

# World War I Victory Medal

## History & Service Requirements

After claiming victory in the war, the allied and associated nations of the Great War agreed to create a medal commemorating the war to be called the "Victory Medal." Each country would be responsible for distributing the medal under its own conditions, but the nations collectively agreed to adopt a set of standards for its design:

- The ribbon, which was to be identical for every country, would represent two rainbows placed in juxtaposition with the red in the center of the ribbon.
- The medal would be bronze and 1 3/8 inches in diameter.
- The final design was left to each respective country, but each country's medal would show the following:
  - The obverse of the medal would represent a full-length winged Victory (representing the Greek goddess of victory, Nike), standing and with a full face. The background and border were to be plain with no inscriptions.
  - The reverse of the medal was to bear the inscription "The Great War for Civilization" in the language of the providing country with its coat of arms and the names of the other allied and association nations. The edges were to be plain.

The United States adopted the design of sculptor James Earle Fraser (designer of the Navy Cross and the "buffalo" nickel) on 14 November 1919, which showcased Victory wearing a spiked crown reminiscent to the Statue of Liberty. The reverse showed a fasces (medieval battle axe) atop the shield. At right the medal for the United States with a Navy Transport service clasp is shown.

The United States' Victory Medal was established by War Department General Order Number 48 (1919) for military service between 6 April 1917 and 11 November 1918. Specifications were disseminated through General Headquarters of the American Expeditionary Forces General Order 75 (2 May 1919), and Department of the Navy General Order 482 (30 June 1919). The medal was renamed the "World War I Victory Medal" after World War II necessitated its own version of a victory medal.

Designations for authorized clasps showing specific service contributions while in the service of the Army and Navy are noted on the following pages.



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## Army Battle Clasps

Battle clasps were eligible to officers and enlisted men who participated, under orders, in the following engagements:

Cambrai	20 May - 4 December 1917	
Somme Defensive	21 March - 6 April 1918	
Lys Defensive	9 - 27 April 1918	
Aisne Defensive	27 May - 5 June 1918	On the Chemin des Dames and northeast of Rheims
Montdidier-Noyon Defensive	9 - 13 June 1918	
Champagne-Marne Defensive	15 - 18 July 1918	
Aisne-Marne Offensive	18 July - 6 August 1918	
Somme Offensive	8 August - 11 November 1918	
Oise-Aisne Offensive	18 August - 11 November 1918	
Ypres-Lys Offensive	19 August - 11 November 1918	
St. Mihiel Offensive	12 - 16 September 1918	
Meuse-Argonne Offensive	26 September - 11 November 1918	
Battle of Vittorio-Veneto	24 October - 4 November 1918	
Defensive Sector		For defensive services not included in any of the above battles.

## Army Service Clasps

Service clasps were eligible to officers and enlisted men who served overseas in non-combat roles in the following countries, but who were not entitled to battle clasps:

France	6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918	
Italy	6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918	
Siberia	Any service in Siberia	Including 23 November 1918 - 1 April 1920
Russia	Any service in Russia	Including 12 November 1918 - 5 August 1919
England	6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918	

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## Navy Service Clasps

Navy personnel were entitled to wear one of the following Navy service clasps (view authorizations [here](#)):

Armed Guard	Regularly attached to an armed guard vessel for one voyage across the North Atlantic, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
Asiatic	For service on any vessel which made a Siberian port during service, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 Or any combatant ship in a Russian port on the White Sea not less than ten days, 12 November 1918 - 31 July 1919
Atlantic Fleet	For service on such duty in the Atlantic Ocean, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Aviation	For service on the high seas on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 For service on the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean north of the Equator, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Destroyer	For service on the high seas on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 For service on the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean north of the Equator, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Escort	Regularly attached to an escort vessel for one voyage across the North Atlantic, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
Grand Fleet	Regularly attached to any vessel forming part of the Grand Fleet, 9 December 1917 - 11 November 1918
Mine Laying	For service on such duty from 26 May - 11 November 1918
Mine Sweeping	For service on such duty from 6 April 1917 until mine sweeping was completed
Mobile Base	For service on the high seas on such tenders or repair vessels on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
Naval Battery	For service on such duty, 10 July - 11 November 1918
Overseas	For service on shore in allied or enemy countries of Europe, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
Patrol	For service on the high seas on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 For service on the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean north of the Equator, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Salvage	For service on such duty from 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
Sub Chaser	For service on the high seas on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 For service on the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean north of the Equator, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Submarine	For service on the high seas on such duty east of the 37th meridian and north of the

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	Equator, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 For service on the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean north of the Equator, 25 May - 11 November 1918
Transport	Regularly attached to a transport or cargo vessel for one voyage across the North Atlantic, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
West Indies	For service in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Cuba, or the Virgin Islands, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918
White Sea	For service on any vessel which made a Russian port during service, 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918 Or any combatant ship in a Russian port on the White Sea not less than ten days, 12 November 1918 - 31 July 1919

## Navy Service Devices

A bronze star on the service ribbon, in lieu of a clasp, was authorized when any person was commended through the Board of Awards by the Secretary of the Navy for performance of duty not justifying a Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Medal, or Navy Cross, he shall wear a silver star for each such citation instead of a bronze star.

A bronze Maltese Cross was authorized to be worn on the service ribbon for those officers and enlisted men of the Marine Corps and Navy Medical Corps who were attached to the American Expeditionary Forces between 6 April 1917 - 11 November 1918, and who were not entitled to any Army battle clasp.

Note: Marine Corps and Naval personnel were also entitled to wear the corresponding Army battle and service clasps for duty attached to the American Expeditionary Forces.

## Army Service Devices

Army regulations did allow for citation stars to be worn on the ribbon of the victory medal for any Army personnel who had been cited for gallantry in action. One through four citations could be shown with bronze stars; one silver star was representative of five bronze stars.

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## Sources

Code of Federal Regulations. Title 32 - National Defense, [Section 578.54](#) - World War I Victory Medal (Washington, D. C. : U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2008).

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