



Guidelines for Women's Military and Civilian Impressions

First of all, congratulations on having chosen a hobby so uniquely worthy of your time, particularly suitable for honoring our WWII veterans, and ultimately a great lot of fun! Following are some general guidelines that will help you to enjoy your reenacting experience more and may save you a great deal of time (and possibly embarrassment!). Your goal should be to create an impression that is as historically accurate and honestly representative of the WWII era as possible. To that end, you will want to keep in mind the following general guidelines:

1. Your main objective in “dressing up” like a woman who lived during WWII is to teach others about life during that time, particularly about the sacrifices made by both men and women to secure the freedoms we now enjoy as Americans. It's great to look cute in addition to this, but your primary function is to educate the public and honor the women and men who served our country during WWII, both in the military and on the home front.
2. You will need to do a good bit of research in order to craft your impression. Do not be intimidated by the amount of information you will need to learn, but seek the advice of people who know what they're talking about – most reenactors are delighted to help you by giving advice and/or loaning you gear when you're first getting started. Don't rely on movies (particularly modern movies) or common perceptions about the 1940s when choosing clothes, hairstyles, etc. Do your own research – read books, look through magazines from the time, watch movies from the era, and, if you can, talk with people who lived through that time and/or served in WWII.
3. Be prepared to think differently about your gender. Women's roles in American culture were not the same as they are now, and women didn't

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perceive of themselves in the same way women do today. A good place to start would be to look through some women's magazines from the era to get an accurate picture of what women were concerned about, what their idea of beauty was, and how they saw themselves fitting into American society.

Military Impressions

1. Ask questions before you buy anything reproduction or postwar. Not all reproductions are equal and many times postwar items are not acceptable. Subtle differences in cut between post war and wartime uniforms may not.
2. Don't over exaggerate your rank. Few women held ranks higher than Captain (or its equivalent).
3. Uniforms generally come in two varieties - fatigues or battle dress, and class A's or service dress. Battledress / fatigues are normally worn for work, in the daytime, while service dress is usually worn for dressing up, going to a dance, etc. It's helpful to have both, but if you have to pick just one uniform, make sure that it will be comfortable to wear all day for two-three days.
4. Read, read, read. Not only about the unit you are portraying, and the uniform, but general history and military protocol for your service, as well as an overview of the war in Europe and the Pacific in general. It helps to understand the difference between Dunkirk and D-day. You'll earn more respect from the men in the hobby if you can execute a proper salute and identify rank for at least the nationality you are portraying. The US Army has a book called The Officer's Guide and there are similar publications for other nations.
5. While any 40's looking shoes will work for your civilian kit, each different service had its own requirement not only for shoes, but for jewelry, hair, makeup, and nails as well. Typically, military impressions require the hair off the collar, minimal jewelry (usually just a watch and wedding ring if applicable), subtle makeup or none at all, as well as well neatly trimmed nails with a neutral color or no nail polish.

From Kate Carter: Full credit is given to the Paper Dolls organization for much of the content of these guidelines.

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