

World War II

Dog Tags

Shown here are two World War II dog tags. The smaller rounded tag is for a sailor in the United States Navy. The larger tag is for a U.S. Infantry soldier. Dog tag is an informal but common term for a specific type of identification tag worn by military personnel. The tags' primary use is for the identification of casualties. Dog tags are usually fabricated from a corrosion-resistant metal. They commonly contain two copies.



This purposeful duplication allows one tag, or half-tag, to be collected from a personnel's dead body for notification, while the duplicate remains with the corpse if the conditions of battle prevent it from being immediately recovered. The term arose and became popular because of the tags' resemblance to animal registration tags. There is a recurring myth about the notch situated in one end of the dog tags issued to United States Army personnel during World War II, and up until the Vietnam War era. It was rumored that the notch's purpose was that, if a soldier found one of his comrades on the battlefield, he could take one tag to the commanding officer and stick the other between the teeth of the soldier to ensure that the tag would remain with the body and be identified. In reality, the notch was used with the Model 70 Addressograph Hand Identification Imprinting Machine (a pistol-type imprinter used primarily by the Medical Department during World War II). American dog tags of the 1930s through 1980s were produced using a Graphotype machine, in which characters are debossed into metal plates.