

70th Guards Impression Guide, RKKA 1943-1945

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Introduction

This is a guide to the uniforms and equipment that every Soviet rifleman would be issued during the period from 1943 to 1945. Within 70th Guards, this is our primary impression, as many of our events take place during this time period. Though this guide is not completely exhaustive, it covers the majority of necessary items to complete the “late war” impression.

It is required to acquire all of the items in this guide before you spread out into other impressions within 70th Guards (e.g., sappers, medical, or naval infantry). First, this is because there is plenty of overlap between the uniforms for those impressions and the equipment listed. Second, this is because those impressions are ancillary to our primary impression as an infantry unit.

This guide represents the equipment of a rifleman with the rank of krasnoarmeyets (the Red Army equivalent of private), not soldiers in specialized roles, e.g. combat engineers, artillery, or naval infantry. Similarly, this guide also does not reflect special equipment for officers, except to indicate where said equipment would not be carried by the lower ranks. For clarification, an officer in the Red Army was defined as anyone above the rank of junior lieutenant (mladshiy leytenant).

While this guide exists to put down a lot of the knowledge that the authors have learnt about various pieces of Soviet uniforms, it is still highly encouraged to speak with unit leadership before making a major purchase which may end up useless for reenacting. Asking questions and learning is as much a part of this hobby as fighting battles and shooting. Please do not be afraid to contact Ian Fries if you have any questions on anything.

Finally, a note on formatting. **Text in bold indicates a vital piece of information, usually an absolute requirement when searching for an original item so that you do not purchase the wrong thing.** *Text in italics indicates items or practices that should be avoided because they do not reflect the standards of the Red Army in World War II accurately.*

How to Build Your Impression

There are four key rules to building any impression. They are as follows:

1. Research - Research is key to building an accurate impression. Many people would like to immediately start purchasing uniforms and equipment. This is extremely ill-advised. Different pieces of kit were worn at different times during the war. Quality of reproductions vary greatly between different sources. There are plenty of vendors that, whether out of ignorance or malice, mislead buyers into buying inaccurate kit. Before buying anything, do your research and ask questions.

2. Buy smart - Certain sized items (boots, uniforms, hats) are more difficult to loan, and so should be purchased first. Other sized items (underwear) are not feasible to be loaned, so they should be prioritized. As a general rule, start with items that are in direct contact with your body, and work outwards, which is how this guide is formatted.

3. Buy timely - The nature of military surplus is that often a cache of a particular item is discovered, is sold out, and is never restocked. Also, 70th Guards members often organize group buys from suppliers, which is a great way to split shipping costs and save money. Sticking to your purchasing plan but being flexible when the opportunity arises is a great way to save money in the long run.

4. Buy once, cry once - Save your money and only buy the best kit. You will ultimately spend less money in the long run because you will not need to replace it. Better quality uniforms and equipment last longer than the alternative. The price and time to deliver an item is often inversely proportional to its quality.

This guide is organized by general importance, i.e. items closer to the top should be purchased first.

Sources and Vendors

The sources listed for these items are easy places to find them new. The primary sources for the author's equipment, in particular, are:

[Schuster](#) - Schuster provides a very wide range of top-quality Soviet items. They have very high quality field gear and produce almost every type of equipment that was issued from 1914 to 1945, from headgear to ammo pouches. They also sell some post-war original items. All reproduction items are made custom tailored in-house. Schuster is based in Belarus. Expect a month wait at minimum for shipping, depending on the size and specifics of your order.

[Voenspec](#) - Voenspec has various reproductions and original items. They mostly focus on items used during the war, from 1939 onwards. They are the only current source for Soviet naval infantry reproductions (though these will not be covered in this guide), as well as the only current source for correct boots and women's field uniforms (also not covered). They are based out of Russia, make all reproduction items in-house, and provide custom tailoring. They are very good at vetting post-war items to make sure they are close enough to wartime production to be accurate. Expect a two month wait for shipping at minimum.

[Voin](#) - Voin produces reproductions of Russian and Soviet uniforms and field gear, starting from the 1860s and progressing onwards. They produce custom tailored uniforms based on original pieces, often also permitting a variety of different materials that reflect variations in wartime production. Their work is extremely high quality, often using original materials. Voin is based in Ukraine, so expect a minimum of one month for shipping.

[Red Guard Militaria](#) - Run by Dorian Motovulak on Facebook. Dorian is the kapitan of the Red Guard in the Eastern United States. His page sells original items, post-war original items, and high quality reproductions. Shipping is generally very fast, unless Dorian is in Russia, and large enough orders often include extra items that are great for pocket filler. Note that specific links to his products will not be listed in this guide, since orders are made simply by messaging him directly.

These are not the only sources for items, particularly acceptable post-war surplus. Many items are also available second-hand on Ebay, Facebook trading pages, or other sites, some which are also included in this guide. These other sources may be faster and cheaper than any of these, but they can also be less reputable, so it is encouraged to exercise caution and ask about anything you find. The links to those sources are also harder to track down and, particularly in the case of Ebay and Facebook listings, quickly become obsolete, so they have not been included. Note that both post-war original items and reproductions use Russian sizing. The scheme for this is given on the next page.

Sizecharts, Russian Military Equipment

Clothing Sizes

Russian uniforms has two sizes, one for width and one for height. They are most often given as a pair of numbers, for example 56-4 or 54-182.

Width

The width sizes is given in a number that equals the width of your chest, that means half of its circumference.

Meassure the circumference of your waist and chest and compare to the table below. If the two measurements give you different sizes according to the table, choose the larger size.

Russian Size	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62
Waist in inches	~30"	~32"	~34-36"	~36-38"	~38"	~40"	~42"	~44"
Waist in cm	76 cm	81 cm	86-91 cm	91-97 cm	97 cm	102 cm	107 cm	112 cm
Chest in inches	~38"	~39"	~41"	~43"	~44"	~46"	~47"	~49"
Chest in cm	96 cm	100 cm	104 cm	108 cm	112 cm	116 cm	120 cm	124 cm

Height

There are two systems used; one is a single number, the other is a three digit number. Which version is used depends on the manufacturer and garment.

Meassure your height and compare to the table below.

Russian Size	2 164	3 170	4 176	5 182	6 188	7 194
Height in feet & inches	5'5"	5'7"	5'9"	6'	6'2"	6'4"
Height in cm	164 cm	170 cm	176 cm	182 cm	188 cm	194 cm

Hat Size

This is the sizes used for headwear.

Meassure the circumference of the widest part of your head and compare to the table below.

Russian Size	52	54	56	58	60	62	64
US Size	6½ (6.5)	6¾ (6.75)	7	7¼ (7.25)	7½ (7.5)	7¾ (7.75)	8
Circumference in inches	~20.5"	~21"	~22"	~23"	~23.5"	~24.5"	~25"
Circumference in cm	52 cm	54 cm	56 cm	58 cm	60 cm	62 cm	64 cm

Packing List

70th Guards Packing List:

Generic Army 1939-1945 v. 2.0

Red items- required

Black items- recommended

* - noncombatant required

OVERVIEW

This packing list is carefully structured as a system with three layers (1st, 2nd and 3rd line gear) to sustain an individual for a weekend reenactment. 40 hrs of food, 6L of water, and shelter are distributed between all three layers. Items can easily be relocated from one layer to another, as dictated by the situation.

ON YOUR PERSON: ~8 hour sustainment

- Uniform, Obr. 43 (pre-1943: Obr. 35) **
 - Gymnasterka w/ collar liner **
 - Pogoni (pre-1943: petlitsi)*
 - Guards badge (pre-1943: no badge) **
 - Underwear*
 - Shavori **
 - Remen, shavori **
 - Pilotka w/ cap star **
 - Winter: shapka ushanka w/ cap star*
 - Sapogi or botinki, w/ insoles **
 - If using botinki, add obmotoki **
 - Portyanki and/or socks **
- Load bearing equipment*
 - Remen, equipment **
 - Flyaga, .7L w/ cover **
 - Saperka, w/ pouch, cover blade with rag*
 - Ammunition pouch*
- Weapon - w/ remen*
 - Ammunition for two days of operations, plus*
reserve (3x mags worth), in paper packets
 - Bayonet*
- Helmet - SSh-40*
- Laminated copy of picture ID **
- Laminated card w/ name, allergies, medical conditions, current medications, and ICE contact **
- Earplugs, flesh colored **
- Enough food for 1x meal **

QUICK TIPS

- How to videos: [sew collar liner](#), [wear uniform](#), [set up equipment](#), [select helmet](#), [select boots](#), [roll shinel](#), [make plasch cape](#)
- Leather equipment: treat to protect and darken; [Huberd's shoe oil](#), neetsfoot oil, etc

2ND LINE PACK: ~24 hour sustainment

- Gas mask bag **
 - Spoon **
 - Mug **
 - Water, at least 1.3L **
 - Spare portyanki and/or socks **
 - Weapon cleaning kit*
 - Enough food for 2x meals, and snacks **
 - Dish rag, soap, and garbage bag **
 - Wet wipes and/or toilet paper **
 - Cash for incidentals **
- Shinel - w/ remen or rope for rolling **
 - Pogoni w/ buttons and petlitsi w/ buttons (pre-1943: petlitsi only) **

3RD LINE PACK: ~40 hour sustainment

- Veshmeshok **
 - Plasch-palatka, w/ pegs and rope*
 - Water, at least 4L **
 - Dry rations, at least 1x day **
 - Messtin **
 - Hygiene kit*
 - Winter: mittens or gloves*
- Winter: telogreika jacket and trousers*

Personal Standards

It is against Soviet military regulations for any (male) soldiers to have a beard or wear their hair touching the ears or collar. As a rule, Soviet soldiers kept their hair short on the sides and back and were almost never authorized to grow facial hair.

A Soviet soldier was supposed to shave every single day when not in heavy combat. All soldiers are expected to be clean shaven prior to the commencement of combat operations. The only exception to this was men over 40 years old, who were allowed to have a moustache not extending past the corners of the mouth. *There is no evidence of any sort of regulation about Red Army soldiers who fought in the Revolution being able to keep their beards, etc.*

Any military-style haircut will do. Hair can be kept long on the top, but it needs to be fairly short on the sides. See the examples for some good styles. In general, lower ranking soldiers wore shorter hair.





Women in the Red Army had different personal standards. Per regulation, women were to style their hair so that it would stay away from the face and not extend past the collar. See examples below.



Boots (Сапоги и ботинки)

Boots are the most important piece of a soldier's gear, so it is important to ensure they fit well. However, they are also one of the trickiest pieces of gear to acquire, as there are no consistent sources for originals and quality reproductions do not exist at time of writing. Fortunately, there are a few options available to reenactors.

There are two options for boots: jackboots and low boots. Jackboots are preferred, since they were more often issued to men at the front, with low boots for second-line troops. For a starting guide on boots, see [this video](#). For an absolutely comprehensive guide on boots, see [this guide](#).



Post-war, non-chrome jackboots with the correct soles can be found frequently on Ebay or trading pages on Facebook. Boots can be fairly easy to find by searching “Soviet boots XX” or similar terms, with “XX” being the size in Russian units. The sizing follows the following scheme:

37 - fits feet up to 232 mm long	43 - 277 mm
38 - 240 mm	44 - 285 mm
39 - 247 mm	45 - 292 mm
40 - 255 mm	46 - 300 mm
41 - 262 mm	47 - 307 mm
42 - 270 mm	48 - 315 mm

Jackboots come in three calf widths, which you can get from the stamp on the boot:

Y - narrow
C - regular
W - wide

Both all-leather or kirza boots are acceptable. The toe box on the front of the boot should wrap over the calf, and there can be a rectangular strip of material running up the back. This will absolutely be the case if the boot is made of kirza, but a few all-leather boots may have it too. **Boots must be matte, not shiny, as shiny chrome boots are for officers.** On all-leather boots, the interior liner should sew in above the ankle, and be made of canvas (a leather liner is also for officers).



All boots must have dot or two-piece leather flat soles, as in these two examples.

Voenspec sells replacement dot soles if you would like to replace post-war tractor soles. **Boots must also be non-chrome, since chrome boots are officers' boots.** Chrome boots are fairly easily spotted by their sheen, but can also be identified (beyond being shiny, because some of the enlisted boots can be shiny too) by the pronounced "S" shape at the top of the calf opening; lacking the leather strip running up the back; and having a toe box that doesn't overlap the calf, but meets at the same level.



Similarly, low boots must also have either dot or flat soles, not the post-war tractor pattern. Low boots were always worn with puttees, strips of cloth wrapped around the legs. These protected against dirt and water and helped support the ankles and lower legs. Puttees came in a variety of different colors; however, units were issued all the same color. Please try to coordinate your puttee color with others in the unit.

We cannot make a choice that works for your feet. You may need to experiment with different combinations of foot wraps, socks, and/or insoles. Please be sure your feet are comfortable

Dot Soles

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

Puttees

[Voenspec reproduction, khaki](#)

[Voenspec reproduction, grey](#)

[Voenspec reproduction, black](#)

[Voyn reproductions](#)

Avoid boots with a different style of sole than those listed here, as these are not correct. In particular, boots from Hikishop are incorrect both in terms of sole pattern, materials, and dimensions. Post-war tractor-pattern soles are also not acceptable, as are post-war buckled jackboots.

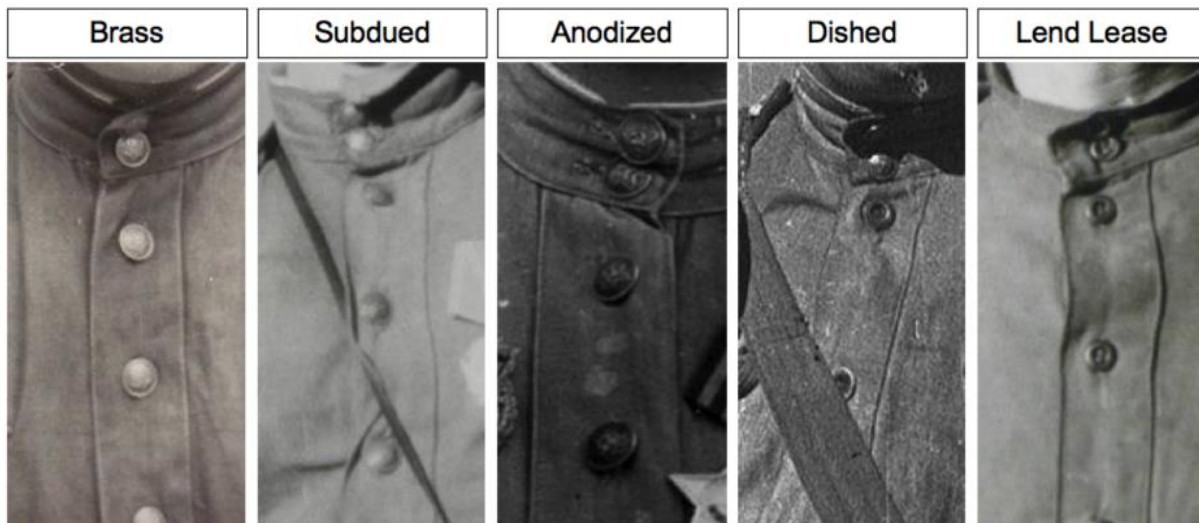
Tunics and Trousers (Гимнастёрки и шаровары)



The base Soviet uniform consisted of a tunic with shoulder boards and a pair of breeches.

The Obr. 43 pattern tunic (gimnastyorka, on the top left) can be purchased from Schuster or Voenspec. **Obr. 43 pattern tunics have a “standing” straight collar and no breast pockets. They also have buttons and loops for shoulder boards and are made of a “salt and pepper” twill cotton. Male enlisted soldiers should always use Obr. 43 tunics without breast pockets.** The pocketed tunics were officially for those above the rank of junior lieutenant. Female members of the Red Army were authorized to use pocketed tunics in 1944.

Gymnasterka Button Variations



Tunics used a variety of different buttons, as shown above. Depending on the quality of dye and manufacturer, the color of uniforms could vary greatly from olive to khaki to off-white. Tunics were also made from a variety of different styles of cotton (either bollard or tricot melange). However, all maintained a similar design.

The breeches (sharovari) did not change from early to late war, and so the Obr. 35 pattern is correct for both periods. An Obr. 44 pattern of these was produced later in the war, the only difference being an exterior rear pocket and a reduction in the amount of material used for the legs. This pattern is acceptable, but not recommended because the Obr. 35 was slightly more common. **All breeches should have no colored edging.** For Schuster reproductions, you will need to request that. The breeches are meant to be worn high, with the waist at your navel. It is encouraged to purchase either a canvas or leather trouser belt to keep your breeches up, though many soldiers also made do with a piece of rope.



Red Guard Militaria makes excellent reproduction shoulder boards from original materials. Shoulder boards are sold through Schuster, Voenspec, and Voin as well. Infantry shoulder boards must have **raspberry piping and no stripes or other markings, as shown.** This indicates the soldier is an enlisted rifleman with the rank of krasnoarmeyets (private). As with the tunic and breeches, these could also vary in color from factory to factory, and also depending on if they were made

from Soviet or Lend-Lease materials.

You will also need to **sew a white collar liner into your tunic.** This was done for sanitary reasons. The collar liner is meant to be a matchstick's width above the collar just showing a little bit of the white. The ends of the collar liner should not touch and have about an inch or so gap between ends. It is fairly easy to do with any strip of white cloth. [See this video for a detailed guide.](#)

Obr. 43 Tunic

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Shoulder Boards

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Obr. 35 Breeches

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Breeches Belt

[Schuster reproduction](#)

Equipment Belts (Ремни)



The equipment belt was made of leather or canvas and had a roller buckle. The belt was worn high and tight at the natural waist, which prevents movement of equipment and gives a sharp appearance. Belts (remyon, plural remni) can be purchased from Red Guard Militaria, Schuster, Voenspec, and Voin.

Leather Belts

[Schuster reproduction, sewn](#)

[Schuster reproduction, rivetted](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Canvas Belts

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Pilotki (Пилотки)



The standard head gear for the Red Army soldier was a garrison or forage cap, known as the pilotka. **Enlisted pilotki should be made of olive “salt and pepper” cotton**, i.e., the same material as gimnastyorki and sharovari. *Only officers may have branch-of-service piping on their pilotki. Some post-war pilotki are very green or made out of a cotton/polyester blend material that has a pronounced sheen. These should not be used.* However, pilotki made of wartime materials were manufactured well into the 1970s. Schuster, Voenspec, and Voin all make good reproductions. Voenspec also offers original post-war pilotki, but they are fairly common on Ebay and trading pages as well.

Regulations state the pilotka is to be worn centered on the head, with the flaps tight, and tilted slightly to the right. The pilotka should also be worn under the SSh-40 helmet to help give the helmet a tighter, more comfortable fit. Also, the side flaps may be turned down for warmth against mild cold. A needle and some thread may be placed inside the pilotka as an emergency sewing kit.

Please note that neither Schuster nor Voenspec reproduction pilotki are offered with a cap star included. Any of the pictured cap stars on the next page are appropriate, with those listed in the secondary category good alternatives if any of the primary category are unavailable.

Pilotki

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

Cap Stars

[Schuster reproduction, 32mm M1936 two-piece](#)

[Schuster reproduction, 25mm M1941 sew-in](#)

[Schuster reproduction, 25mm M1941 US-made](#)

RKKA CAP STARS 1936-1945



(22MM) M.1936
FOR PILOTKA



(22MM) FIELD MADE / TROPHY
STARS FOR PILOTKA



(22MM) M.1941
FOR PILOTKA



(31MM) M.1936
FOR VISOR CAPS/USHANKA/
PILOTKA* (*WHEN AUTHORIZED)



(31MM) M. 1939
FOR VISOR CAPS/USHANKA



(31MM) M.1941
FOR VISOR CAPS/USHANKA



(38MM) M.1939
FOR OFFICER CAPS

SECONDARY CAP STARS



(22MM) M.1953
FOR PILOTKA

+



BEND BACK EACH OF THE 5 POINTS

+



REPAINT
RED OR GREEN



(31MM) M.1947
FOR VISOR CAPS/USHANKA



(31MM) M.1953
FOR VISOR CAPS/USHANKA



(22MM) M.1947
FOR PILOTKA



(22MM) M.1953
FOR PILOTKA

Guards Badges

The 138th Rifle Division was granted the Guards distinction for its defense of the Barrikady factory during the Battle of Stalingrad. The division was renumbered as the 70th Guards Rifle Division and would retain the Guards distinction through the end of the war until its dissolution in 1991.

The Guards badge was worn on the right breast, in line with the fourth button on the tunic front and the button for securing the right shoulder board on the tunic shoulder. The screw post on the back of a guards badge is very long (to pass through thick winter greatcoat), so a scrap of felt or leather backing on the inside of the thinner cotton tunic is recommended.

Guards Badges Cheat Sheet

WWII



Post-War



Trident WWII Reproduction



Note the thin edge along the bottom of the flag on the Wartime example. Post-War examples typically have fringe at the bottom of the flag and a pattern behind the red of the flag to make it appear three-dimensional. Also note that on this Post-War example, the wreath is somewhat more ornate and the star is more faceted. There are a lot of variances in these badges but the fringe is the big giveaway and the first thing to look for.

The Trident repro looks okay on eBay but when you put it side-by-side with a wartime example, the differences jump out. The repro seems to have a mix of wartime and Post-War features.

All Guards badges must be correct wartime badges. The guide above explains the differences between the wartime, post-war, and reproduction badges. Guards badges can be found through a variety of sources, primarily eBay.

Armaments (Винтовки, автоматы, и пулемёты)



The M91/30 rifle was standard issue for infantrymen throughout the war. This system was developed as the “Three-Line Rifle, Model of 1891” (a line in this case being a caliber 1/10th of an inch, or 2.54mm, thus 7.62mm caliber) in the late 19th century by Captain S. I. Mosin. A legal dispute had the name of Léon Nagant attached to the rifle. The initial design of Mosin’s rifle served in the First World War. It was later updated in 1930. This conversion to the M91/30 pattern shortened the length by 7 centimeters and replaced the sights, among other changes. Despite intentions of replacing the weapon with a semi-automatic rifle in the late 1930s, the rifle served through the entirety of the Second World War as well.

An M91/30 can be purchased from a variety of places, including, but not limited to, Gunbroker, Armslist, Classic Firearms, etc. M91/30s also frequently appear at local gun stores and gun shows. They can also occasionally be found at sporting goods’ stores.

Obviously, using the DP-27, SVT-40, PPSH-41, or PPS-43 is highly encouraged as well. Please follow all local regulations when acquiring your firearm. Indianapolis Ordnance produces open-bolt blank firing non-gun (BFONG) versions of Soviet automatic weapons which are excellent for reenacting.

All weapons require a sling and a magazine pouch. An M91/30 will often come with a post-war canvas sling, a weapon cleaning/tool kit, and an (unfortunately incorrect) post-war kirza ammunition pouch. Leather slings were much more common during the war, and can be found

on eBay or other sources. For questions regarding other weapons slings and magazine pouches, contact Ian Fries.

The TO&E for a rifle squadron from July 1942 to December of 1944 is as follows:



Source: <https://www.battleorder.org/ussr-rifle-co-1943>

Other types of squads existed, such as squads equipped entirely with automatics, and it was not uncommon for more semi-automatic rifles or submachine guns to be distributed throughout the squad. However, this was what STAVKA (Soviet High Command) expected to issue its infantry squads per doctrine.

A few final notes, mostly on things to avoid:

Imperial M91-pattern Mosin-Nagants are not permitted. Other nations' models of Mosin-Nagant (e.g., Finnish M28, M28/30, and M39 patterns) are not permitted.

Carbines, in general, were issued to specialist troops, such as artillerymen. M44, M59, and Type 53 carbines, in particular, are not acceptable. Soviet-produced M44 carbines were only ever issued to some anti-tank teams at the very end of the war; all others are post-war production by other states of the Warsaw Pact. The Type 53 is a Chinese copy of the M44. All have a folding bayonet that is highly identifiable, as shown below.



The M59 carbine (shown below) may appear identical to the wartime M38 at first glance, but it has a longer sight with crudely removed range markings, because it was manufactured from a cutdown M91/30.



If you need something with a shorter length than the standard issue M91/30, consider a submachine gun instead.

Additionally, enlisted men and NCOs never carried sidearms. M1897 Nagant revolvers, TT-33s, etc. should not be carried by anyone below the rank of mladshiy leytenant (junior lieutenant).

Ammunition Pouches (Боеприпасы)



Riflemen were issued a single leather two-cell ammunition pouch, which held 30 rounds of 7.62x54R ammunition in steel stripper clips. These pouches were produced in a number of different styles in both natural and artificial leather with either a smooth or pebbled texture. Ammunition was issued in cardboard containers that were then stuck into the pouches.

Schuster, Red Guard Militaria, and Voin make reproductions in a variety of styles. Post-War East German "war reparations" pouches (shown above at right) are also acceptable, as they are nearly identical to wartime versions. All ammo pouches should be brown; black pouches were issued to naval infantry. Note these are pouches for the M91/30 rifle, obviously other weapons had different styles of pouches. If you have any questions about other types of magazine pouches, please speak to Ian Fries.

Only one ammo pouch may be carried for late war events, worn on the right side of your body. This applies to all types of weapons, including automatics. Two pouches were only carried by riflemen very early in the war. Automatics only ever received one spare magazine pouch. You may carry extra magazines or ammunition in your pockets, veshmeshok, and/or gas mask bag.

Ammo Pouches:

[Schuster reproduction, type 1](#)
[Schuster reproduction, type 2](#)
[Schuster reproduction, type 3](#)
[Schuster reproduction, type 4](#)
[Schuster reproduction, "ersatz" pattern](#)
[Original post-war, DDR war reparations](#)
[Voin reproduction](#)

Ammunition Packets:

[Original post-war](#)

Post-war kirza pouches (shown in the photo at right) are not permitted. Though they are often given away freely with the purchase of an M91/30, they do not match pouches produced during the war. Do not use these.



Canteens (Фляги)



The standard canteen held .7 liters of water and was made of aluminum. *Glass canteens were also issued, but these are not recommended because they break easily.* **Wartime canteens have thinner screws than the post-war versions, and either a dull paint job or no paint at all. Identical versions were produced by East Germany post-war, and these are the best option to use today besides originals.**

Reproduction and original canteen carriers can be bought via Red Guard Militaria. Original carriers, both wartime and post-war, are common enough through other sources as well. They come in a variety of different styles, using different buttons or either metal or wood toggles. *Avoid covers with plastic buttons, since you will need to replace said button.*

Soviet post-war canteens and carriers (like these ones) are fairly common as military surplus. They are acceptable, but not ideal. They are easily identified by the wide threads on the cap and the shiny brownish-green paint. A post-war Soviet canteen is fine to keep inside your gas mask bag or veshmeshok, but they should not be worn on your belt.



Mess Kits, Mugs, and Spoons (Котелки, кружки, и ложки)



There are two different patterns of acceptable mess kits. The earlier M36 pattern (on the left) is more common, since it has a nearly identical post-war version. It was also more popular with soldiers since it could hold more and the two-piece design was more flexible. **If using a post-war M36 (as in the picture), remove the paint.** The M1940 pattern (on the right) was more common during the war because of its simplicity of manufacture, but is harder to find today. It is an aluminum pot with a swiveling handle. Adding trench art or other decorations to your mess tin is always recommended to help with identification.

You can drink out of your mess kit top, but an enamel mug is far superior. They come in a variety of colors; the most common is green, but brown, blue, and white are also acceptable. These can be acquired through a variety of sources, primarily Red Guard Militaria. Again, it is encouraged to add some sort of identifying markings to your cup.

Soviet soldiers were not issued eating utensils of any kind. They were expected to bring a large spoon from home. We recommend you do the same. Red Guard Militaria may provide a spoon with a large enough order or on request. Schuster and Voenspec both sell spoons. However, any decent sized wood or metal spoon will do. Soldiers generally stuck their spoons in one of their boots, the head facing up, so as not to lose them.

Mess Tins

[Schuster, M1936, original post-war](#)

Spoons

[Aluminum, original post-war](#)

Greatcoats (Шинели)



The stereotypical giant wool greatcoat (shinel, plural shineli). This was by far the most common winter coat worn by Red Army forces before, during, and after the Second World War. When not in use, it can be rolled up and slung over the shoulder (see [this video](#)). To keep the roll together, straps were provided, although some soldiers used rope. The greatcoat also served as a krasnoarmeyets's blanket.

Reproductions are available from Schuster and Voenspec, however, post-war versions (shown on the far right) are also fairly common. **If purchasing a post-war version, it will need to be converted.** All postwar buttons should be removed and replaced with original proper size 22 mm (for rear "half" belt and collar tabs) and 18 mm (for shoulder boards) buttons. All postwar insignia (usually some green fabric on the collar and shoulders) must be removed.

The greatcoat must use Obr. 43 insignia, which consists of shoulder boards and collar tabs (**again, these need to be for infantry, olive green with raspberry piping**). The same shoulder boards on the tunic are used on the greatcoat - again, these can be bought through Red Guard Militaria, Schuster, Voenspec, or Voin. However, because all of these things need to be sewn on, it is highly recommended to purchase your greatcoat through Schuster, who will sew the insignia themselves.

Shineli

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

Collar Tabs

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voenspec reproduction](#)

Straps

[Schuster, slide buckle](#)

[Schuster, prong buckle](#)

[Schuster, canvas](#)

Helmets (Шлемы)



The proper helmet to use is the SSh-40. There are a lot of helmets that are very similar to this model, and it is best not to get confused. [This video explains how to select a helmet.](#)

You want a helmet that, externally, looks like the one above, with three rivets low around the sides of the helmet. The interior should have three painted fabric pads and a canvas chinstrap with a single rivet. You will also want to look for date markings between around 1946-1950 (helmets were restamped after the war).

Since wartime helmets can be hard to find, post-war SSh-40s are also acceptable. The only difference is a lack of a rivet on the chinstrap.

Avoid Czech, SSh-60, or SSh-68 model helmets. These are visibly different from the SSh-40 in a variety of ways. Czech helmets can be converted to resemble an SSh-39, but this takes undue time and effort to reproduce a helmet that was less common during the war.

Helmets come in three sizes, based on head circumference:

Size P1: Smaller than 58 cm

Size P2: 59 to 61 cm

Size P3: Larger than 61 cm

Gas Mask Bags (Сумки для противогазов)



The deployment of chemical weapons was a significant fear throughout the war, and the Soviet Union prepared for this by issuing every soldier a gas mask and a bag to carry it. Gas mask bags varied in color, material, number of pockets, sling adjustment, and a variety of other factors based on manufacturer. It is not required to find a gas mask for the gas mask bag. In fact, most soldiers disposed of the gas mask and used the bag to carry other things, such as extra food, water, or ammunition, which you should do as well.

Schuster, Voin, and Red Guard Militaria all produce acceptable gas mask bags. By this period, the simplified Obr. 41 pattern had largely supplanted the earlier Obr. 36 pattern. The latter is acceptable, though not preferred. *Post-war gas mask bags are not permitted, since they vary too much in materials and dimensions.*

Gas Mask Bags

[Obr. 41, Voin reproduction](#)

Telogreiki (Телогрейки)



A telogreika (literally, body-warmer) is a padded jacket filled with cotton. Two patterns of telogreiki were used during the war. The M1932 pattern was intended to be worn under a greatcoat, and thus has no collar tabs or shoulder boards. However, many were worn without the greatcoat, since the telogreika provided greater mobility. In response, the M1941 pattern was produced, which has collar tabs. Either may be used, though the M1932 pattern is slightly preferred. A reproduction of the M1941 pattern is produced by Schuster and Voin. A near-identical post-war version to the M1932 was produced and is fairly common military surplus (sometimes also listed as a vatnik). This version is available through Voenspec, Schuster, and other sources. **Post-war plastic buttons on telogreiki must be replaced.** Wartime jackets were often made with whatever buttons were available, so there is no set pattern.

Telogreiki

[M1932, original post-war](#)

[Schuster reproduction, M1941](#)

[Schuster reproduction, M1941, reversible](#)

[Voin reproduction, M1941](#)

Note: the greatcoat is preferred over the telogreika as cold weather gear, since the telogreika was issued on a situational basis, whereas the greatcoat was part of a soldier's standard-issue equipment.

Ushanki (Ушанки)



The ubiquitous M1940 shapka ushanka (plural ushanki) was issued to keep soldiers' heads warm and dry, replacing the earlier budenovka, which provided very little protection against the subzero temperatures that frontoviki faced. Ushanki were made of quilted cotton flannel (blue on the inside and a drab grey or green on the exterior) and artificial brownish-grey wool, known as “fish fur” because it is impossible that the material came from any real animal.

Like the pilotka, the ushanka should be worn cocked slightly to the side. The ushanka, like the pilotka, can be worn under your helmet to keep your head warm and provide a better fit.

However, note that soldiers were not authorized to fold the flaps of their ushanki down unless the temperature was under -1°C (30°F).

Reproduction ushanki can be purchased through [The Other Hat Guy](#) on Facebook or Voin. Note both versions do not come with a cap star. A chart of acceptable cap stars is on the next page.

Ushanki

[Voin reproduction, grey wool with green flannel](#)

[Voin reproduction, grey wool with grey flannel](#)

Ushanki Cap Stars

[M1936, reproduction](#)

Correct Star Cockades for Shapki



Plasch-Palatki (Плащ-палатки)



A sheet of treated cloth with a variety of different uses. Primarily, it serves as a rain poncho (plasch), though four can be buttoned together to form a tent (palatka). **Please, make sure your plasch has leather grommets at the four corners where the stakes would go. Metal grommets are not allowed as they date to the 1960s or later.** Originals can be purchased from a variety of sources, including Red Guard Militaria and Schuster. The plasch may be formed into a rain cape using [this method](#).

Plasch-Palatki
[Original post-war](#)

Veshmeshki (Вещмешки)



This is a sack whose straps tie into a slipknot to close the top. This backpack design allegedly dates back hundreds of years. Like many pieces of Soviet equipment, there were a large number of different patterns for this piece of equipment - some had buckles, some had wooden toggles, etc. Schuster produces reproductions, but post-war originals are also fairly common. *Avoid post-war packs with an exterior, buttonable pocket.*

The veshmeshok should contain the following items:

- Plasz-palatka, folded with any poles or stakes
- Extra water (preferably in a canteen)
- Enough food for one meal (e.g., a small tin of meat and some crackers)
- Mess tin and cup
- Spare footwraps and/or socks
- Reserve ammunition (15 rounds for M91/30, 30 for SVT-40, 70 for PPSH-41 and PPS-43, 94 for DP-27)
- Spare underwear
- Hygiene kit
- Weapon cleaning kit

Veshmeshki

[Schuster reproduction](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Shovels (Лопаты)



This style of shovel originates in the late 19th century, originally with a square blade. Both square and pointed-blade shovels were used during the war in a variety of different patterns, and they continued to be produced through the post-war period in great numbers. Though some sources are linked below, shovels are fairly easily found by searching on Ebay or Facebook trading pages. *Avoid shovels with a handle on the end, as these are actually post-war Finnish.*

Similarly, a variety of different patterns of shovel carriers were produced. Reproductions are available through Schuster, though post-war originals like the one pictured are also acceptable. The actual shape of the carrier most likely will not matter for your shovel, i.e., pointed shovels should fit in most square carriers and vice versa.

The shovel is a vital tool of defense, for digging foxholes and other entrenchments. We also require shovels for fire safety.

Shovel Carriers

[Schuster reproduction, square with leather buckle](#)

[Schuster reproduction, square with toggle](#)

[Schuster reproduction, square war-time pattern](#)

[Schuster reproduction, pointed canvas with toggle](#)

[Schuster reproduction, pointed war-time pattern with button](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

Underwear (Нижний белье)



The undergarments consist of a set tunic and pants. These may be made of either cotton (for summer) or flannel (for winter). *Army infantry did not wear telnyashki (blue and white striped undershirts); these were exclusive to naval troops.* Underwear sets can be bought from Schuster, though post-war originals are also acceptable.

Underwear

[Schuster reproduction](#)

Grenade Pouches (Сумки для ручных гранат)



Soviet infantry were issued a canvas pouch with two cells for RGD-33 grenades. Like many other pieces of equipment, this pouch came in a number of different styles. Schuster and Voin produce reproduction pouches. Replica rubber grenades may be used in place of real grenades. *Avoid post-war two-cell F1 pouches. Three-cell F1 pouches were issued to vehicle crews during the war, but not to infantry.*

Grenade Pouches

[Schuster reproduction, olive canvas with button](#)

[Schuster reproduction, olive canvas with prong buckle](#)

[Schuster reproduction, olive canvas with slide buckle](#)

[Schuster reproduction, blue canvas](#)

[Voin reproduction](#)

As a note: blue canvas is correct for many items in this guide. These were intended to be issued to naval infantry units, but were often sent to army units as well.

Extra Items

Extra Warmth

Some other options for extra warmth include gloves or mittens and balaclavas (podshlemnik, literally “under helmet”). These were made out of a variety of materials, primarily wool. Your comfort is a high priority; sleeping outdoors can be chillier than you expect. Please acquire these items before you need them.

Gloves and Mittens

[Trigger mittens, original post-war](#)

[Wool trigger mittens, original post-war](#)

[Wool gloves, Schuster reproduction](#)

Extra Buttons

It is encouraged that you replace visible plastic buttons on any items with wartime buttons. **It is necessary to replace the post-war buttons on post-war greatcoats and telogreiki.** Buttons are best found through Red Guard Militaria, though they are also available through Schuster, Voenspec, and other sources.

14 mm buttons are used on tunic collars and cuffs. 18 mm buttons are used for shoulder boards. 22 mm buttons are used for telogreiki, shinel waist straps, and more.

Buttons

[14 mm painted buttons](#)

[14 mm painted buttons, wartime pattern](#)

[18 mm brass buttons](#)

[18 mm painted buttons](#)

[22 mm painted buttons](#)

Hygiene Items

Soldiers were issued a hygiene kit that contained a toothbrush, tooth powder, soap, and a small shaving kit. A reproduction of the case can be bought through Schuster. The actual contents can be found via Red Guard Militaria or various trading pages. Captured items may also be used.

Hygiene Kit

[Schuster reproduction](#)

Eyewear

If you require corrective eyewear, you have three options. This is one of the items that is impossible for anyone else to loan you, so make it a top priority!

1. Contacts

This is the best and cheapest option as eyeglasses were uncommon among the lower ranks. If you cannot wear contacts, keep reading.

2. Metal frame glasses

Typically called "cable temple" or "saddle bridge" glasses. The size of these are a little more forgiving than horn frames due to the springy temples. Look for a pair with round lenses and no nose pads. You will need to add your own prescription to these.

3. Horn or similar material frame glasses

These could be horn, tortoise shell, celluloid, bakelite, etc. Look for a pair with round lenses and no nose pads. You will need to add your own prescription to these.

For some examples, see the next page.

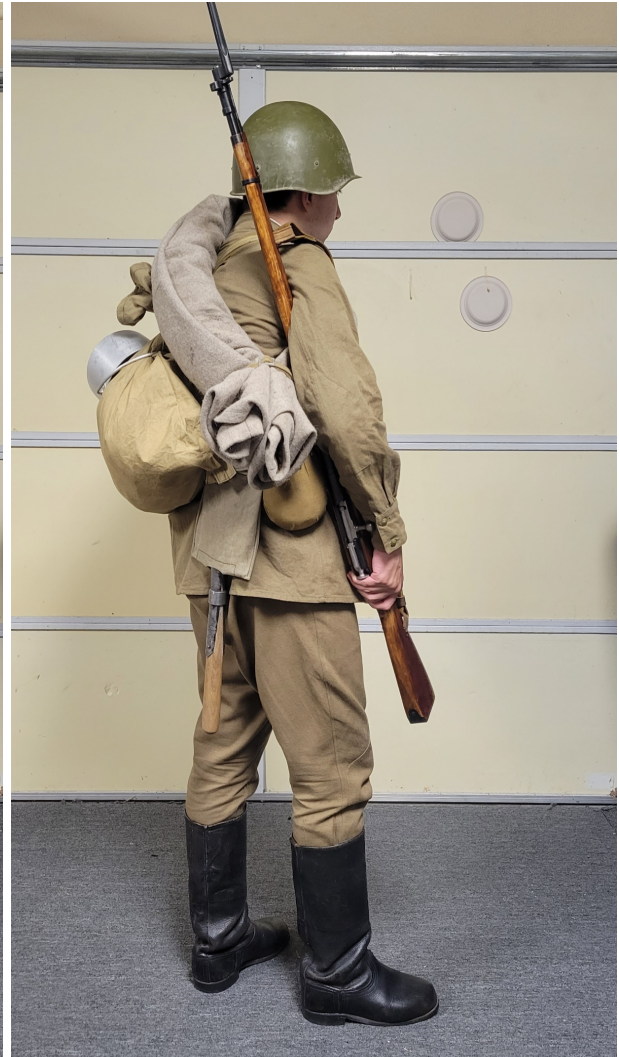


Conclusion

This conclusion will discuss how to wear different pieces of the equipment and the general demeanor of the Soviet infantry.

First, here are two videos. [This video explains how to wear your basic uniform.](#) [This video discusses how to assemble your equipment belt properly.](#)

The following photo sets will demonstrate several examples of dress. Full marching order includes all basic field gear: grenade pouch, shovel, canteen, veshmeshok, mess kit, rolled greatcoat, and helmet.



For missions and trench fighting, the veshmeshok and greatcoat roll can be left behind.



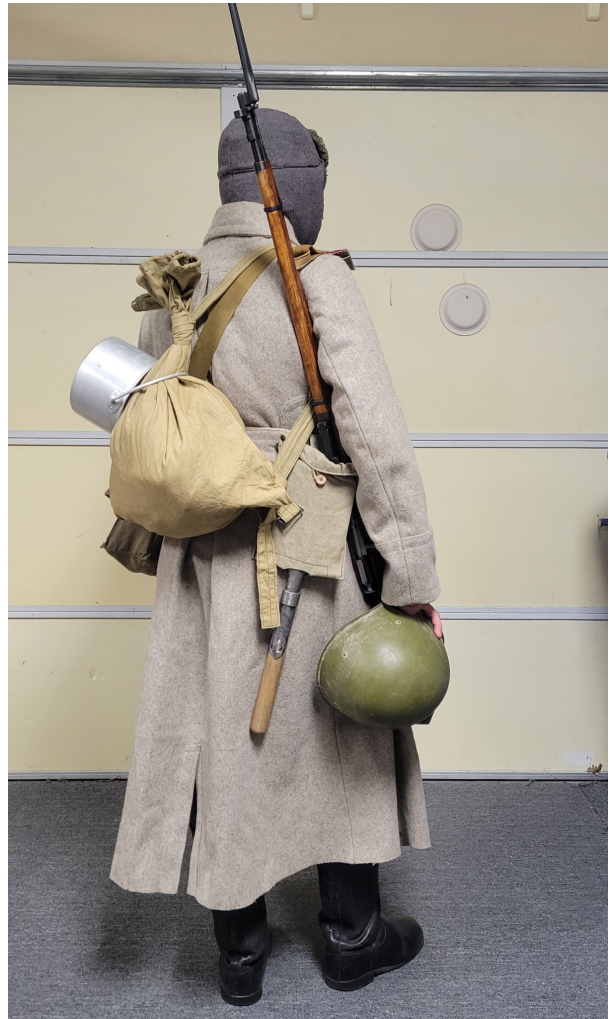
For garrison, work, or guard duties, and during formation, the helmet may be left behind.



Walking-out dress consists of just your base uniform, with no other equipment. Note how the extra material of the tunic is pleated at the soldier's back, to keep a sharp appearance.



During cold weather, soldiers wore their greatcoats and ushanki. Note that the ushanka may only be worn with the flaps down if the temperature is under -1°C (30°F).



This concludes the 1943-1945 impression guide. We hope that you found this guide informative and helpful. If you have any further questions, please feel free to message us on Facebook. We hope to see you at one of our events soon. *Za rodinu!*