
Distinguished Service Order (DSO)



Awarded for meritorious or distinguished service by officers of the armed forces during wartime, typically in actual combat, serving under fire, and usually awarded to those above the rank of captain. Until 1943, the recipient must have been mentioned in despatches by the commander-in-chief of the Army, or admiral of the Navy.

Between 1914 and 1916, the DSO could also be awarded to staff officers when they were not under fire or in contact with the enemy, but by 1917, it was once more restricted to those who had served in the presence of the enemy. On 23 August 1916, a warrant allowed a bar to be awarded as a way of formally recognising further acts of merit.

First established

By Queen Victoria, 6 September 1886 ([Gazette issue 25641](#)): 'We have instituted and created and by these presents, for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, do institute and create a new Naval and Military Order of Distinction.'

The first DSOs were awarded on 25 November 1886 ([Gazette issue 25650](#)).

Military Cross (MC)



Awarded for an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land, to captains or officers of lower rank up to warrant officers. (NCOs or other ranks instead received the Military Medal.)

First established

By King George V, 28 December 1914, 'We are desirous of signifying Our appreciation of such services by a mark of Our Royal favour We do by these Presents for Us Our heirs and successors institute and create a Cross to be awarded to Officers whose distinguished and meritorious services have been brought to Our notice.' ([Gazette supplement 29024](#))

Mentioned in Despatches (MiD)



British commanders-in-chief of a theatre of war or campaign were obliged to report their activities and achievements to the War Office in the form of despatches, which were published in The Gazette. Many attached lists of men deemed worthy of a mention, though text explaining the precise reason why a particular individual was chosen is uncommon. Some were mentioned on multiple occasions.

To be mentioned in despatches can be a condition of receiving certain decorations. Though not a medal, for actions during WW1, soldiers were entitled to receive a certificate and wear a decoration of a spray of oak leaves in bronze (instigated in an Army Order on 12 January 1920), and to be displayed on the Victory Medal.