

## U. S. Army Marksmanship Qualification Badges, 1921 to Present



**US Army Qualification Badges, 1921 to present. Left to Right the badges were for: expert, sharpshooter, and marksman. All-silver colored badges like the expert badge shown, were widely worn from 1921 but were not official until 1991. At least one weapons bar should be worn at the bottom of each badge.**

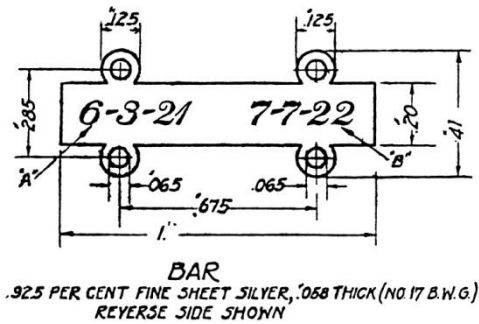
Mr. Arthur E. DuBois designed the three “badges for marksmanship and gunnery qualification” in June 1921, and the War Department announced them in circular 182 the next month. During the 1930s and early World War II many soldiers wore these in bright silver color even though the regulations called for a dark finish with the highlights burnished in bright silver. The army finally gave in to the soldiers’ constant demand for bright colored badges and Military Standard MIL-B-3628/14G allowed for a bright finish starting in April 1991.

A soldier could qualify with an appropriate artillery weapon and become a “gunner” (expert gunner, first-class gunner, or second-class gunner). Sometimes the title gunner included proficiency in tanks, machine guns, trench mortars, submarine mines, and even searchlights.

In June 1922 Congress provided that a soldier who qualified with his primary weapon could receive extra pay. Under some circumstances soldiers could qualify with other than their primary weapon and wear the appropriate bar on their badge, but they could not draw any proficiency pay for these other weapons.

In 1923 extra qualification pay varied from \$1 to \$5 each month, depending on the shooter’s skill, appropriations, and army regulations. In 1933 the army added aerial machine guns and aerial bombs to the weapons that rated extra pay. Mainly officers qualified for these two bars, but they could not draw additional pay. The few enlisted pilots who qualified could earn their pay through aerial qualification. In 1941 the army ended additional marksmanship pay in the interest of increasing a soldier’s skill during wartime training.

Initially the army provided for a weapons bar to show annual qualification, then for the second and third qualifications, to have the requalification date engraved on the bar’s reverse. A fourth qualification rated a second bar and the engraving process went on that bar for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> requalification. This processing of adding a bar for each three requalifications continued through World War II although few soldiers took advantage of this measure. Finally AR 600-70, covering marksmanship badges, in the April 1948 edition, failed to mention the requalification and limited soldiers to a single bar for each weapon. This practice has continued.



Left: Reverse of a qualification bar with requalification dates, as shown in an official War Department drawing. Center: An actual badge with the last bar engraved with requalification years. Right: Front of the badge shown in the center.

### Prescribed Qualification Bars, 1921-2005.

Bar Inscription	Dates of Authorization (per Uniform Regs or changes)	Notes
A A ARTILLERY	April 1948–Present	β
AERO WEAPONS	June 1974–Present	
AERIAL BOMBER	December 1926–April 1948	§
AERIAL GUNNER	December 1926–April 1948	
ARMORED CAR WEAPON	November 1931–November 1941	Never appears on price lists.
ANTI-TANK	June 1942–April 1948	Prescribed by Circular 207, 1942
AUTO RIFLE	July 1921–Present	July 1923 circular states all enlisted men qualifying with automatic rifle will receive the RIFLE bar. Current criteria not clear.
BAYONET	November 1924–Present	On price list, June 1924. § β
CARBINE	June 1942–Present	First appears on price list August 1943.
COAST ARTY	July 1921–February 1958	Coast Artillery dissolved, 1950.
C W S WEAPONS	November 1924–April 1948	CWS = Chemical Warfare Service. On price list, June 1924.
FIELD ARTY	July 1921–Present	
FLAME THROWER	April 1948–Present	M-1 Flame-thrower introduced in 1941. β (Flame throwers replaced by disposable flame weapon c. 1970, the year of the last authorized course.)
GRENADE	July 1928–Present	Not on price list until 1930.
INF HOWITZER	July 1921–June 1942	Still on August 1943 price list.
MACHINE GUN	July 1921–Present	
MACHINE RIFLE	November 1924–April 1948	On price list, June 1924.
MINES	July 1921–Feb 1958	For submarine mines for harbor defense.
MISSILE	February 1958–Present	β
MORTAR	April 1948–Present	

<b>PISTOL</b>	July 1921–September 1922 and April 1948–Present	Between these two dates, <b>PISTOL–D</b> and <b>PISTOL–M</b> authorized.
<b>PISTOL–D</b>	September 1922–April 1948	For dismounted qualification.
<b>PISTOL–M</b>	September 1922–April 1948	For horse-back (mounted) qualification.
<b>RECOILLESS RIFLE</b>	April 1948–Present	Training initially prescribed, 1945. β
<b>ROCKET LAUNCHER</b>	April 1948–Present	Training initially prescribed 1942. β
<b>RIFLE</b>	November 1924–Present	Initially on price list, June 1924.
<b>RIFLE–A</b>	July 1921–November 1924	
<b>RIFLE–B</b>	July 1921–November 1924	
<b>RIFLE–C</b>	July 1921–November 1924	
<b>RIFLE–D</b>	July 1921–November 1924	
<b>SMALL BORE</b>	June 1930–August 1933	Starting in 1926, cavalry and infantry recruits were required to fire for qualification with small bore rifle.*
<b>SMALL BORE MG</b>	November 1941–April 1948	*
<b>SMALL BORE PISTOL</b>	August 1933–Present	*
<b>SMALL BORE RIFLE</b>	August 1933–Present	*
<b>SUBMACHINE GUN</b>	November 1931–Present	Not on price list until June 1935. At that time, the note appeared that the price will be determined once it is purchased. Actual price not listed until 1940.
<b>SWORD</b>	April 1922–November 1940	Starting in 1935, price lists have note “until exhausted.” The August 1943 price list shows note “Price to be determined when manufactured.”
<b>TANK WEAPONS</b>	November 1924–Present	On price list, June 1924
<b>T D 37 M M</b>	June 1942–April 1948	TD stands for Tank Destroyer.
<b>T D 57 M M</b>	June 1942–April 1948	
<b>T D 75 M M</b>	June 1942–April 1948	
<b>T D 76 M M</b>	Dec 45–April 1948	
<b>T D 90 M M</b>	Dec 45–April 1948	
<b>T D 3 INCH</b>	June 1942–April 1948	
<b>60 M M MORTAR</b>	June 1942–April 1948	
<b>81 M M MORTAR</b>	June 1942–April 1948	

Notes: Data in the table is summarized from uniform regulations, training regulations, Circular 207 of 1942, and price lists.

\*Annual price list issued in May 1934 states small bore bar to be issued, “until exhausted” but new bars (Small bore MG, Small bore pistol, and Small bore rifle) do not appear on price lists until June 1935. The price lists for 1936 and 1937 show small bore bar to be issued in place of small bore rifle until exhausted. “Small bore” reappears on August 1942 price list and the August 1942 price lists and later do not list small bore rifle. Small bore MG, small bore rifle, and small bore pistol added to official drawing in 1934.

§ Only expert qualification authorized with this badge.

β Listed in regulations near the end of the 20th century, but correspondence at that time with appropriate US Army schools, indicates there was no authorized course and has not been for many years.

Many bars exist that are not on the above table. Various manufacturers made these unofficial bars out of ignorance, to satisfy military schools and others using similar badges, or in a simple attempt to sell extras to soldiers.



Left: Four different colors of the post-1948 PISTOL qualification bar. Right: three of the authorized style of tank destroyer qualification bars while the bar with just "37 MM" does not meet army regulations.



A few samples of the many unauthorized bars that have been made are at the left. Some are somewhat similar to prescribed bars.

A typical badge was manufactured in seven steps, as shown and described below.



Top Row—Step 1: A blank is made. Step 2: The first striking. Step 3: The second strike, which includes creating the maker's mark on the reverse. Bottom Row—Step 4: Trim. Step 5: 1st piercing. Step 6: 2d piercing. All that is left is to add the pin on the reverse, the 7th step.

Between the world wars some badges were made with the target rings struck from a second piece of metal and then applied. This provided a three-dimensional look and feel. Two such examples are show below.

