



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Gaiters

Gaiters, formally called “anklets”, were part of a Canadian soldier’s uniform during the Second World War. Made of heavy cotton, they held the bottom of the trouser legs in place against the top of the boots. They also helped keep out dirt and water.

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Gaiters © Canadian War Museum

Part of the Uniform

Gaiters, also called “anklets,” were used by Canadian forces during and after the Second World War. As a standard part of most army

uniforms, they were worn and used in Canada and many other locations around the world.

A Replacement for Puttees

Gaiters largely replaced the puttees worn during the First World War and up to 1939. Puttees were strips of cloth that were wrapped around the lower leg in a spiral pattern, from the ankle to below the knee. Puttees were still worn with some uniforms during the Second World War, especially when soldiers wore shorts.

Gaiters were worn with **battle dress**, on almost all occasions. They were meant to be worn with ankle boots, not with shoes or with high-top boots. They secured the bottoms of trouser legs to the tops of the ankle boots, and helped to keep out dirt and water.

What is it made of?

Gaiters were made of the same **cotton webbing** worn by soldiers to carry equipment, weapons and supplies. These examples are part of what was called Pattern 1937 Webbing, which was introduced by Britain in 1937. The Canadian Army began to use it in 1939, at the start of the Second World War.

Because gaiters were easy to make, they were manufactured in many countries, including Canada. At first, the buckles and tabs fastening the gaiters were made of brass. This was sometimes replaced by steel, helping to save brass for other uses, such as ammunition.

The examples in the Discovery Box are replicas of an early version. They have cotton straps, with brass buckles and strap ends, and no leather reinforcements.

Did You Know?

The Royal Canadian Navy also used gaiters with some uniforms. They were often worn by sailors performing guard and security duties on shore.

Vocabulary

Battle Dress:

The standard uniform for personnel in the Canadian Army during the Second World War.

Cotton Webbing:

Strong and wear-resistant cotton fabric woven into strips or narrow sheets. It was used for belts, bags, straps and many other kinds of military equipment.