

# Tell a Story with Military Medals

*Tell a person's story by framing relics of their military past.*

**F**rames for war medals and associated memorabilia are always precious and deeply personal to their owners. Each piece is unique, so why not create a frame design that is equally unique? Try to create a story with each of your designs, and make it even more interesting by using different levels within the frames.

## Inside the Frame

Starting with the background as a base, are there any old letters which can be incorporated into the design? Old letters can be scanned and printed onto 100 percent cotton with archival inks to create an interesting base. If the letters are only one or two pages long, print multiple copies. The printed copies can be cut and glued, while the original letters can be returned to their owners for safe keeping.

Alternatively, old newspapers relevant to the date, conflict, or town are also a great way to bring the story together. Original newspapers can be purchased online at [anydate.com](http://anydate.com), [rarenewspapers.com](http://rarenewspapers.com), and [paperworld.com.au](http://paperworld.com.au). If possible, try to purchase a newspaper that includes an article or announcement with the



name of the soldier or individual being commemorated.

Dry mount or glue the copied letters or newspapers into place onto a 100 percent cotton rag matboard. Randomly bend up the corners up on a couple of pages to make them look more authentic.

If you have lots of small items to incorporate into the frame, try grouping two or three of them together onto a mount made from suede matboard. The easiest way to make an attractive mount is to cut a mat opening (or two, for a double mount effect) from a small piece of suede matboard (suede face-down in the cutter) and use the fallout. The outside edge of the fallout will be crisp and sharp, with the bevel sloping towards the back. If you are cutting the fallout on a CMC, try curving the corners for added interest.

Attach the items to the mounts by using Mylar mounts or strips cut to size, hand-stitch-

*A photograph, three medals, and a few other memorabilia were all that was needed to build this eye-catching shadowbox display.*



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Mount original newspaper articles onto cotton rag matboard to add a sense of place to your frame design.

ing with fishing line or cotton thread, plastic-covered wire, or magnets, depending on the items to be mounted. In the interest of preservation, it's important not to use glue, double-sided tape, or staples on valuable items. There is always a way to mount items safely, and if you're unsure, thegrumble.com is a good resource for beginner and expert framers alike.

Old photographs look wonderful finished inside a small "photo frame." Copying the original photograph is recommended. A small photo frame look can be created by using a 1/4" to 3/8" wide decorative fillet cut in reverse to surround a matboard which has been cut to size. It doesn't need to be glazed because it will be housed inside the larger outside frame.

Arrange the mounts and photo frame over the top of the background and secure with white glue. Add depth by gluing small pieces of foam board onto the backs of the mounts.

## The Outside Frames

Choose an inner frame that is deep

enough to house all the items safely, ensuring they won't touch the glazing product. "Shadowbox frames" are most suitable as they are deep, they are designed to draw the eye inward, and they can be painted or covered in fabric to match.

Place the glazing product over the top of the inner frame and then finish with an outside frame cut to size. Timber frames with gold always create a formal look, which is ideal for special framing projects.

## Selling Shadowboxes

An eye-catching display on your shop wall or featured in your window will always draw attention and get your clients thinking creatively. Commemorative frames are often an emotional purchase, so be mindful to be sensitive and not to be too pushy or try to hard sell.

Many years ago, I purchased a photo of a soldier which was being sold on eBay for 99 cents. I felt so sad that a soldier, each one of them so brave and courageous, could be forgot-

ten and his picture thrown away. I felt compelled to buy it and do something special to commemorate him, even though I had no idea who he was.

The newspaper background I chose for his frame was the Adelaide Advertiser, the one on the day that WWII was declared in Australia. I could tell by his uniform that he was a private in the WWII Australian Army. A couple of replica medals and patches and an engraved brass plaque completed the frame. The plaque read, "Your name may fade, but your sacrifice, integrity, and determination shapes our nation. We stand tall because you did."

My unknown soldier was noticed in my shop window one night by a member of the South Australian Returned and Services League. He called in and wanted to know more. Our discussion led to the photo being published in the local newspaper under the heading, "Who Is He?" Within the week, I received two phone calls confirming that his name was Edward Trevor Martin—and, eerily, that he used to live with his wife and son two streets away from my shop in North Adelaide. Sadly, he was killed in the war at age 25. Thanks to the coverage, though, Martin will not be forgotten and will always have a home in North Adelaide.

The frame is still hanging in my shop today and I display it every Remembrance Day. It starts a conversation, which is so important when talking to clients about telling the stories of their loved ones. You don't need a lot to get started, either: a couple of medals, or a single photo, like in this case, is enough to create something that honors and remembers someone's service. **PFM**