

History of the army grooming standard essay sample

[Government](#), [Army](#)



In the current day one usually expects to see American soldiers with neatly trimmed, short hair, as is the standard of today Army. However many do not realize that there have been radical changes since the American Revolution in these standards. A significant reason being the accessibility and ease at which one, now a day can groom and access a barber. Thinking back to the 18th century there were not as many barbers in the American colonies that meant soldiers usually had rather long hair. General orders did require male soldiers to wear their hair braided up or short, along with an option of wearing long hair that was powdered and dried. This powdered and dried technique was done with a mixture of flour and animal fat, and then tied in a pigtail or queue.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s cavalymen preferred a clubbed hairstyle in which they gathered their hair at the back of the neck and tied it in a firm bundle, then folded it to the side before finally tying it again in a club. This style worked well at staying in place during the excitement and violent action of a mounted fight. In these early republic days beards were forbidden in the Army along with a major change in military hair rules that abolished the queue. This change resulted in strong resentment among soldiers, as they believed that the short hair was equivalent to self-mutilation. In the years just before the Civil War the Army regulations allowed mustaches only for soldiers in cavalry regiments. Though, by the time the Civil War hit hairstyle standards had changed yet again as Army senior officers wore beards and mustaches. While a beard could be worn how a soldier wanted it was preferred that it be kept short and neatly trimmed.

World War I was the first conflict where shaving was required. This was due to a proper fit and seal needed for gas masks along with personal hygiene. Beards were not allowed and hair was not to exceed one inch in length. Perhaps these standards were also implemented to help control lice epidemics. In World War II Army standards stayed relatively the same in that soldiers keep their hair short and fingernails clean. Most soldiers wore a medium-short tapered cut. Beards were still banned but as combat situations dictate sometimes it is hard to shave under fire and thus beards begin to grow. By the late 1960's as long hair again became the civilian trend the Army did not give in unlike the Navy and Coast Guard that went along with changing fashion until 1985. Those in the Army that did not or refused to get haircuts received non-judicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The moustache was very popular in the Army during the 1980's and although still permitted today is not popularly worn.

The present grooming standard seen today is a short hairstyle for men and even favored for women as well. Female hair must not extend beyond the bottom edge of the uniform shirt collar and women with long hair must wear it up, clean, well groomed and neat. Many hairstyles are acceptable as long as they are neat and conservative. Headgear and protective masks must be worn properly and hairstyles that interfere are prohibited. Extreme and unnatural hairstyles and colors are not allowed and in all standards is the responsibility of leaders to use good judgment in determining acceptability of style based upon the overall soldiers' appearance. Soldiers that have hair that does not part naturally may cut a part into their hair that will be one

straight line, not curved and will fall into the area where a natural part would occur. Designs are not allowed to be cut into the hair or scalp. For males, the hair on the top of the head should be neatly groomed with no excessive length or bulk on top. It should present a tapered appearance where the outline of the hair follows the shape of the head. The hair should not fall over the hair or eyebrows when combed and only closely cut hairs may touch the collar.

Males are not allowed to have braids, cornrows, or dreadlocks. Hair that is shaved to the scalp or closely clipped is allowed. Sideburns are to be neatly trimmed, they should not be flared and the bases are to be clean-shaven in a horizontal line not extending past the lowest part of the ear opening. Faces must be clean-shaven when in military clothes or in civilian clothes when on duty. If mustaches are worn they must be neatly trimmed, tapered and not extend past the corners of the mouth or cover the upper lip. Handlebar mustaches, goatees, “ Fu Manchu” and beards are not permitted (unless your special forces). In certain medical circumstance profiles are given to individuals that get bad razor bumps. All personnel will keep fingernails clean and neatly trimmed, males will keep nails trimmed to not extend beyond the fingertips.

Although grooming standards have changed throughout the years, it is important to remember that the Army is a uniformed service where discipline is judged and an individual’s personal appearance plays a substantial role in that because there is an approved uniform. Therefore a neat and well-

groomed appearance of soldiers contributes to the esprit, pride and self-discipline that make up the conservative military image.