

The original medal was a Maltese cross, 31mm in diameter, made of nickel, bearing the words FIDELITY ZEAL OBEDIENCE around the edge with U.S.N. in the center. The reverse was plain and engraved with the recipient's name.



1869 Navy Good Conduct Medal



1884



1886

Navy Good Conduct Medal.

In 1884, the medal was redesigned to be bronze, circular, and 32mm in diameter. The obverse was encircled by a rope with a full rigged ship sailing to the right—the whole resting on an anchor.

The reverse was a plain field circled by the words FIDELITY ZEAL OBEDIENCE. The letters C.S.C., for Continuous Service Certificate, along with the number of the certificate, the Sailor's name, the name of his ship, and the date of expiration of the enlistment were engraved on the reverse.

In 1885, the color of the ribbon was changed to a solid red. In 1886, the suspension of the medal was modified to present a squared-off appearance.



1930s-1961 Navy Good Conduct Medal

In the early 1930s, the bars for subsequent awards were stamped with the number of the award instead of the name of the ship. In the 1950s, the Navy stopped engraving the name of the Sailor on the reverse of the medal and bronze stars replaced stamped bars to denote subsequent awards.



1961-present Navy Good Conduct Medal

The current form of ring suspension was adopted in 1961 and is still in use today. The medal has not changed since 1884 and still bears the words FIDELITY, ZEAL, and OBEDIENCE, on the reverse.



NAVY GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

1869-present

The Navy Good Conduct Medal is second only to the Medal of Honor as being the oldest, continuous, award for enlisted Sailors. The medal was first authorized by Secretary of the Navy A.E. Borie in a Circular Letter dated 26 April 1869.

The medal, then referred to as a good conduct badge, was awarded to a Sailor at the end of his enlistment who was "distinguished for obedience, sobriety, and cleanliness, and ... proficient in seamanship and gunnery." When a Sailor earned three consecutive badges, and if qualified, he was able to re-enlist as a Petty Officer. Initially, Sailors were given another medal for a subsequent award. Later, Sailor's received an engraved bar to be worn with the original medal. The bar was engraved on the front with the name of the Sailor's ship.

From 1869 until 1884, a red, white, and blue ribbon was worn with the Good Conduct Medal. In 1885, the color of the ribbon was changed to a solid red.

During the early 1900s, Sailors received extra pay, 75-90 cents, each month, for each award. The time requirement to earn the medal has varied over the years from simply completing an enlistment, to completing 3 or 4 years of continuous active duty.

In 1962, Good Conduct Award Certificates began to be issued with the medal. Later, in 1963, the time required to earn the medal was changed from three years to four years. However, in 1996, the service required to earn the Navy Good Conduct Medal reverted back to three years of continuous active service—with good conduct.