

## Rules of the Challenge

1. The challenge is initiated by drawing out your coin, holding it in the air or firmly placing it on a table or floor. If you accidentally drop your coin and it makes an audible sound upon impact, then you have just “accidentally” initiated a coin check. This is considered paying the price for improper care of your coin.
2. The response consists of all those persons being challenged drawing out their coin in like manner.
3. If you are challenged and are unable to properly respond, you must buy a round of drinks for the challenger and the group being challenged.
4. If everyone being challenged responds in the correct manner, the challenger must buy a round of drinks for all those people who were challenged.
5. Failure to buy a round is a despicable act and requires that you return your coin to the issuing agency.



### Coin Challenge Defined:

A “coin challenge” consists of a challenge and a response.

### When & Where to Challenge:

The right to initiate a coin challenge is reserved for ANY TIME and ANY PLACE.

### Exceptions:

- There are no exceptions. The rules apply to all Airmen (officer, enlisted, civilian), in or out of uniform/clothes.
- At the time of the coin challenge you are permitted one step and an arms reach to locate your coin. If you cannot reach it, you must pay the price.

### Be A Good Steward:

Losing or otherwise defacing a unit coin through any means purposeful or negligent is strictly forbidden and will invoke a penalty from the issuing agency.

<http://www.airman.af.mil>



The  
CHALLENGE  
COIN

**Do you know all about  
the tradition of the  
Challenge Coin?**



## Purpose

A challenge coin can build unity among an organization, which also promotes morale along the way.

Today, the popularity of the challenge coin has evolved into more than just a mark of representation for military personnel. They are actively traded among active-duty, retired, and civilian personnel within government agencies. It has also become customary to present a challenge coin to dignitaries and special guests to certain locations as a sign of “welcome” and respect. Presidents William Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama minted challenge coins to present to White House guests and diplomats of foreign countries. The tradition has expanded to other countries as well.

Throughout the career of an Airman, there is potential to receive a substantial number of challenge coins. For example, the Air Force holds a coin ceremony for new airmen graduating from Basic Military Training.



## History of the Challenge Coin

During World War I, American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy scions attending colleges such as Yale and Harvard who quit mid-term to join the war. In one squadron, a wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze and presented them to his unit. One young pilot placed the medallion in a small leather pouch that he wore about his neck.

Shortly after acquiring the medallion, the young pilot's aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire. He was forced to land behind enemy lines and was immediately captured by a German patrol. In order to discourage his escape, the Germans took all of his personal identification except for the small leather pouch around his neck. In the meantime, he was taken to a small French town near the front. Taking advantage of a bombardment that night, he escaped.

He succeeded in avoiding German patrols by donning civilian attire and reached the front lines. Eventually, he stumbled onto a French outpost. Unfortunately, saboteurs had plagued the French in the sector. They sometimes masqueraded as civilians and wore civilian clothes. Not trusting the young pilot's American accent, the French thought him to be a saboteur and made ready to execute him. He had no identification to prove his allegiance, but he did have his leather pouch containing the medallion.

He showed the medallion to his would-be executioners and one of his French captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion. They delayed his execution long enough for him to confirm his identity. Instead of shooting him, they gave him a bottle of wine.

Back at his squadron, it became tradition to ensure that every member carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through challenge in the following manner: a challenger would ask to see the medallion; if the challenged could not produce a medallion, they were required to buy a drink of choice for the member who challenged them; if the challenged member produced a medallion, then the challenging member was required to pay for the drink. This tradition continued on throughout the war and for many years after the war until every member of the squadron had passed.

