



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

## Flying Helmet

Aircrew from the Royal Canadian Air Force and other British Empire air forces wore helmets like this during the war. The helmets provided warmth and some protection against impact and sharp objects. They were also designed to support other equipment, including an oxygen mask, headphones and goggles.

Reproduction



Flying Helmet © Canadian War Museum

### War in the Air

Helmets like the reproduction in the Discovery Box were used by aircrew (people who operated aircraft) from the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. Some

aircrew were pilots, while others served in positions such as wireless (radio) operator and air gunner.

## About the Helmet

Aircrew helmets were improved during the war. The example in the Discovery Box is based on a version introduced in 1944.

These flying helmets were made of leather. Leather was windproof, which was important for aircrew in some planes where they were exposed to the wind. Leather also offered some warmth and protection against impact and sharp objects. The helmet has straps behind each ear and on the back, to help hold aviation goggles in place.

Flying helmets were also meant to be used with oxygen masks. Snaps on the wearer's left side and a hook on the wearer's right, held an oxygen mask in place.

Flying at high altitudes meant that people needed extra oxygen to stay alert and perform their duties. The oxygen mask would also often hold a microphone to allow the wearer to communicate by radio or intercom (a kind of onboard telephone).

Rubber cups over each ear held earphone speakers in place. This allowed aircrew to wear headphones to listen to other people. Sometimes they would be people in other aircraft, or on the ground, communicating by radio. At other times, they would be fellow crew in the aircraft, communicating by intercom.

To use the radio or the intercom, the microphone and earphones had to be plugged in with a cord.

## A Symbol of Aviation

Air power was important during the war, and many Canadians served with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Much like the Air Force

Lifejacket, the flying helmet came to symbolize aircrew during the Second World War.

## Did You Know?

Helmets similar to this were used after the war, but were replaced by more modern versions. The newer versions had additional padding and hard outer shells, providing better protection against impact.