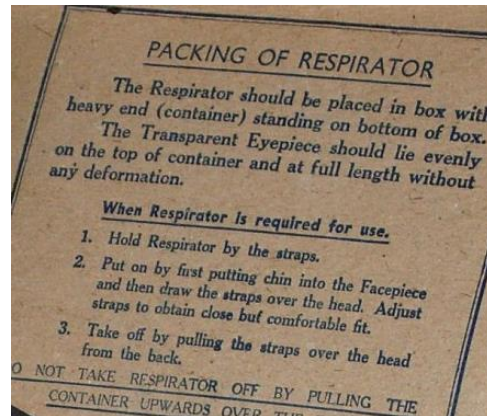


Gas Masks

Everyone in Britain was given a gas mask in a cardboard box, the masks were used to protect people from gas bombs, which could be dropped during air raids. The British people were required to carry these around with them whenever they were outside.



Instructions for the gas masks were written inside the lid of each box.

[Why did people fear that chemical weapons would be used during WW2?](#)

Gas had been used a great deal in the First World War and many soldier had died or been injured in gas attacks. Mustard gas was the most deadly of all the poisonous chemicals used during World War One. It was almost odourless, meaning it had almost no smell, and took 12 hours to take effect. It was so powerful that only small amounts needed to be added to weapons like high explosive shells to have devastating effects.

There was a fear that it would be used against ordinary people at home in Britain, hence why gas masks were issued and the nation was consistently encouraged to carry them.

[Posters](#)

Simple but effective posters were used to encourage people to carry their gas masks. People were even fined if they were caught without their gas mask!



What were gas masks like?

The masks were made of black rubber, which was very hot and smelly! It was difficult to breathe when wearing a gas mask. When you breathed in the air was sucked through a filter in order to take the harmful gas out. When you breathed out the whole mask was pushed away from your face to let the air out. They were extremely uncomfortable to wear and the smell of rubber and disinfectant often made people feel sick.

Different Gas Masks



Adult gas mask



Army gas mask



Child's "Mickey Mouse" mask



Baby gas mask

How were people warned about gas attacks?

To warn people that there was gas about or a possible attack, the air raid wardens would sound the gas rattle. They would then ring a bell to tell people it was all clear.



Luckily, no gas was ever used against the British. This means the effectiveness of these masks and preparation was never put to the test!