How to Install a USGI Rifle Web Sling

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Project Appleseed recommends students bring a USGI cotton web sling for our rifle classes. This guide will walk you through the steps of installing a USGI cotton web sling on any rifle with 1.25" swivels.

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Safety

Safety when handling a rifle is paramount. Before installing a sling on your rifle, make sure your rifle is completely unloaded. Then double check it before starting.

How to Install the USGI Cotton Web Sling

The USGI cotton web sling was a simple, inexpensive wartime economy replacement for the earlier leather M1907 sling. Made of OD green, cotton webbing with basic metal hardware, it was issued widely from 1943 onward for the M1 Garand rifle and remained in use for decades.

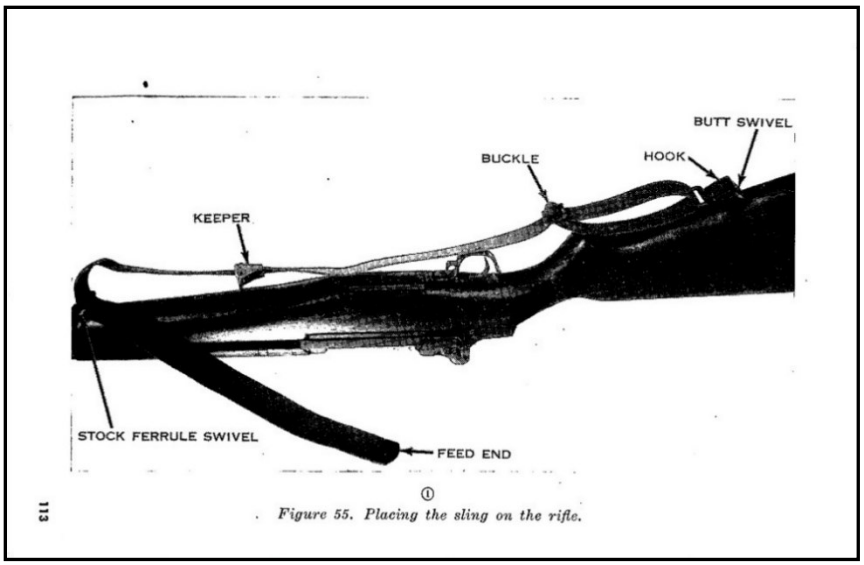
Today, this classic sling is still easy to adjust, effective in all types of weather, and provides great stability for rifle shooting!

Before we begin, let's see what the finished product should look like. Then, then go through the steps to install it, as it was originally designed.

Our pictures show a current production USGI cotton web sling installed on an M1 Garand, but you can install this sling on any rifle with 1.25" swivels on the front and rear.



This diagram from the 1951 Army manual shows the M1 Garand and web sling rigged using the same method.



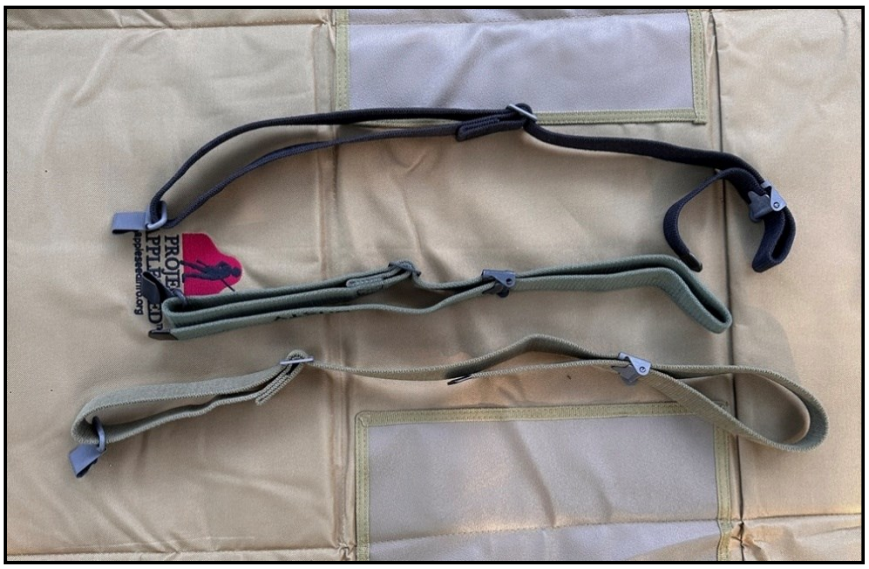
Picture Credit: Departments of the Army and the Air Force. Field Manual 23-5, U.S. Rifle Caliber .30 M1. October 1951.

Examine your new Sling

Current production USGI slings today are commonly available in OD green or black. Depending on who made your web sling, it'll come packaged like the ones below.



Unfold or unroll your sling. Below are several examples.



Anatomy of the USGI Cotton Sling

The USGI web sling is made of the following parts:
• Strap: A single length of 1¼-inch OD green cotton webbing that provides structure and support. The feed end of the strap has a steel tip to prevent fraying.
• Keeper: A cam-type, sliding metal keeper with pointed prongs or tabs on the latch side. It clamps down on the webbing to set the preferred length of the sling for a shooter.
• Hook: A metal hook shaped like a "J" located at one end of the sling. This attaches to the rear sling swivel on the buttstock.
• Buckle: A metal guide that allows a shooter to easily don a loop sling for maximum stability.



These parts allow quick attachment to the rifle's swivels, simple length adjustment, and practical field use without tools. The design emphasizes reliability in adverse conditions. It also has specific orientation for the hardware to avoid snagging on objects and opening accidentally.

Install your Sling

Your reproduction web sling probably came with installation instructions. If you want to install the sling as originally designed for field shooting, the instructions may be **wrong**. Below, find simple steps to install the sling and ensure the hardware is oriented properly.

Step 1. Prepare the sling.

Stretch it out alongside the rifle with the hook-end pointed towards the back of the rifle.



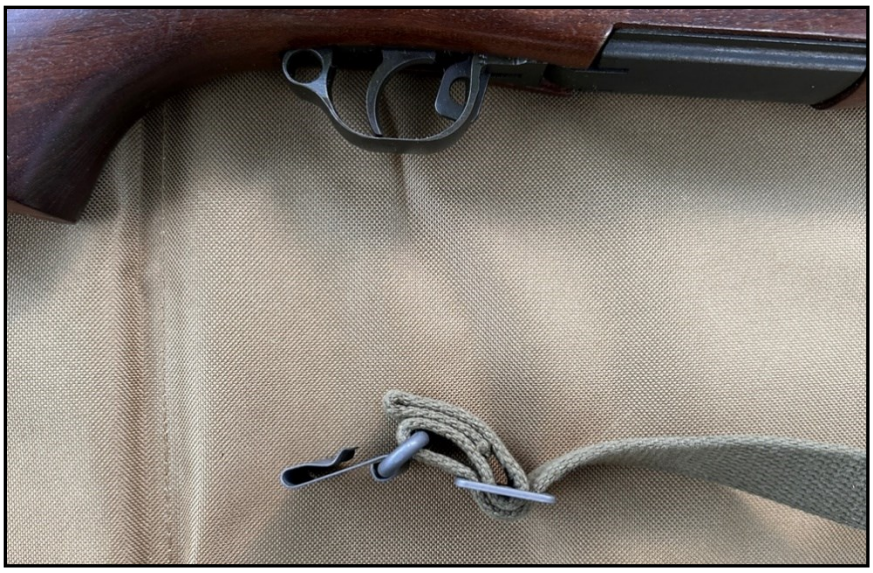


Step 2. Shift the Buckle.

Draw the web strap from the center of the buckle.



Then, then pull the slack through the buckle and slide the buckle down next to the hook.



Step 3. Attach the Hook

Bring the hook to the rear sling swivel.



Slip the hook securely into the rear sling swivel on the buttstock. On a new sling, this might be a tight fit.



Note on hook orientation: The open end of the hook faces inboard (toward the rifle). This orientation helps protect the hook from snagging on gear, clothing, branches, or obstacles during movement.

Step 4. Thread the Strap

Extend the strap from the hook towards the front of the rifle. Ensure there are no twists. If needed, release the keeper. Thread the feed end of the strap into the front sling swivel. Properly done, the end of the strap will be sandwiched between the stock and main body of the sling.



Step 5. Secure the Keeper

Slide the feed end of the strap through the top of the open keeper (rock it gently side-to-side if needed to clear the prongs.)



Pull the tabbed end to achieve the desired overall length. Then, close the keeper firmly. If the sling is new, this may be stiff.



Note on keeper orientation: The points/prongs (latch side) of the keeper face toward the stock. This keeps the mechanism secure and less likely to catch on clothing or branches and open accidentally. The flat side of the keeper faces outward.

Step 6. Final Check.

Inspect the rifle and sling for the following:
- No twists in the webbing.
- The sling lies flat against the rifle.
- The hook's open end faces inboard at the rear swivel.
- The keeper points face toward the stock.
- The entire assembly feels secure with minimal risk of snagging.



The sling is now installed exactly as designed for field shooting and ready for your next Project Appleseed rifle event!

Where to Buy a USGI Cotton Web Sling

Several companies make faithful, quality reproductions of the USGI cotton websling. Beware of very cheap slings because they are often poorly made.

You can find quality slings at online retailers such as Amazon, Brownell's, MidwayUSA, AmmoGarand, and even the Project Appleseed General Store (Sights and Gear Page, https://store.rwvaappleseed.com/page13.html.)

For more information about setting up a rifle, visit the Project Appleseed forum at https://www.appleseedinfo.org/smf/. There are plenty of instructors eager to help new students be successful.