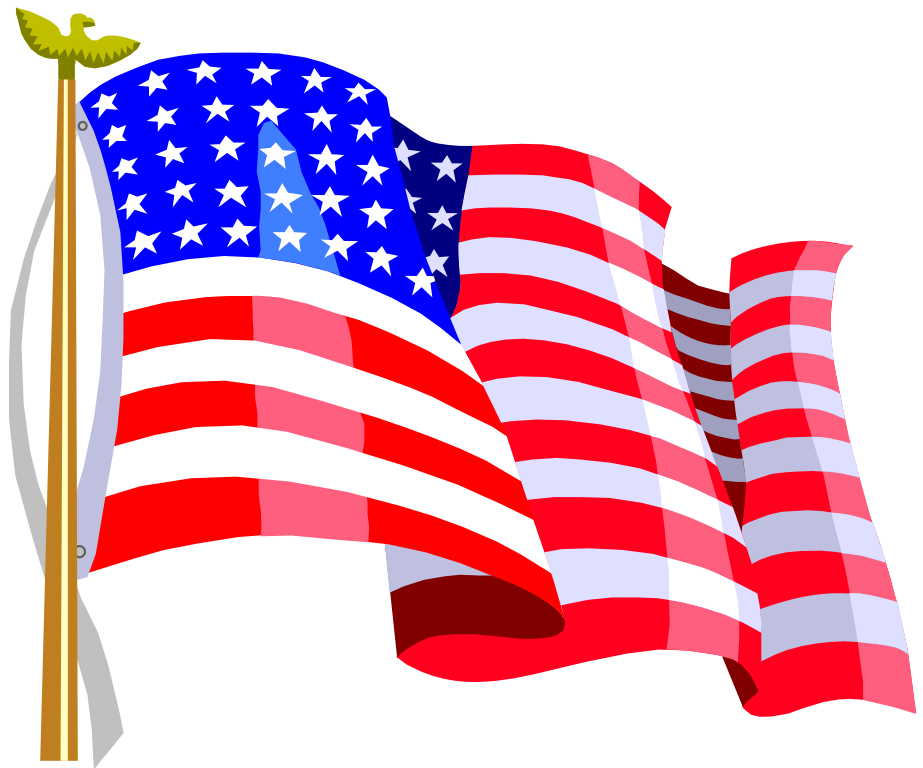

*Troop 1332
Boy Scouts of America
Spring, Texas*

About the Flag of the United States of America

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Evolution of the United States Flag

The First Design

No one knows with absolute certainty who designed the first stars and stripes or who made it. Congressman Francis Hopkinson seems most likely to have designed it, and few historians believe that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first one.

Until the Executive Order of June 24, 1912, neither the order of the stars nor the proportions of the flag was prescribed. Consequently, flags dating before this period sometimes show unusual arrangements of the stars and odd proportions, these features being left to the discretion of the flag maker. In general, however, straight rows of stars and proportions similar to those later adopted officially were used.

Principal Acts Affecting the Flag

The principal acts affecting the flag of the United States are the following:

- On June 14, 1777, in order to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act: "Resolved, That the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation."
- Act of January 13, 1794 - provided for 15 stripes and 15 stars after May 1795.
- Act of April 4, 1818 - provided for 13 stripes and one star for each state, to be added to the flag on the 4th of July following the admission of each new state, signed by President Monroe.
- Executive Order of President Taft dated June 24, 1912 - established proportions of the flag and provided for arrangement of the stars in six horizontal rows of eight each, a single point of each star to be upward.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated January 3, 1959 - provided for the arrangement of the stars in seven rows of seven stars each, staggered horizontally and vertically.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated August 21, 1959 - provided for the arrangement of the stars in nine rows of stars staggered horizontally and eleven rows of stars staggered vertically.



The Pledge of Allegiance

The Original Pledge of Allegiance

On September 8, 1892, the Boston based "The Youth's Companion" magazine published a few words for students to repeat on Columbus Day that year. Written by Francis Bellamy, the circulation manager and native of Rome, New York, and reprinted on thousands of leaflets, was sent out to public schools across the country.

On October 12, 1892, the quadricentennial of Columbus' arrival, more than 12 million children recited the Pledge of Allegiance, thus beginning a required school-day ritual.

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands- one nation indivisible-with liberty and justice for all."

At the first National Flag Conference in Washington D.C., on June 14, 1923, a change was made. For clarity, the words "the Flag of the United States" replaced "my flag". In the following years various other changes were suggested but were never formally adopted.

It was not until 1942 that Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance. One year later, in June 1943, the Supreme Court ruled that school children could not be forced to recite it. In fact, today only half of our fifty states have laws that encourage the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the classroom!

In June of 1954 an amendment was made to add the words "under God". Then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower said "In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war."

The Pledge of Allegiance

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands; one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

It is well to understand the punctuation of the statement; to speak and to teach the proper manner in which to say the Pledge of Allegiance.



The Voice of Patriotism In Writing

I Am The Flag

Ruth Apperson Rous

I am the flag of the United States of America.

I was born on June 14, 1777, in Philadelphia.

There the Continental Congress adopted my stars and stripes as the national flag.

My thirteen stripes alternating red and white, with a union of thirteen white stars in a field of blue, represented a new constellation, a new nation dedicated to the personal and religious liberty of mankind.

Today fifty stars signal from my union, one for each of the fifty sovereign states in the greatest constitutional republic the world has ever known.

My colors symbolize the patriotic ideals and spiritual qualities of the citizens of my country.

My red stripes proclaim the fearless courage and integrity of American men and boys and the self-sacrifice and devotion of American mothers and daughters.

My white stripes stand for liberty and equality for all.

My blue is the blue of heaven, loyalty, and faith.

I represent these eternal principles: liberty, justice, and humanity.

I embody American freedom: freedom of speech, religion, assembly, the press, and the sanctity of the home.

I typify that indomitable spirit of determination brought to my land by Christopher Columbus and by all my forefathers - the Pilgrims, Puritans, settlers at James town and Plymouth.

I am as old as my nation.

I am a living symbol of my nation's law: the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

I voice Abraham Lincoln's philosophy: "A government of the people, by the people, for the people."

I stand guard over my nation's schools, the seedbed of good citizenship and true patriotism.

I am displayed in every schoolroom throughout my nation; every schoolyard has a flag pole for my display.

Daily thousands upon thousands of boys and girls pledge their allegiance to me and my country.

I have my own law—Public Law 829, "The Flag Code" - which definitely states my correct use and display for all occasions and situations.

I have my special day, Flag Day. June 14 is set aside to honor my birth.



Americans, I am the sacred emblem of your country. I symbolize your birthright, your heritage of liberty purchased with blood and sorrow.

I am your title deed of freedom, which is yours to enjoy and hold in trust for posterity.

If you fail to keep this sacred trust inviolate, if I am nullified and destroyed, you and your children will become slaves to dictators and despots.

Eternal vigilance is your price of freedom.

As you see me silhouetted against the peaceful skies of my country, remind yourself that I am the flag of your country, that I stand for what you are - no more, no less.

Guard me well, lest your freedom perish from the earth.

Dedicate your lives to those principles for which I stand: "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

I was created in freedom. I made my first appearance in a battle for human liberty.

God grant that I may spend eternity in my "land of the free and the home of the brave" and that I shall ever be known as "Old Glory," the flag of the United States of America.

The American's Creed

"I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the people by the people, for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a Republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my Country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."

The American's Creed was a result of a nationwide contest for writing a National Creed, which would be a brief summary of the American political faith founded upon things fundamental in American history and tradition. The contest was the idea of Henry Sterling Chapin, Commissioner of Education of New York State. Over three thousand entries were received, and William Tyler Page was declared to be the winner. James H. Preston, the mayor of Baltimore, presented an award to Page in the House of Representatives Office Building on April 3, 1918.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the commissioner of education of the state of New York accepted the Creed for the United States, and the proceedings relating to the award were printed in the Congressional Record of April 13, 1918. It was a time when patriotic sentiments were very much in vogue. The United States had been a participant in World War I only a little over a year at the time the Creed was adopted.



The author of the American's Creed, William Tyler Page, was a descendant of John Page, who had come to America in 1650 and had settled in Williamsburg, Virginia. Another ancestor, Carter Braxton, had signed the Declaration of Independence. Still another ancestor, John Tyler, was the tenth president of the United States.

William Tyler Page had come to Washington at the age of thirteen to serve as a Capitol Page. Later he became an employee of the Capitol building and served in that capacity for almost sixty-one years. In 1919 he was elected clerk of the House. Thirteen years later, when the Democrats again became a majority party, they created for Page the office of minority clerk of the House of Representatives. He held this position for the remainder of his life.

Referring to the Creed, Page said: "It is the summary of the fundamental principles of the American political faith as set forth in its greatest documents, its worthiest traditions, and its greatest leaders." His wording of the Creed used passages and phrases from the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Daniel Webster's reply to Robert Y. Hayne in the Senate in 1830.

The Gettysburg Address

Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863 at the Gettysburg Battlefield

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion--that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."



Commentary on the Pledge of Allegiance

As a schoolboy, one of Red Skelton's teachers explained the words and meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance to his class. Skelton later wrote down, and eventually recorded, his recollection of this lecture. It is followed by an observation of his own.

I - - Me; an individual; a committee of one.

Pledge - - Dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self-pity.

Allegiance - - My love and my devotion.

To the Flag - - Our standard; Old Glory ; a symbol of Freedom; wherever she waves there is respect, because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts, Freedom is everybody's job.

United - - That means that we have all come together.

States - - Individual communities that have united into forty-eight great states. Forty-eight individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose. All divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common purpose, and that is love for country.

And to the Republic - - Republic--a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For which it stands

One Nation - - One Nation--meaning, so blessed by God.

Indivisible - - Incapable of being divided.

With Liberty - - Which is Freedom; the right of power to live one's own life, without threats, fear, or some sort of retaliation.

And Justice - - The principle, or qualities, of dealing fairly with others.

For All - - For All--which means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.

And now, boys and girls, let me hear you recite the Pledge of Allegiance:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands; one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance: Under God. Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said that is a prayer, and that would be eliminated from schools, too?

Red Skelton



What Do The Colors of the Flag Mean

Some History

"Sentimental writers and orators sometimes ascribe meanings to the colors in the flag. The practice is erroneous, as are statements on this subject attributed to George Washington and other founders of the country. Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress, reporting to Congress on the Seal of the United States, stated: "The colours of the pales [the vertical stripes] are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valor, and Blue, the color of the Chief [the broad band above the stripes] signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice."

"The star is a symbol of the heavens and the divine goal to which man has aspired from time immemorial; the stripe is symbolic of the rays of light emanating from the sun."

Something New

"The placing of a fringe on Our Flag is optional with the person of organization, and no Act of Congress or Executive Order either prohibits the practice, according to the Institute of Heraldry. Fringe is used on indoor flags only, as fringe on flags on outdoor flags would deteriorate rapidly. The fringe on a Flag is considered and 'honorable enrichment only', and its official use by the US Army dates from 1895.. A 1925 Attorney General's Opinion states: 'the fringe does not appear to be regarded as an integral part of the Flag, and its presence cannot be said to constitute an unauthorized addition to the design prescribed by statute. An external fringe is to be distinguished from letters, words, or emblematic designs printed or superimposed upon the body of the flag itself. Under law, such additions might be open to objection as unauthorized; but the same is not necessarily true of the fringe.'"



The National Anthem

The Star-Spangled Banner

Tune: Anacreon in Heaven

Written by Francis Scott Key on September 14th, 1814.

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight'
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming.

And the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen, thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,

As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream;
'Tis the star-spangled banner: oh, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.

No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand,
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Power that has made and preserved us as a nation.

Then conquer we must, when our cause is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust";
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.



Flag Etiquette

Standards of Respect

The Flag Code, which formalizes and unifies the traditional ways in which we give respect to the flag, also contains specific instructions on how the flag is not to be used. They are:

- The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing. It is flown upside down only as a distress signal.
- The flag should not be used as a drapery, or for covering a speakers desk, draping a platform, or for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.
- The flag should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard
- The flag should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, fireman, policeman and members of patriotic organizations.
- The flag should never have placed on it, or attached to it, any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind.
- The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
- When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.
- The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.
- When a flag is so worn it is no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our country, it should be destroyed by burning in a dignified manner.

Dignified Flag Burning

The Flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

Most American Legion Posts regularly conduct a dignified flag burning ceremony, often on Flag Day, June 14th. Contact your local American Legion Hall and inquire about the availability of this service. Many Boy Scout Troops also conduct dignified flag burning ceremonies at special events and also on Flag Day.



Displaying the Flag Outdoors

When the flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a window, balcony, or a building, the union should be at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff.

When it is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag - of a state, community, society or Scout unit - the flag of the United States must always be at the top except that the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for Navy personnel when conducted by a Naval chaplain on a ship at sea.

When the flag is displayed over a street, it should be hung vertically, with the union to the north or east. If the flag is suspended over a sidewalk, the flag's union should be farthest from the building.

When flown with flags of states, communities, or societies on separate flag poles which are of the same height and in a straight line, the flag of the United States is always placed in the position of honor - to its own right.

- The other flags may be smaller but none may be larger.
- No other flag ever should be placed above it.
- The flag of the United States is always the first flag raised and the last to be lowered.

When flown with the national banner of other countries, each flag must be displayed from a separate pole of the same height. Each flag should be the same size. They should be raised and lowered simultaneously. The flag of one nation may not be displayed above that of another nation.

Raising and Lowering the Flag

The flag should be raised briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously. Ordinarily it should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset. It should be illuminated if displayed at night.

The flag of the United States of America is saluted as it is hoisted and lowered. The salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or through the last note of music, whichever is the longest.

Displaying the Flag Indoors

When on display, the flag is accorded the place of honor, always positioned to its own right. Place it to the right of the speaker or staging area or sanctuary. Other flags should be to the left.

The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of states, localities, or societies are grouped for display.

When one flag is used with the flag of the United States of America and the staffs are crossed, the flag of the United States is placed on its own right with its staff in front of the other flag.

When displaying the flag against a wall, vertically or horizontally, the flag's union (stars) should be at the top, to the flag's own right, and to the observer's left.



Parading the Flag

When carried in a procession, the flag should be to the right of the marchers. When other flags are carried, the flag of the United States may be centered in front of the others or carried to their right. When the flag passes in a procession, or when it is hoisted or lowered, all should face the flag and salute.

Saluting the Flag

To salute, all persons come to attention. Those in uniform give the appropriate formal salute. Citizens not in uniform salute by placing their right hand over the heart and men with head cover should remove it and hold it to left shoulder, hand over the heart. Members of organizations in formation salute upon command of the person in charge.

The Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem

The pledge of allegiance should be rendered by standing at attention, facing the flag, and saluting.

When the national anthem is played or sung, citizens should stand at attention and salute at the first note and hold the salute through the last note. The salute is directed to the flag, if displayed, otherwise to the music.

The Flag in Mourning

To place the flag at half staff, hoist it to the peak for an instant and lower it to a position half way between the top and bottom of the staff. The flag is to be raised again to the peak for a moment before it is lowered. On Memorial Day the flag is displayed at half staff until noon and at full staff from noon to sunset.

The flag is to be flown at half staff in mourning for designated, principal government leaders and upon presidential or gubernatorial order.

When used to cover a casket, the flag should be placed with the union at the head and over the left shoulder. It should not be lowered into the grave.



Flag Folding

There is one notable exception to the final statement; the flag of the State of Texas is properly folded into a triangle as is the United States flag. The Texas flag should be folded so that only the blue field may be seen.

As an Army and Navy custom, the flag is lowered daily at the last note of retreat. Boy Scouts also follow this custom when music is available. Special care should be taken that no part of the flag touches the ground. The Flag is then carefully folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, emblematic of the hats worn by colonial soldiers during the war for Independence. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of night. This custom of special folding is reserved for the United States Flag alone.

How to Fold the Flag

Step 1



To properly fold the Flag, begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground.

Step 2



Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.

Step 3



Fold the flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside.



Step 4



Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the flag.

Step 5



Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle.

Step 6



The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner.

Step 7



When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible.



Flag Folding Ceremony

The reader and the color guard should coordinate the ceremony so as to "read briskly" and to fold the flag in a "timely manner". It may be appropriate to substitute the term "Boy Scouts" or "Scouting" in lieu of the Armed Services, Army, Navy, etc.

The it is recommended that the reader should not be the same person directing the flag ceremony.

The flag folding ceremony described by the Uniformed Services is a dramatic and uplifting way to honor the flag on special days, like Memorial Day or Veterans Day, and is sometimes used at retirement ceremonies.

Here is a typical sequence of the reading:

(Begin reading as Honor Guard or Flag Detail is coming forward).

"The flag folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our country was originally founded. The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing the states our veterans served in uniform. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted when draped as a pall on a casket of a veteran who has served our country in uniform.

In the Armed Forces of the United States, at the ceremony of retreat the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's honored dead. The next morning it is brought out and, at the ceremony of reveille, run aloft as a symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the body.

(Wait for the Honor Guard or Flag Detail to unravel and fold the flag into a quarter fold--resume reading when Honor Guard is standing ready.)

The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.

The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world.

The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance.

The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong."

The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered in to the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on mother's day.

The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.



The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God we Trust."

*(Wait for the Honor Guard or Flag Detail to inspect the flag-
after the inspection, resume reading.)*

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington and the sailors and marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges, and freedoms we enjoy today."



The Federal Flag Code

The Federal Flag Code prescribes the proper display of and respect for the United States Flag. Each state has its own flag law. Here is the code in its entirety (PUBLIC LAW 94 - 344).

A Joint Resolution

To amend the joint resolution entitled "Joint resolution to codify and emphasize existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America".

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the joint resolution entitled "Joint resolution to codify and emphasize existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America", as amended (36 U.S.C. 171-178), is amended --

Section I

That the following codification of existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America be, and is hereby, established for the use of such civilians or civilian groups or organizations as may not be required to conform with regulations promulgated by one or more executive departments of the Government of the United States. The flag of the United States for the purpose of this chapter shall be defined according to title 4, United States Code, Chapter I, section I and section 2 and Executive Order 10834 issued pursuant thereto.

Section 2

(a) It is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaffs in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.

(b) The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

(c) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all weather flag is displayed.

(d) The flag should be displayed on all days, especially on New Year's Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Lincoln's Birthday, February- 12; Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February; Easter Sunday (variable); Mother's Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Independence Day, July 4; Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; Christmas Day, December 25; and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; The birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays.

(e) The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.

(f) The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.

(g) The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

Section 3

That the flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right; that is, the flag's own right, or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

(a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff, or as provided in subsection (j).

(b) The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motor car, the staff should be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

(c) No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy. (See Public Law 107, page 4)

(d) The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.

(e) The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.

(f) When flags of states, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the United States Flag's right.

(g) When flags of two or more nations are displayed, they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in time of peace.

(h) When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extending from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the flag should be hoisted out, union first, from the building.

(i) When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left. When displayed in a window, the flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.

(j) When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.

(k) When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker or to the right of the audience.

(l) The flag should form a distinctive feature of the ceremony of unveiling a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or monument.

(m) The flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. By order of the President, the flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the United States Government and the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, as a mark of respect to their memory. In the event of the death of other officials or foreign dignitaries, the flag is to be displayed at half-staff according to Presidential instructions or orders, or in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law. In the event of the death of a present or former official of the government of any State, territory, or possession of the United States, the Governor of that State, territory, or possession may proclaim that the National flag shall be flown at half-staff. The flag shall be flown at half-staff thirty days from the death of the President or a former President; ten days from the day of death of the Vice President, the Chief Justice or a retired Chief Justice of the United States, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives; from the day of death until interment of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former Vice President, or the Governor of a State, territory, or possession; and on the day of death and the following day for a Member of Congress. As used in this subsection -

(1) the term 'half-staff' means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff;

(2) the term 'executive or military department' means any agency listed under sections 101 and 102 of title 5, United States Code; and

(3) the term 'Member of Congress' means a Senator, a Representative, a Delegate, or the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico.

(n) When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

(o) When the flag is suspended across a corridor or lobby in a building with only one main entrance, it should be suspended vertically with the union of the flag to the observer's left upon entering. If the building has more than one main entrance, the flag should be suspended vertically near the center of the corridor or lobby with the union to the north, when entrances are to the east and west or to the east when entrances are to the north and south. If there are entrances in more than two directions, the union should be to the east.

Section 4

That no disrespect should be shown to the flag the United States of America; the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, State flags, and organization or institutional flags are to be dipped as a mark of honor.

(a) The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.

(b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water,

(c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.

(d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free. Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for covering a speaker's desk, draping the front of the platform, and for decoration in general.

(e) The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a manner as to permit it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged in any way.

(f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.

(g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.

(h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying or delivering anything.

(i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.

(j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, the lapel flag pin being a replica, should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.

(k) The Flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

Section 5

During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.

Section 6

During rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. Men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should render the military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note. When the flag is not displayed, those present should face toward the music and act in the same manner they would if the flag were displayed there.

Section 7

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all", should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag and render the military salute.

Section 8

Any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the flag of the United States of America, set forth herein, may be altered, modified, or repealed, or additional rules with respect thereto may be prescribed, by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, whenever he deems it to be appropriate or desirable; and any such alteration or additional rule shall be set forth in proclamation.

Frequently Asked Questions

On Various and Assorted Topics

You will hear and see differences in flag ceremonies; some are proper, some are not. The questions that seem to be the most popular are listed here.

How many boys does it take to properly raise a flag?

Answer: It usually takes two. One to hold the flag and the other to place the flag on the lanyard or staff. However, with younger Scouts or with a large flag you may need 3 or more.

Does the US flag get raised before the other flags or at the same time?

Answer: In a typical ceremony, where the US flag, the Texas flag and the Troop flag are all raised, the US flag will start to be raised before the other two. You do not have to wait until the US flag is all the way up to start raising the other flags.

When do I salute the flag?

Answer: You begin your salute to the flag when ordered or directed by the person directing the flag ceremony. If no order is given, you should salute as soon as the US flag begins its journey up (or down) the flag pole.

So when do I stop saluting the flag?

Answer: You stop when ordered to or when the flag is at the top of the pole. If you are reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, you keep the salute. If the flag is being lowered, your salute may be dropped as soon as the flag is removed from the lanyard.

Do I have to take my hat off during a flag ceremony?

Answer: Are you inside or outside? If you are inside a building, your hat is already off. If you are outside the building, no, you keep your hat on, at all times. Your hat is part of your uniform and when ever you are outside you should be wearing your hat.

But what if it is cold or raining and the hat I'm wearing is not my official Boy Scout hat?

Answer: Your hat is part of your uniform – whether it is the official Boy Scout hat or any hat designed for cold or for wet weather. What you are wearing becomes part of your uniform. You would keep the hat on. You don't remove other parts of your uniform for any other ceremony, so keep your hat on when outside, any hat.

What if I can't remember all the rules about the flag?

Answer: Don't worry. Few people remember all the rules all the time. When you have questions, or are going to participate in a flag ceremony, use your resources – like this book – and your Boy Scout Handbook. And ask the senior Scouts for help. If in doubt, use common sense.