

OUR FLAG

THE FLAG OF THE *UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

A Guide to Flag Etiquette and the Presentation & Display

Compiled from:

"Your Flag" published by the Boy Scouts of America

"Our Flag" published by the United States Congress

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THE HISTORY OF THE STARS AND STRIPES

The Stars and Stripes originated as a result of a resolution adopted by the Marine Committee of the Second Continental Congress at Philadelphia on June 14, 1777. The resolution read:

“Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation.”

The resolution gave no instruction as to how many points the stars should have, nor how the stars should be arranged on the blue union. Consequently, some flags had stars scattered on the blue field without any specific design, some arranged the stars in rows, and some in a circle.

The United States flag started out with thirteen stars and thirteen stripes, however, on January 13, 1794, Congress changed the flag design by adding a stripe and star when two new states (Kentucky and Vermont) were admitted to the union. This flag had fifteen stars and fifteen stripes. This flag was to remain the official flag of our country from 1795 to 1818. This flag was prominent in many historic events. It inspired Francis Scott Key to write “The Star Spangled Banner” during the bombardment of Fort McHenry; and was the first flag to be flown over a fortress of the Old World when American Marine and Naval forces raised it above the pirate stronghold in Tripoli on April 27, 1805; and it was flown by General Andrew Jackson in New Orleans in January of 1815.

It was realized that the flag would become unwieldy with the addition of a stripe for each new state added to the union, and on April 4, 1818, President Monroe accepted a bill requiring that the flag of the United States have thirteen stripes to represent the Thirteen Colonies, and that a star be added to the blue field for each new state coming into the Union, to be added to the union of the flag on the Fourth of July following its date of admission.

PATRIOTIC CUSTOMS

National anthem; Star Spangled Banner

During the rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention 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 a military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note. *Boy Scouts should render the Boy Scout salute when in full and complete Class "A" uniform. If the scout is in less than complete Class "A" uniform, then he shall stand at attention with his right hand over the heart.* When the flag is not displayed, those present should face the music and act in the same manner they would if the flag were displayed there.

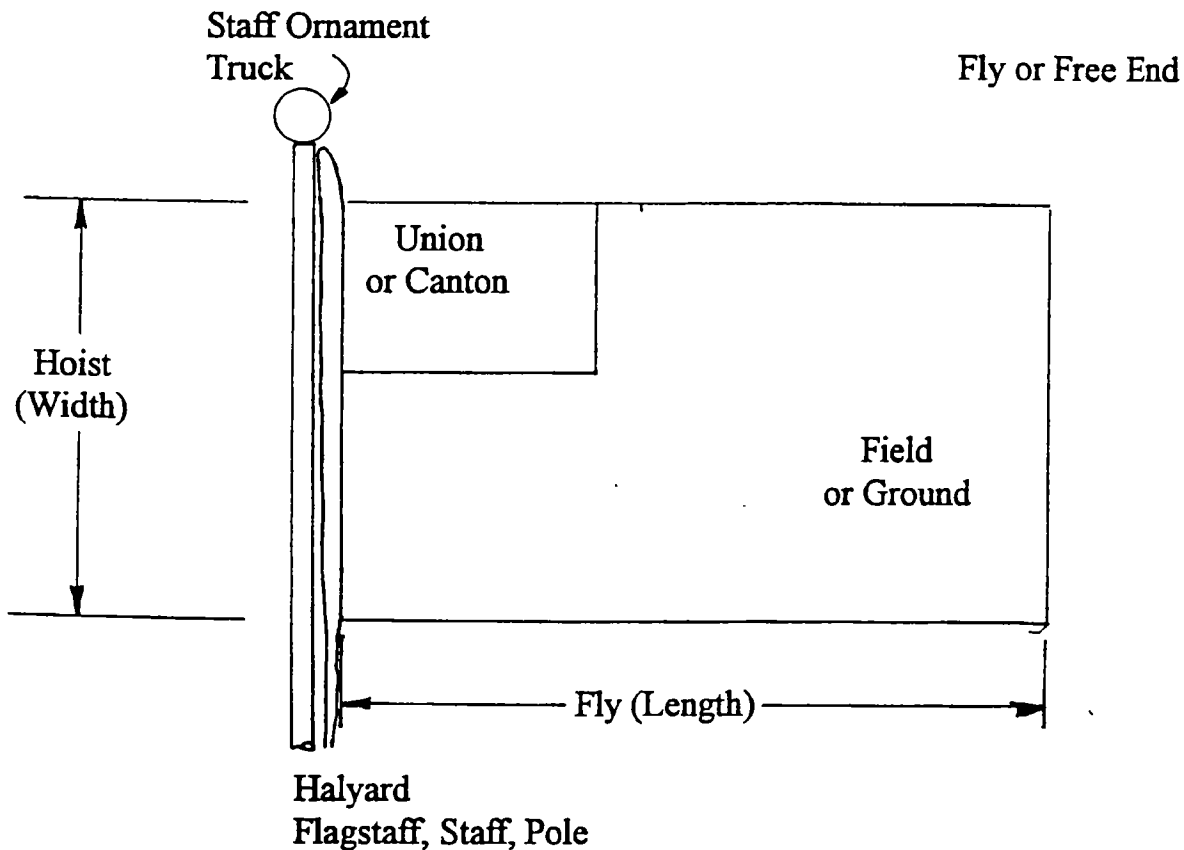
Pledge of Allegiance to the flag

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, 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 a military salute. *Boy Scouts should stand at attention and render the Boy Scout salute when in full and complete Class "A" uniform. If the scout is in less than complete Class "A" uniform, then he shall stand at attention with his right hand over the heart.*

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.

PARTS OF THE FLAG



FLAG TERMS

Canton. Upper corner of the flag's own right. The point of honor. Also called the union.

Ensign. National flag flown by a naval vessel. Same as a standard in some countries.

Badge: Emblem, device, seal, usually on the field.

Field: The ground of each division of a flag. The U.S. flag is divided into red and white striped field, and a white-starred blue field.

Fly: Length of a flag from end to end. Also the end away from the canton, called the free end.

Halyard: Rope for hoisting and lowering a flag.

Hoist: Width of the flag at the canton side. To raise a flag.

Staff: The pole a flag hangs on.

Truck: Top of the flagpole to which the flag is hoisted. Often has an ornament attached to a cap.

Union: Same as the canton.

THE RAISING OF THE FLAG

General Rules for the Raising of the Flag

1. The Flag should be carried by the center person in a three person color guard and by the person on the right in a two person color guard.
2. The Flag should never be allow to touch the ground.
3. The Flag is always raised briskly (quickly) hand over hand, without pause to the top of the flagpole. *Note:* On Memorial Day, or other periods of National grief, when the flag is to be flown at Half-Staff, the color guard briskly raises the flag to the top of the flagpole, pauses momentarily, and then slowly lowers the flag to a position approximately half-way up the pole.
4. **The Flag of the United States is always raised first, by itself, and upon being raised and tied off, then any other flags to be raised are then raised on their flagpoles.**
5. Hoisting the national flag rolled up and secured by the halyards, so it can be “broken out” on reaching the peak, is not proper. The flag should always be hoisted unfurled.

Sequence for the Raising of the Flag

At the morning formation, or whenever the Flag is to be raised, the troop is assembled and prepared for the flag ceremony. The color guard is selected ahead of time and have been briefed on the ceremony.

1. At the appropriate time, the leader in charge will give the command to raise the colors. At that time, a pre-designated person will call out, “*Troop Attention*”.
2. The command will then be given, “*Color Guard Advance*”.
3. Upon reaching the flagpole, the number 2 person will un-wrap the flag while the number 3 person prepares the halyard for the hoisting. The number 3 person needs to make sure that the halyard is free to run to the top. The number 1 person secures the flag’s halyard to the flag grommets, while number 2 person keeps the flag from touching the ground.
4. Once step number 3 is complete, the pre-designated person gives the command, “*Troop Salute*”, followed by, “*Raise the Colors*”. At that point, the number 3 person raises the colors hand over hand briskly and without pause, while the number 1 person guides the rope with the flag close to the pole so that it does not belly out too far from the pole. The number 2 person steps back as soon as the flag flies free and salutes. Number 3 secures the halyard to the pole, then he and number 1 step back and join number 2 in the salute.
5. The pre-designated person then says “*Two*”, all drop the salute, and he commands, “*Color Guard Retreat*”, at which time the color guard returns to the formation.

THE LOWERING OF THE FLAG

General Rules for the Lowering of the Flag

1. The Flag should be carried by the center person in a three person color guard and by the person on the right in a two person color guard.
2. The Flag should never be allowed to touch the ground.
3. The Flag is always lowered slowly (with dignity) hand over hand, without pause. *Note:* On Memorial Day, or other periods of National grief, when the flag is to be flown at Half-Staff, the color guard briskly raises the flag back up to the top of the flagpole, pauses momentarily, and then slowly lowers the flag.
4. **The Flag of the United States is always lowered last, by itself, and upon being lowered and folded, then any other flags flying are lowered from their flagpoles.**

Sequence for the Lowering of the Flag

At the evening formation formation, or whenever the Flag is to be lowered, the troop is assembled and prepared for the flag ceremony. The color guard is selected ahead of time and have been briefed on the ceremony.

1. At the appropriate time, the leader in charge will give the command to lower the colors. At that time, a pre-designated person will call out, "*Troop Attention*".
2. The command will then be given, "*Color Guard Advance*".
3. Upon reaching the flagpole, the number 3 person loosens the halyard and the number 2 person holds the up pull rope. The number 1 person stands in position to retrieve the flag when it comes within reach of the ground.
4. Once step number 3 is complete, the pre-designated person gives the command, "*Troop Salute*", followed by, "*Lower the Colors*". At that point, the number 3 person lowers the colors hand over hand slowly, with dignity and without pause, while the number 2 person guides the rope with the flag close to the pole so that it does not belly out too far from the pole. The number 1 person gathers the flag when he can reach it and steps back while the number 2 person takes it loose from the halyard. Number 3 secures the halyard to the pole while number 1 and 2 folds the flag. The pre-designated person says "*Two*" as soon as the flag reaches the bottom and is being released from the halyard, once the flag is folded, he commands, "*Color Guard Retreat*", at which time the color guard returns to the formation.

SALUTING THE FLAG

When in complete Class "A" uniform, stand at attention and give the Boy Scout salute with your right hand when:

1. The National Anthem is played.
2. The colors are raised or lowered.
3. During the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. As the flag passes by in a parade or review.
5. A flag-draped coffin is passing.
6. When "Taps" is sounded at a funeral.

When attending a parade or where the colors pass in review, you should come to attention and render a salute when the approaching flag is about 12 feet from you and you should not drop the salute until the flag is about the same distance past you (about 12 feet).

Stand at attention facing the flag and salute at the first note of the national anthem. Hold the salute until the last note is played. If there is no flag or you cannot see it from where you are, face the music.

When the colors are being raised, stand at attention facing the flagpole. Come to salute as soon as the flag is started on its way up and hold the salute until it is at the peak. If the flag is to be flown at half-mast, hold the salute until it is lowered to half-mast after being hoisted to the peak.

At the lowering of the colors, stand at attention facing the flagpole. Come to salute at the moment the flag is on the way down and hold the salute until the flag is gathered at the base of the flagpole. If the flag is at half-mast, salute as it is first hoisted to the peak, and hold the salute until it is gathered at the base.

The salute is held during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance as you face the flag.

There are times when a salute to the national flag is neither necessary or feasible. These include:

1. When you are separated from the passing flag by a crowd.
2. If you are performing some duty that requires you to face away from a parade.
3. Pictures of the flag shown on TV or in theaters are not saluted.
4. If you are helping a youngster see over the heads of a crowd.

CARRYING THE COLORS INTO BUILDINGS

1. Care must be taken to avoid hitting doorways or light fixtures with the staff peak.
2. As the colors are angled down to pass through, be careful they do not touch the ground, and be especially careful they are not stepped on.
3. The color guard must enter and walk down the aisle in single file. The national colors must lead the way.
4. Color guards, if covered (with hats on), do not uncover when carrying the colors until they are seated, even if it is a house of worship.
5. The congregation or audience remains standing until the color guard is seated or the colors are at the "order".
6. Leaving the building, the national colors go out first. The audience rises and waits until the color guard has exited.
7. The audience should be requested to stand prior to the entry of the colors and before the colors are retired from the building.
8. The color guard sits in the front row of seats with the national colors to the right of their group.
9. When displayed on a stage, platform, or chancel of a church, the national flag should be on the speaker's right. Any other flag, on his left. This is correct also if the audience or congregation is on the same level as the speaker.
10. Flags displayed in the audience area shall be placed to the audience's right.

VIOLATIONS OF THE FLAG CODE

1. The national flag should **never** be used as part of the covering of a monument at an unveiling, although it may take a prominent part in the ceremony.
2. The flag should **never** be used to cover a table, a desk, or be draped or festooned as a decoration. *The only exception to using the flag as a covering is when laid on the casket at certain funerals.*
3. The national flag should **never** be carried flat in a parade or at any other time. The national flag always should be carried upright on a staff (except when cased or furled or when draped over a casket).
4. The national flag must **never** be draped over the hood or any other part of a vehicle.
5. A color guard **never** executes an about face. To reverse direction, the detail pivots around in a line making a 180-degree turn.
6. The flag should not be used as any portion of a costume or athletic uniform. The wearing of a replica of the U.S. flag to designate this country's representation is permissible.
7. The national flag is **never** dipped at any person, flag, or thing.

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4. Once step number 3 is complete, the pre-designated person gives the command, “*Troop Salute*”, followed by, “*Raise the Colors*”. At that point, the number 3 person raises the colors hand over hand briskly and without pause, while the number 1 person guides the rope with the flag close to the pole so that it does not belly out too far from the pole. The number 2 person steps back as soon as the flag flies free and salutes. Number 3 secures the halyard to the pole, then he and number 1 step back and join number 2 in the salute.
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3. Upon reaching the flagpole, the number 3 person loosens the halyard and the number 2 person holds the up pull rope. The number 1 person stands in position to retrieve the flag when it comes within reach of the ground.
4. Once step number 3 is complete, the pre-designated person gives the command, "*Troop Salute*", followed by, "*Lower the Colors*". At that point, the number 3 person lowers the colors hand over hand slowly, with dignity and without pause, while the number 2 person guides the rope with the flag close to the pole so that it does not belly out too far from the pole. The number 1 person gathers the flag when he can reach it and steps back while the number 2 person takes it loose from the halyard. Number 3 secures the halyard to the pole while number 1 and 2 folds the flag. The pre-designated person says "*Two*" as soon as the flag reaches the bottom and is being released from the halyard, once the flag is folded, he commands, "*Color Guard Retreat*", at which time the color guard returns to the formation.

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