

# Flag Protocol



## & Ceremonies

# History of American Flag



***For more than 200 years, the American flag has been the symbol of our nation's strength and unity. It's been a source of pride and inspiration for millions of citizens. And it has been a prominent icon in our national history. Here are the highlights of its unique past.***

On January 1, 1776, the Continental Army was reorganized in accordance with a Congressional resolution which placed American forces under George Washington's control. On that New Year's Day the Continental Army was laying siege to Boston which had been taken over by the British Army. Washington ordered the Grand Union flag hoisted above his base at Prospect Hill. It had 13 alternate red and white stripes and the British Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner (the canton).

In May of 1776, Betsy Ross reported that she sewed the first American flag.

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."

Between 1777 and 1960, Congress passed several acts that changed the shape, design and arrangement of the flag and allowed for additional stars and stripes to be added to reflect the admission of each new state.

- 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.

Today the flag consists of thirteen horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with 6 white. The stripes represent the original 13 colonies; the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well: Red symbolizes Hardiness and Valor, White symbolizes Purity and Innocence and Blue represents Vigilance, Perseverance and Justice.

# *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."

Francis Bellamy, the author of these words, was an ordained minister, magazine writer, and Freemason who stated that his aim was to say "what our republic meant and what was the underlying spirit of its life." Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance in 1892 as part of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. It was embraced by the nation and almost immediately became a part of the school-day ritual. Bellamy's original text has been altered twice. In 1923, the words "the flag of the United States of America" were substituted for the words "my flag". Congress officially recognized the Pledge in 1942 and added the words "under God" in 1954.

# *American Flag Etiquette*



Federal law stipulates many aspects of flag etiquette. The section of law dealing with American Flag etiquette is generally referred to as the Flag Code. Some general guidelines from the Flag Code answer many of the most common questions:

- The flag should be lighted at all times, either by sunlight or by an appropriate light source.
- The flag should be flown in fair weather, unless the flag is designed for inclement weather use.
- 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 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 any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind placed on it, or attached to it.
- The flag should never be used 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.

# American Flag Display Rules



## Display Outdoors



### 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.



### 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. By "half-staff" is meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff. Crepe streamers may be affixed to spear heads or flagstaves in a parade only by order of the President of the United States.



### Flown on the Same Halyard with Non-Nation Flags

The American Flag 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 right of the flag of the United States.



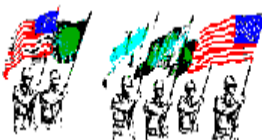
### Suspended Over a Sidewalk

The flag may be suspended 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.



### From a Staff Projecting Horizontally or at an Angle

The flag may be projected from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, with the union of the flag placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff.



### In a Parade with Other Flags

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.



### **With Non-National Flags**

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.



### **With Other National Flags**

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.



### **With Another Flag Against a Wall from Crossed Staffs**

Should be on the right, the flag's own right which is the viewer's left, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.



### **When the flag is displayed on a car**

The staff shall be fixed to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

## **Display Indoors**



### **From a Staff in a Church or Public Auditorium on or off a Podium**

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 (to the right of the audience).



### **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.



### **When displayed in a window**

It should be displayed with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street. When festoons, rosettes or drapings are desired, bunting of blue, white and red should be used, but never the flag.



### **Other than being Flown from a Staff**

The flag should be displayed flat, whether indoors or out. 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.

# Flag Ceremonies



## Honoring the American Flag

The American flag has been known as “Old Glory,” the Stars and Stripes,” and “the colors.” For American citizens, the flag is a powerful symbol of liberty and equal opportunity for all. While flags of other countries often represent a glorious past or are symbol of a royal family, the American flag carries the message of national independence and unity for people originally from many diverse countries. George Washington stated that the stars are from heaven represented by blue and the red represents Britain. Each star represents a state, and the white stripes stand for the liberty of each original colony from Britain.

Flag ceremonies are very often part of larger ceremonies. They are also used to open or to close a troop/group meeting. Learning about the proper way to handle the American flag and to conduct flag ceremonies fosters a patriotic spirit in young people.

At a flag ceremony, you say the Pledge of Allegiance in the presence of a flag. You may also sing a patriotic song and repeat the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

## Salute To The Flag

To salute the flag, stand at attention and place you right hand over your heart. Salute the flag when it is being raised or lowered, when it passes you in a parade, when you recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Salute when you sing “The Star-Spangled Banner,” with or without the flag present.

There is absolute silence from the time the flag ceremony starts until dismissed. The Color guard remains silent from the time they start to walk in until they walk out. **They do not speak or sing with the group, but stay at attention.**

Color guards and the Girl Scout-in-charge may wear white gloves. Red sashes can be worn by color guards around waist, right to left, tie on left. Red sashes worn by flag bearers are worn over shoulder, right to left, tie on left at waist.

A flag ceremony is a way of showing love and respect for one's country. Flag ceremonies may be used for:

- Opening or closing meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, in outdoor settings, in large auditoriums, on stage, even on horseback. All flag ceremonies share one thing in common—respect for the flag.

# Flag Ceremony Guidelines

Keep it simple. Emphasis should be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Ask these questions when planning:

1. Who will carry the flag?
2. Who will be the color guards?
3. Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
4. What song will be sung? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
5. Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
6. After the Pledge of Allegiance, will the Promise and the Law be said?
7. In what order will the parts of the ceremony take place?
8. When will the group practice?
9. Where will the flags be placed at the end of the ceremony?

## Terms Used in a Flag Ceremony

The **color bearer** (or flag bearer) is the person who carries the flag. There is one color bearer for each flag used in the ceremony.

The **color guard** is a team that guards the flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six girls are sufficient.

The **Girl Scout in-charge** (or caller) is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony.

The **standards** are the stands that support the flag. The color bearers place their flags in the standards.



# Basic Flag Ceremony Commands

## Opening Flag Ceremony

Girl Scouts, Attention - *This signals everyone to stand*

Color Guard, Advance - *This signals the color guard to advance with the flags*

Color Guard, Post the Colors - *(Indoors) The Color Guard places the flags in the stands, the American Flag last. (Don't forget the American Flag is always on its own right, this would mean if you stand where the American Flag is going to be posted, facing the audience, and you are the rightmost flag) (Outdoors) The Flag Bearer attaches the flag to the rope and quickly hoists the flag; the American flag is raised first.*

Color Guard, Honor your Colors - *The Color Guard salutes the Flag and then returns to Attention. The Pledge of Allegiance, songs, poems, Girl Scout Promise, is done now.*

Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. . .

Please join me in the Girl Scout Promise . . .

Color Guard Dismissed - *The Color Guard walks to the back of the room, or away from the flagpole.*

## Closing Flag Ceremony

Girl Scouts, Attention - *This signals every one to stand.*

Color Guard Advance - *This signals the color bearers and guards to advance to the flags.*

Color Guard, Honor your Colors - *The Color Guard salutes the Flag and then returns to Attention*

Color Guard, Retrieve the Colors - *(Indoors) The Color Guard removes the flags from the stands, the American Flag first. (Outdoors) The Flag Bearer lowers the flag slowly and with dignity. The Color Bearers fold the flag(s).*

Color Guard, Dismissed - *The Color Guard carries the flag to the back of the room, or carries the folded flag to an appropriate place.*

*Other than saluting the flag immediately after posting, or before retrieving, the Color Guard remains at attention. They do not take place in any singing or speaking.*



## *Arch of Silence*

At your next outdoor event, try having participants walk through an "arch of silence".

Position two scouts at entrance to field or parade ground.

These scouts should be tall enough to be able to raise hands overhead and grasp each other's hands to form an arch.

All other scouts pass through the "arch". They all should be told that once through the "arch", no talking is allowed for the flag ceremony.

Several "arches" may be needed for a large group.

## *Multiple Levels*

Opening: Quiet Sign

*Daisy Girl Scout enters carrying a Daisy Flag*

**Narrator 1:** I am the Daisy Girl Scout Flag. I have watched over the Girl Scouts in blue. I have watched them become Girl Scouts & now they seek the wise old owl.

*Brownie Girl Scout enters carrying Brownie Flag.*

**Narrator 2:** I am the Brownie Girl Scout Flag. I have watched over the Girl Scouts in Brown. I have guided their enthusiasm for three years and now they fly from my arms.

*Junior Girl Scout enters carrying Girl Scout Flag.*

**Narrator 3:** I am the Girl Scout Flag. I have watched over the Girl Scouts in green. For three years I have watched them go and now they step upward to Cadette Girl Scouting.

*Cadette Girl Scout enters carrying the World Association Flag.*

**Narrator 4:** I am the World Association Flag. I watch over my Girl Scouts to appreciate Girl Scouting and Girl Guiding all over the world. They have the same international spirit that made me great. I watch Cadette Girl Scouts grow to be Senior Girl Scouts. Please stand.

*Senior Girl Scout enters carrying United States Flag.*

**Narrator 5:** I am the United States Flag. I watch over Senior Girl Scouts and all Girl Scouts. I can hold me head high when I am with them. I am proud of my daughters. Girl Scouts & guests, the flag of our country. Please say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Close as you like.

## *Unfolding The Flag*

For this ceremony, it is suggested that you begin with the basic flag ceremony up until "Color Guards, Honor your flag". After a hand over heart salute from the Guards, Have the Guards move to the side and ask the audience to sit for the next portion of the ceremony.

Have 5 girls standing in front of the audience, side by side.

The first girl on the left holds a correctly folded flag.

She says:

I hold in my hands a folded flag -- a piece of cloth -- for presentation.

The first girl holds onto the grommet edge of the flag and begins to unfold the flag SLOWLY, passing the rest of the folded flag to the next girl in line. Only the blue union with the stars should be showing.

The second girl says:

I bring to this piece of cloth the color blue. Blue is the color of the sky and the oceans, whose mysteries remind us of a law that goes beyond the law of Man. Blue symbolizes Justice.

The second girl now unfolds another portion of the flag so the third girl may take hold while girls one and two continue their hold on the flag. The third girl unfolds until a portion of the strips are now visible.

The third girl says:

I bring to this piece of cloth the color white. White is the color of bridal gowns and angel wings. White symbolizes purity.

The third girl now unfolds the flag so the fourth girl may take hold. The fourth girl may unfold another fold before saying:

The fourth girl says:

I bring to this cloth the color red. Red is the color of the blood of Americans who died for their country. Red symbolizes valor.

The fourth girl passes the folded portion to the last girl in line. The fifth girl finishes unfolding the flag and will say:

The fifth girl says:

I hold in my hands, not a mere piece of cloth, but a symbol of valor, of purity, and of justice.

All girls should take hold to the top of the flag and raise it so the lengthwise fold will open. A caller or all girls together will now say:

All girls together say:

We hold in our hands the flag of the United States of America. Will the audience please rise and join in the Pledge of allegiance.

From here, continue the ceremony. Have the color guards walk out with the 5 girls and unfurled flag to a back area where the folded flag may be refolded. If a flag on a flag pole was not used to walk in before this ceremony, this flag may be appropriately hung for the meeting.

# *Recipe For An American Flag*

*(a.k.a. Make a Flag Ceremony)*

*In center of stage is a large basket in which a flag is hidden.*

**Narrator:** Will you please rise for the presentation of the colors.

*Girls come in single file, each carrying a component of the flag. They are followed by the Girl Scout flag. Girls stand across the stage behind the basket.*

**Narrator:** Red for valor - for the courage of all women who, with a dream in their hearts, crossed the ocean to begin life anew in a free land. For the bravery of women who, with hope and faith, crossed the prairie and mountains of our vast land. For the steadfastness of these women who, through all adversities, shouldered the country's burdens to emerge as stronger individuals.

*Place red streamers in basket.*

**Narrator:** White for purity - for the integrity of all women whose fortitude wove the strands of diverse cultures into an integral national heritage. For the piety of all women whose faith formed the foundation upon which our country was built and continues to grow.

*White streamers are placed in basket.*

**Narrator:** Blue for justice - for the foresight of all those women who created an atmosphere in which each of their children could develop to their fullest potential. For the perseverance of all those women who contributed their talents to further the development of our country.

*Light blue paper or piece of cloth is placed in basket.*

**Narrator:** Stars for dreams - for the dreams of the future. That the generations of tomorrow may fulfill the promise of the past 200 years, so that the visions of those who came before us will be revitalized and the future will hold forth hope and promise for all generations to come.

*Stars are placed in basket.*

*Pick up flagpole and "stir"*

**Narrator:** Stirring the stories of my stars and stripes, I symbolize the soul of America, her ideas and aspirations, her institutions and traditions.

*Remove the folded flag.*

**Narrator:** This flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the symbol of our unity, our power and our purpose as a nation.

*Two or more girls unfold the flag, attach it to the pole & stand at attention.*

**Narrator:** Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

*All say Pledge of Allegiance*

**Narrator:** All Girl Scouts make the Girl Scout Sign and say the Girl Scout Promise

*All Scouts say Promise.*

**Narrator:** Color guard, post your colors

*Wait for flags to be posted.*

**Narrator:** Color guard retreat.

*Wait for color guard to return to their places.*

Dismiss all.

## *Flashlight Flag Ceremony*

Equipment/People Needed

Narrator (one, or more if your troop is large)

Four Flashlight Bearers (candles may be substituted)

Flag Bearer and Color Guard(s)

*Color Guard advances with Flag and posts Colors. Lights are turned out so that the room is in total darkness. Flashlight bearers turn on flashlights (or light candles) and direct light toward flag.*

NARRATOR: What you see here tonight represents the past, present, and future. The stripes of Old Glory stand for the original thirteen colonies. The stars represent the present 50 states. The light and warmth of the four lights you see shining remind us of the four great freedoms - Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Assembly, Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion. Eliminate any one of these freedoms and our world would become darker and colder. Narrator calls out the four freedoms slowly.

*As each is called a flashlight is turned off until the room is again in total darkness.*

1. Freedom of the Press
2. Freedom of Assembly
3. Freedom of Speech
4. Freedom of Religion

NARRATOR: In this world of potential cold and darkness, of rule by a few, stands the United States of America. Here the Four Freedoms do exist and are an example of warmth and light for all. Will you please join us in the salute to our flag?

*Turn flashlights back on and direct light toward flag.*

All join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

# *Flag Replacement Ceremony*

You'll have an old tattered flag and a new flag (one that's been flown over the nation's Capitol), a certificate. The principal should be there along with the Leaders and Girl Scouts.

*Girl Scouts and Leaders advance to the stage. Two Girl Scouts are holding the old flag draped over their arms (folded lengthwise). One Girl Scout has the new flag and another Girl Scout has the framed certificate. Four to six additional Girl Scouts also march up to the stage to fold the flag later.*

Leader: (to School and principal): Our flag is the symbol of our country. Have you ever stopped to think what the flag really means? As you look at your Flag, remember that it is red because of the blood of the men and women who have died to keep our country free. It is blue because of the true blue loyalty of its defenders and people. It is white to symbolize liberty - our land of the free. And the stars are symbols of our states, and our hope for a bright and shining future.

*(turn to principal) {name}, please come forward.  
(Scouts bring old flag to the front)*

Leader: We have an old friend here who has fulfilled his duty to our country. The flag which has proudly waved in front of {town} for many years is now worn and faded, and we are here to retire it with honor. Please rise and be respectful as the Girl Scouts fold this flag for the last time.

*(Girl Scouts fold flag)  
(music teacher leads school in "My Country 'tis of Thee')  
(One Girl Scout holds the folded flag as the Honor Guard steps back)*

Leader: This proud symbol of our country will be retired officially by our Girl Scouts at a later date.

*(Scouts bring forward new folded flag and certificate)*

Leader to principal: Congress has decreed that the American Flag fly over each school. I am honored to present to you and the citizens of {town's} Elementary school, a new flag. This flag is very special. It has been flown over the Capitol Building in Washington DC in honor of {town's} Elementary school, as a symbol of the loyalty and faith in the United States of America. My hope is that it will now fly proudly over {town}, and that all of our students, teachers, and parents will remember the meaning of our flag each time that they pass by.

Leader: *(Present new flag to principal)* Please accept your new flag and fly it high and well, with respect and honor.

*(Music teacher leads school in The Star Spangled Banner while Honor Guard retreats)*

# Flag Folding



As an Army and Navy custom, the flag is lowered daily at the last note of retreat. 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.

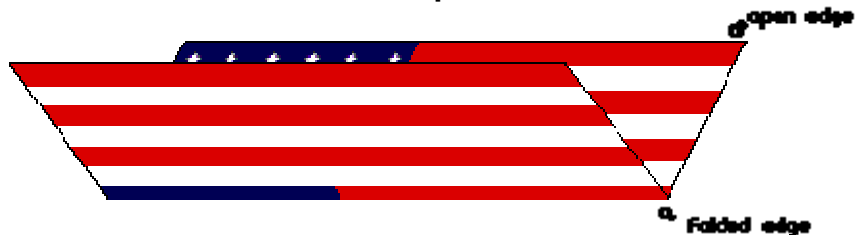
## How to fold the Flag

### 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.

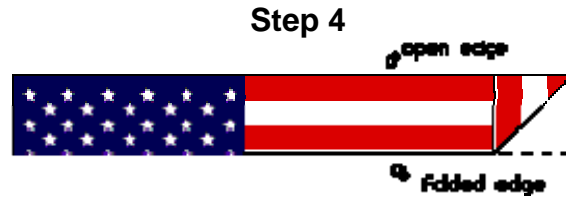
### Step 2



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



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



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



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



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



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



# Flag Folding 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 Flag Folding Ceremony above is from the US Air Force Academy



# Flag Retirement Ceremonies



## Retiring a Worn American Flag

Retiring an American Flag is a special ceremony that ends with burning the flag and disposing of the ashes in a respectful manner.

## Which is Really the Correct Way?

The subject of flag retirement ceremonies sparks heated debates every year in scouting circles. Like discussions of religion and politics, the flag and flag retirements evoke strong feelings in a lot of people. Many are willing to tell you that their way is the only way. So who's to say which elements of flag retirement ceremonies are correct and which are not? Who is the "authority" on flag retirements?

As Girl Scout, we are bound by the authority of US Flag Code. Regarding flag retirement, US Flag Code<sup>1</sup> simply reads; "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."

This simple statement being the only official guideline, many misconceptions are revealed.

## Common misconceptions

Many well intended and patriotic people have deep seated ideas about how flag retirements are suppose to be done. Most of their ideas make wonderful flag retirement ceremonies, but are not necessarily fact when it comes to what **MUST** be done. Again, the simple statements of the US Flag Code are the only rules we must follow. That said, the following common misconceptions are disproved.

## Misconceptions:

- **The flag must be cut up before retiring.**  
The Flag Code does not say anything about cutting up the flag.. The only conclusion that can be drawn then is; you may cut or not cut the flag as long as the flag is retired in a "dignified" manner.
- **If the flag is cut, it must be done with scissors, not ripped or cut with a knife.**  
If this is your custom, it is great that you have such respect that you have developed specific customs for flag retirements. Be aware that others may have a custom that says the flag should only be ripped, not cut. Also know that there is a number of very patriotic people who feel that cutting or ripping the flag in any manner is a desecration of the flag and they will be biting their tongues hard as you do so. (If you do cut the flag, perhaps you may want to consider doing this prior to the ceremony in consideration of those who might find this part traumatic.)

- **Only certain organizations are authorized to retire flags.**  
A number of people believe that only veteran organizations, military organizations, and scouting groups can or should retire flags. However, any organization or individual may retire a flag in a ceremony or in their backyard by themselves. (Common sense may tell you that if you do it by yourself that maybe you should do it in private so others who happen to see don't mistake your dignified service for unpatriotic desecration.)
- **Flag retirements should only be done in a ceremony, only on a separate campfire, the fire should not be used for anything else, the ashes should be buried, etc.**  
All of these, when explained to others, are good ways to demonstrate your own customs and your respect for our flag. However, they are just that, your customs. There are many different flag retirement ceremonies with differing elements in each. Generally groups and organizations evolve and refine what makes their customs feel patriotic, respectful, and dignified.
- **Only people over 18 may handle the flag during flag retirement ceremonies.**  
Not true
- **The flag must be retired by burning.**  
The flag code says "PREFERABLY by burning", meaning that burying, or other method can be done when burning is not feasible.

## **Pass along your traditions, but teach respect too!**

As we see, the US Flag Code allows just about any type of flag retirement ceremony. That doesn't mean we can't have our traditions. Teach your traditions to your girls, and tell them why they are important to you and your troop. Tell your audience, "this is our custom, and other groups may have different customs." It is important to talk to girls about what happens during a flag retirement before you start. Many will be witnessing a flag retirement for the first time and, if it is not explained, they may feel that something very wrong is going on.

The key is respect. Respect for our flag, and our country. Respect for others. There are many different flag retirement ceremonies you can conduct, and you could certainly design a ceremony yourself. The only requirement is that you conduct the ceremony in a "dignified" manner. Do this, and most people will be sincerely moved.

## **Know your audience**

If your unit is working jointly with the local American Legion to perform a flag retirement ceremony, then you should find out what their customs are. Likewise you might sometime be working jointly with Boy Scouts, the DAV, or the VFW, or some other group. Find out what their customs are. If their members make up most of your audience for an event, then you should probably consider putting your customs on the back burner this time and honoring them and their customs.

Good luck with your next retirement. Plan carefully and your ceremony will be enjoyed as respectful adoration for our flag, our nation, and everything for which they stand.

## *Ceremony of Final Tribute*

**Note:** Only one Flag, representing all those to be destroyed, should be used in the ceremony.

Two color guards should be used at evening retreat, one for the Flag currently in use and a special color guard for the Flag to be permanently retired.

Just before sunset, the Flag which has been flying all day is retired in the normal, ceremonial procedure for the group or site.

The color guard responsible for the Flag receiving the final tribute moves front and center. The leader should present this color guard with the Flag which has been selected for its final tribute and subsequent destruction. The leader then should instruct the color guard to "hoist the colors".

When the Flag has been secured at the top of the pole, the leader says:

"This Flag has served its nation long and well. It has worn to a condition to which it should no longer be used to represent the nation.

"This Flag represents all of the Flags collected and being retired from service today. We honor them all as we salute one Flag."

The leader then calls the group to attention, orders a salute, leads the entire group in the "Pledge of Allegiance." and orders the Flag retired by the color guard.

Slowly and ceremoniously, the flag is lowered, then respectfully folded in the customary triangle. The Flag is delivered to the leader and then the group is dismissed.

This concludes the Ceremony of Final Tribute.

## *Ceremonial Burning*

**Note:** Fire and Flag Preparation: The burning of a Flag should take place at a campfire in a ceremony separate from the Ceremony of Final Tribute. The fire must be sizable (preferably having burnt down to a bed of red hot coals to avoid having bits of the Flag being carried off by a roaring fire), yet be of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning.

Before the ceremony begins, the color guard assigned to the Flag opens up its tri-corner fold and then refolds it in a coffin-shaped rectangle.

When all is ready:

All assemble around the fire. The leader calls the group to attention. The color guard comes forward and places the Flag on the fire. All briskly salute.

After the salute, but while still at attention, the leader should conduct a respectful educational program as the Flag burns: e.g. singing of "God Bless America"; offering an inspiring message of the Flag's meaning followed by the "Pledge of Allegiance"; performing a reading about the Flag; reciting the "American's Creed"; etc.

When the Flag is consumed, those assembled, with the exception of a leader and the color guard, should be dismissed. They should be led out in single file and in silence.

The leader and color guard should remain to ensure that the Flag is completely consumed, and to burn additional Flags, if any.

The fire should then be safely extinguished.

# *A Girl Scout Flag Retiring Ceremony*

## **I Am Your Flag**

I am your flag. I appear in many places. I have taken many forms and been called many names. I was authorized by congress in 1818 in the form you see now and have remained unchanged except to add a new star each July 4<sup>th</sup> after a new state joined the union, until I reached my present number of 50.

I am more than just red, white and blue cloth shaped into a design. I am a silent sentinel of freedom. People of every country in the world know me on sight. Many countries love me as you do. Other countries look at me with contempt because they don't allow the freedom of democracy that I represent – But every country looks on me with respect. I am strong and people of America have made me strong. My strength comes from your willingness to give help to those who are in need. You strive for world peace and yet stand ready to fight oppression. You send resources and offer technology to less fortunate countries so they may strive to become self-sufficient. You feed starving children. You offer a home to anyone who will pledge allegiance to me. Your sons and daughters gather beneath me to offer their lives on the battlefields to preserve the liberty I represent. That's why I love the American people. That's why I have flown so proudly.

Girl Scouts are some of my favorite people. I listen to your patriotic songs, I'm there at your flag ceremonies and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your heart when I am on parade and I ripple with pleasure when I see it.

Now I am tired and It's time for me to rest in the sacred flames of your campfire. My colors are faded and my cloth is tattered, but my spirit remains unbroken. To set my spirit loose, first cut the blue field away from my stripes. Tear each of my 13 stripes and lay them on the fire one at a time. As you do this, think about the 13 original colonies and the pioneers who carved a nation out of a wilderness. They risked everything to fight for the independence which we enjoy.

*Put in red and white stripes (one by one) as you say the following*

My first state was Virginia, next Massachusetts, then New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and finally Georgia.

As you cut and rip me apart and watch me burn, do not be sad or feel sorry for me. I have had the Grand Honor of being your flag of the United States of America and the Republic for which I stand, One Nation Under God, Indivisible with Liberty and Justice for All.

*Put in blue with stars as you say the following.*

When my stripes are gone, kiss the blue field and lay it across the fire. Then stand silently as you watch each star twinkle and fade into ashes.

Now I am just a memory, but if there was a tear in your eye or a lump in your throat; If you felt a shiver in your spine as you watched me burn, then I will be back the next time you need me and my colors will be fresh and bright and my edges won't be ragged anymore. When I climb to the top of the flagpole, I'll wave at you and remember the love and respect that you showed me here tonight. And now Girl Scouts – Good Night . . .

# *Patriotic Poems and Readings*



## *My Name is Old Glory*

I am the flag of the United States of America.  
My name is Old Glory.

I fly atop the world's tallest buildings.  
I stand watch in America's halls of justice.

I fly majestically over institutions of learning.  
I stand guard with power in the world.

Look up ... and see me.

I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice.  
I stand for freedom.

I am confident.  
I am arrogant.  
I am proud.

When I am flown with my fellow banners,  
my head is a little higher,  
my colors a little bit truer.

I bow to no one!

I am recognized all over the world.  
I am worshipped - I am saluted.

I am loved - I am revered.  
I am respected -- and I am feared.

I have fought in every battle of every  
war for more than 200 years.

I was flown at Valley Forge, Gettysburg,  
Shiloh and Appomattox.

I was there at San Juan Hill,  
the trenches of France,  
in the Argonne Forest, Anzio, Rome  
and the beaches of Normandy, Guam,  
Okinawa, Korea and KheSan, Saigon,  
Vietnam know me,

I was there.  
I led my troops,  
I was dirty, battleworn and tired,  
but my soldiers cheered me  
And I was proud.

I have been burned, torn and trampled  
on the streets of countries I have helped set free.  
It does not hurt, for I am invincible.  
I have been soiled upon, burned, torn  
and trampled on the streets of my country.  
And when it's by those! whom I've served in  
battle -it hurts.

But I shall overcome - for I am strong.

I have slipped the bonds of Earth  
and stood watch over the uncharted  
frontiers of space from my vantage point  
on the moon.

I have borne silent witness  
to all of America's finest hours.  
But my finest hours are yet to come.

When I am torn into strips  
and used as bandages  
for my wounded comrades on the battlefield,  
When I am flown at half-mast to honor my  
soldiers  
Or when I lie in the trembling arms  
of a grieving parent  
at the grave of their fallen son or daughter,

I am proud.

MY NAME IS OLD GLORY  
LONG MAY I WAVE.  
DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN  
LONG MAY I WAVE

## *I am an American*

### ARRANGEMENTS:

Flags are presented in the usual manner.  
Twelve uniformed Scouts have speaking parts.

1st - My country gives each one of us the opportunity to advance according to his ambition. Education is for all. I am an American.

2nd - My country means love of freedom, faith in democracy, justice and equality. I am an American.

3rd - My country believes in the moral worth of the common man. I am an American.

4th - My country gives us the privilege to express our belief and opinions without fear of persecution. I am an American.

5th - My country has the best form of government. It is our duty to keep it that way. I am an American.

6th - My country promises life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I am an American.

7th - My country gives us a privilege that we shall protect and defend it even with our lives. I am an American.

8th - My country is and always shall remain the land of the free and the home of the brave. I am an American.

9th - My country offers a living Americanism which demands an informed, intelligent and active citizenship. I am an American.

10th - My country meets any need or suffering with its abiding love and loyalty. I am an American.

11th - My country is the servant-not the master. I am an American.

12th - My country possesses a Statue of Liberty whose torch shall burn as long as we keep it alight with our devotion to the freedom of the individual. I am an American.

Please join us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## *I Am Your Flag...*

I have been kicked, trampled, burned, and shot full of holes. I have fought battles, but I prefer the untroubled air of a world at peace.

I am your Flag. I represent the freedom of humanity, and I shall fly high, thundering in silence for the whole world to hear. My gentle rustling in the breeze sounds out the warning to all who would bury me forever -- that below stands a population dedicated to liberty.

For those who have perished for my right to freedom of flight, for those who will die, and indeed, for those who will live, I stand as a symbol of freedom-loving people.

I have been carried into battle in faraway lands, always for the cause of freedom. I am bloodstained, torn, and many times wearied and saddened by the thousands who have paid the supreme sacrifice. Do not let it all be for nothing. Tell me the brave have all died for a worthwhile cause. Be proud of what I represent, and display me for all to see.

Whether you call me "Old Glory," "Stars and Stripes" or "Star-Spangled Banner," I shall fly forever as a symbol of your freedom, as I did for your ancestors, and as I shall for your heirs.

***I am YOUR Flag!!***

*Author Unknown*



## *Ragged Old Flag*

I walked through a county courthouse square,  
On a park bench an old man was sitting there.  
I said, "Your old courthouse is kinda run down."  
He said, "Naw, it'll do for our little town."  
I said, "Your flagpole has leaned a little bit,  
And that's a Ragged Old Flag you got hanging on it."

He said, "Have a seat", and I sat down.  
"Is this the first time you've been to our little town?"  
I said, "I think it is." He said, "I don't like to brag,  
But we're kinda proud of that Ragged Old Flag."

"You see, we got a little hole in that flag there  
When Washington took it across the Delaware.  
And it got powder-burned the night Francis Scott Key  
Sat watching it writing \_Oh Say Can You See\_  
And it got a bad rip in New Orleans  
With Packingham and Jackson tuggin' at its seams."

"And it almost fell at the Alamo  
Beside the Texas flag, but she waved on through.  
She got cut with a sword at Chancellorsville  
And she got cut again at Shiloh Hill.  
There was Robert E. Lee, Beauregard, and Bragg,  
And the south wind blew hard on that Ragged Old Flag."

"On Flanders Field in World War I  
She got a big hole from a Bertha gun.  
She turned blood red in World War II  
She hung limp and low by the time it was through.  
She was in Korea and Vietnam.  
She went where she was sent by her Uncle Sam."

"She waved from our ships upon the briny foam,  
And now they've about quit waving her back here at home.  
In her own good land she's been abused --  
She's been burned, dishonored, denied and refused."

"And the government for which she stands  
Is scandalized throughout the land.  
And she's getting threadbare and wearing thin,  
But she's in good shape for the shape she's in.  
'Cause she's been through the fire before  
And I believe she can take a whole lot more."

"So we raise her up every morning,  
Take her down every night.  
We don't let her touch the ground  
And we fold her up right.  
On second thought I DO like to brag,  
'Cause I'm mighty proud of that Ragged Old Flag."

Written by Johnny Cash

## *Flag of the Free*

Look at the flag as it floats on high,  
Streaming aloft in the clear, blue sky,  
Rippling, leaping, tugging away,  
Gay as the sunshine, bright as the day,  
Throbbing with life, where the world may see-  
Flag of our country, flag of the free!  
What do we see in the flag on high,  
That we bare our heads as it passes by,  
That we thrill with pride, our hearts beat fast,  
And we cheer and cheer as the flag goes past-  
The flag that waves for you and me-  
Flag of our country, flag of the free?

We see in the flag a nation's might.  
The pledge of a safeguard day and night,  
Of a watchful eye and a powerful arm  
That guard the nation's homes from harm.  
Of a strong defense on land and sea-  
Flag of our country, flag of the free!  
We see in the flag a union grand,  
A brotherhood of heart and hand,  
A pledge of love and a stirring call  
To live our lives for the good of us all-  
Helpful and just and true to thee,  
Flag of our country, flag of the free!

Flutter, dear flag, o'er the lands and seas!  
Fling out your stars and your stripes to the  
breeze,  
Righting all wrongs, dispelling all fear,  
Guarding the land that we cherish so dear,  
And the God of our fathers, abiding with thee,  
Will bless you and trust you, O flag of the free!

-Walter Taylor Field





## *Why I Love Her*

*"America, America, God shed His grace on thee..."  
You ask me why I love her? Well, give me time and I'll explain.  
Have you seen a Kansas sunset or an Arizona rain?  
Have you drifted on a bayou down Louisiana way?  
Have you watched the cold fog drifting over San Francisco Bay?*

*Have you heard a bobwhite calling in the Carolina pines  
Or heard the bellow of a diesel at the Appalachia mines?  
Does the call of the Niagara thrill you when you hear her waters roar?  
Do you look with awe and wonder at her Massachusetts shore...  
Where men, who braved a hard new world, first stepped on Plymouth's rock?  
And do you think of them when you stroll along a New York City dock?*

*Have you seen a snowflake drifting in the Rockies...way up high?  
Have you seen the sun come blazing down from a bright Nevada sky?  
Do you hail to the Columbia as she rushes to the sea...  
Or bow your head at Gettysburg...at our struggle to be free?*

*Have you seen the mighty Titans? Have you watched an eagle soar?  
Have you seen the Mississippi roll along Missouri's shore?  
Have you felt a chill at Michigan, when on a winter's day,  
Her waters rage along the shore in thunderous display?  
Does the word "Aloha"...make you warm? Do you stare in disbelief  
When you see the surf come roaring in at Waimea Reef?*

*From Alaska's cold to the Everglades...from the Rio Grande to Maine...  
My heart cries out...my pulse runs fast at the might of her domain*

*You ask me why I love her?...I've a million reasons why.  
My beautiful America...beneath God's wide, wide sky.*

*"And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea."*

*By John Wayne*



## *Red, White, and Blue So True*

Those colors wave so gallantly and true.  
The colors of freedom; red, white, and blue.  
Those 13 stripes dance so bright.  
Those 50 stars what meaningful sight.  
All for one and one for all  
That American Flag stands so tall  
I stand so proud as tears fall from my eyes  
And watch as my nation begins to rise.  
The star spangled banner flows through my ears  
My eyes fill up with big, blurred tears  
I can see my freedom wave in the air  
As all gather round from here and there  
Red, white, and blue for all to see  
For the home of the brave and the land of the free

## *Forever Our Flag Will Fly*

Forever our flag will fly,  
Hues red, white, and blue.  
The symbol of our nation,  
Strong, proud, and true.

Forever our flag will fly,  
A united nation we stand.  
Helping and loving each other,  
Side by side, hand in hand.

Forever our flag will fly.  
Freedom and justice it shows.  
All fifty stars united together.  
This is the America I know

-Alexandria Moseley

# *Explanation of the Pledge Ceremony*

We often recite the Pledge of Allegiance without really listening to or understanding the meaning of the words we are saying. You can have each girl recite a portion, then the explanation. You can also have the girls put the meaning into their own words.

**I** - Me, an individual, a committee of one

**Pledge** - Dedicate all of my worldly possessions to give without self pity

**Allegiance** - My love and 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!"

**Of the United** - United - that means we have all come together

**States Of America** - States - individual communities that have united into fifty great states - fifty individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united in a common purpose - love for country.

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

**For Which it Stands** - This is what our Flag stands for - Our United States

**One Nation Under God** - meaning so blessed by God

**Indivisible** - Incapable of being divided

**With Liberty** - Which is freedom - the right to live one's own life without threats or fear of retaliation.

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

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

- adapted from a recording by Red Skelton

# *Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?*

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died.

Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.

Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army, another had two sons captured.

Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.

They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners; men of means, well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year, he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such were the stories and sacrifices of the American Revolution. These were not wild-eyed, rabble-rousing ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more.

Standing tall straight, and unwavering, they pledged: "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

They gave you and me a free and independent America. The history books never told you a lot about what happened in the Revolutionary War. We didn't fight just the British. We were British subjects at that time and we fought our own government!

Some of us take these liberties so much for granted, but we shouldn't. So, take a few minutes while enjoying your 4th of July Holiday and silently thank these patriots. It's not much to ask for the price they paid. Remember: Freedom is never free.

# *Patriotic Songs*

## *Lyrics that Stir our Hearts*



National pride swells to the music that pays tribute to our great country. Honor the United States by learning some of these patriotic songs.

### *The Star Spangled Banner*

*Lyrics By Francis Scott Key 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 thru the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's 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 through 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 in 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 washed 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 freemen shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it 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!

### *AMERICA My country, 'tis of Thee*

*Lyrics by Samuel F. Smith – 1832*

My country, 'tis of Thee,  
Sweet Land of Liberty  
Of thee I sing;  
Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the pilgrims' pride,  
From every mountain side  
Let Freedom ring.

My native country, thee,  
Land of the noble free,  
Thy name I love;  
I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills,  
My heart with rapture thrills  
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees  
Sweet Freedom's song;  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break,  
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God to Thee,  
Author of Liberty,  
To thee we sing,  
Long may our land be bright  
With Freedom's holy light,  
Protect us by thy might  
Great God, our King.

Our glorious Land to-day,  
'Neath Education's sway,  
Soars upward still.  
Its hills of learning fair,  
Whose bounties all may share,  
behold them everywhere  
On vale and hill!

Thy safeguard, Liberty,  
The school shall ever be,  
Our Nation's pride!  
No tyrant hand shall smite,  
While with encircling might  
All here are taught the Right  
With Truth allied.

Beneath Heaven's gracious will  
The stars of progress still  
Our course do sway;  
In unity sublime  
To broader heights we climb,  
Triumphant over Time,  
God speeds our way!

Grand birthright of our sires,  
Our altars and our fires  
Keep we still pure!  
Our starry flag unfurled,  
The hope of all the world,  
In peace and light impeared,  
God hold secure!

### *God Bless the USA*

*Lyrics by Lee Greenwood*

If tomorrow all the things were gone  
I'd worked for all my life,  
And I had to start again  
with just my children and my wife,  
I'd thank my lucky stars  
to be living here today,  
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom  
and they can't take that away.

I'm proud to be an American  
where at least I know I'm free,  
And I won't forget the men who died  
who gave that right to me,  
And I gladly stand up next to you  
and defend her still today,  
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land  
God Bless the U.S.A.

From the lakes of Minnesota  
to the hills of Tennessee,  
Across the plains of Texas  
from sea to shining sea.  
From Detroit down to Houston  
and New York to L.A.,  
There's pride in every American heart  
and it's time we stand and say:

I'm proud to be an American  
where at least I know I'm free,  
And I won't forget the men who died  
who gave that right to me,  
And I gladly stand up next to you  
and defend her still today,  
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land  
God Bless the U.S.A.

## *America, The Beautiful*

*Lyrics by Katharine Lee Bates – 1913*

O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,  
Whose stern impassion'd stress  
A thoroughfare for freedom beat  
Across the wilderness!  
America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for heroes proved In liberating strife,  
Who more than self their country loved,  
And mercy more than life!  
America! America! May God thy gold refine  
Till all success be nobleness,  
And ev'ry gain divine!

O Beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam,  
Undimmed by human tears!  
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!

## *God Bless America*

*Lyrics by Irving Berlin*

God bless America,  
Land that I love,  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Thru the night with a light from above;

From the mountains, to the prairies,  
To the oceans white with foam,  
God bless America,  
My home, sweet home.  
God bless America,  
My home, sweet home.

## *Battle Hymn of the Republic*

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,  
He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword  
His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps  
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps  
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps  
His day is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnish'd rows of steel,  
"As ye deal with my contemnors, so with you my grace shall deal,"  
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel  
Since God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded from the trumpet that shall never call retreat  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!  
Our God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,  
While God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

## *The Stars and Stripes Forever*

*Lyrics by John Philip Sousa - 1897*

Let martial note in triumph float  
And liberty extend its mighty hand  
A flag appears 'mid thunderous cheers,  
The banner of the Western land.  
The emblem of the brave and true  
Its folds protect no tyrant crew;  
The red and white and starry blue  
Is freedom's shield and hope.  
Other nations may deem their flags the best  
And cheer them with fervid elation  
But the flag of the North and South and West  
Is the flag of flags, the flag of Freedom's nation.

Hurrah for the flag of the free!  
May it wave as our standard forever,  
The gem of the land and the sea,  
The banner of the right.  
Let despots remember the day  
When our fathers with mighty endeavor  
Proclaimed as they marched to the fray  
That by their might and by their right  
It waves forever.

Let eagle shriek from lofty peak  
The never-ending watchword of our land;  
Let summer breeze waft through the trees  
The echo of the chorus grand.  
Sing out for liberty and light,  
Sing out for freedom and the right.  
Sing out for Union and its might,  
O patriotic sons.  
Other nations may deem their flags the best  
And cheer them with fervid elation,  
But the flag of the North and South and West  
Is the flag of flags, the flag of Freedom's nation.

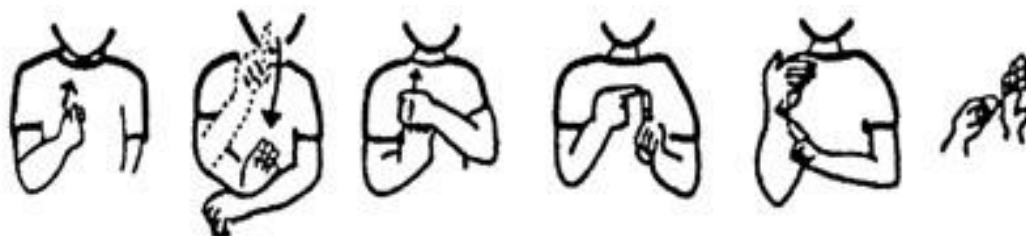
Hurrah for the flag of the free.  
May it wave as our standard forever  
The gem of the land and the sea,  
The banner of the right.  
Let despots remember the day  
When our fathers with might endeavor  
Proclaimed as they marched to the fray,  
That by their might and by their right  
It waves forever.

# *Patriotic Fun Things To Do*



## *Pledge of Allegiance in Sign Language*

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, oath of loyalty to the U.S. national emblem and to the nation it symbolizes.



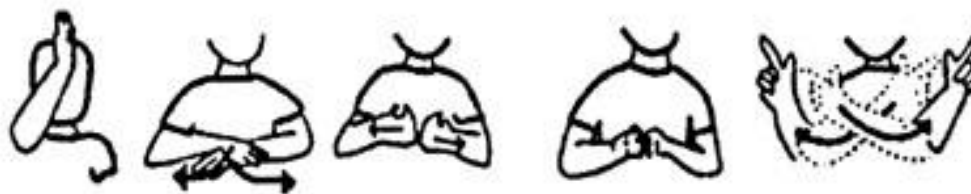
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of



the United States of America and to



the Republic for which it stands, one nation under



God, indivisible, with liberty



and justice for all."

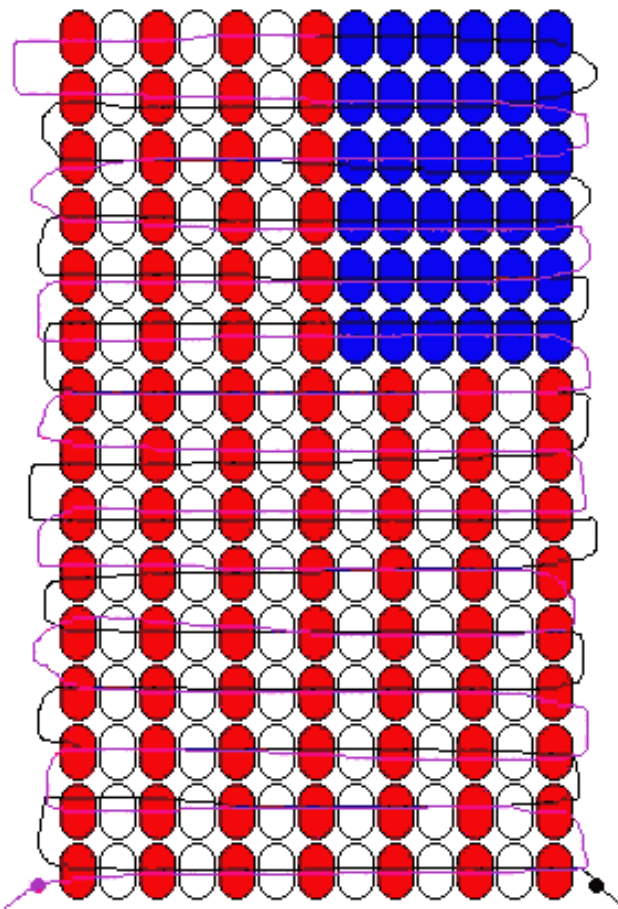
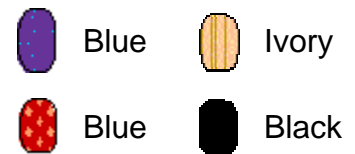
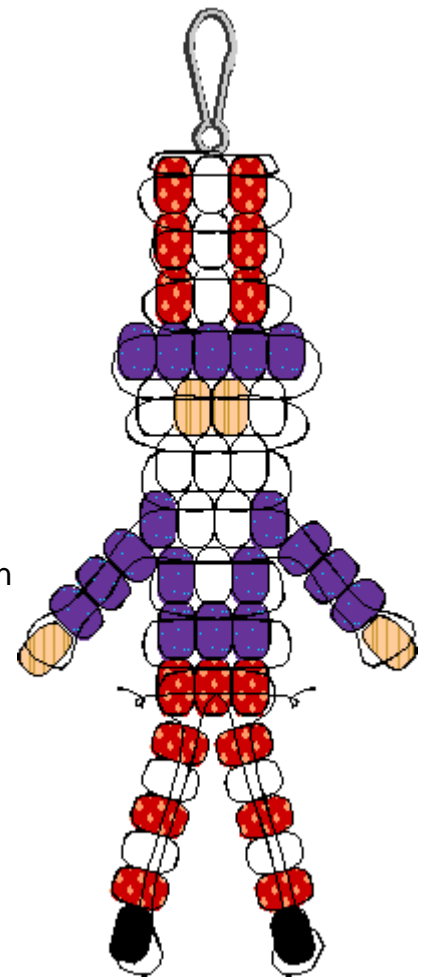
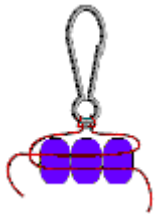
# Uncle Sam Pony Bead Pattern

## Materials:

- 18 Blue [Pony Beads](#)
- 15 Red [Pony Beads](#)
- 15 White [Pony Beads](#)
- 4 Ivory [Pony Beads](#)
- 2 Black [Pony Beads](#)
- 1 [Lanyard Hook](#)
- 2 Yards [Satin Cord](#)

## Basic Instructions:

Fold your ribbon in half to find the center. Use a half hitch (see detail below) to secure it to lanyard hook. Lace beads using pattern at right as a guide. Finish by tying off with a double knot.



# Flag Necklace Pony Bead Pattern

## Materials:

- 3 yards cord or ribbon of choice
- 1 lanyard hook
- 87 red pony beads
- 78 white pony beads
- 36 blue pony beads

# Flag Pin

## Materials:

Safety pins: 10 medium and 1 large  
Glass seed beads in red, white and blue

1. Thread 3 blue beads onto the shaft of one medium pin (**figure A**).
2. Starting with white, alternate white and red beads until you have a total of 11 beads.
3. Close the pin (**figure B**); repeat steps with 3 pins.  
**Note:** The blue beads will form the blue field of the flag.
4. Starting and ending with red, feed red and white beads alternately onto the shaft of another pin for a total of 11 beads.
5. Repeat the preceding step with 7 more pins.
6. Once all the medium pins are beaded, lay them on the table to see the flag pattern.
7. Open the larger pin.
8. Starting with a red-and-white-beaded pin, held with beads facing you, slip the pin around the larger pin loop. Do this twice until it threads onto the opposite shaft.
9. Continue threading the red-and-white-beaded pins, followed by the blue-beaded pins. The patriotic flag should be taking shape (**figure C**).

You've made a stars-and-stripes pin you can wear *proudly* for years to come!



Display the red, white and blue proudly when you wear this patriotic flag pin.



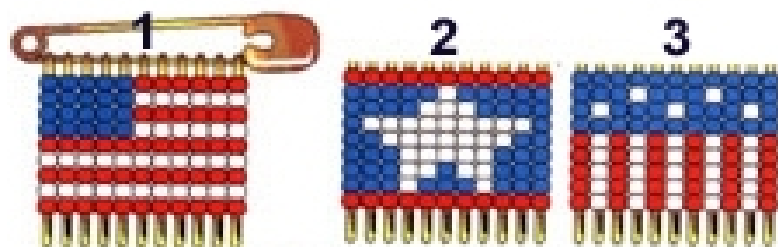
Figure A



Figure B



Figure C





## *Parade Stick*

Who can resist a parade? Now even the spectators can join in by waving their parade sticks.

### **Materials:**

- Newspaper
- Glue Stick
- Red, White and Blue Crepe Paper Streamers
- Tape
- Scissors



### **Instructions**

Roll a piece of newspaper tightly into a slim, long cone. Wrap tape around cone in several places to strengthen. Wrap cone completely with white crepe paper, gluing in place. Cut a 5' length of red crepe paper in half lengthwise. Wrap diagonally around cone, spacing as shown in picture. Glue in place.

Cut five 4' lengths of blue crepe paper. Fold in half. Tape folded ends securely around wider cone end. Cut out stars and glue to blue streamers.

## *Soup Can Signs*

Directions:

Here is a new idea for recycling soup cans.

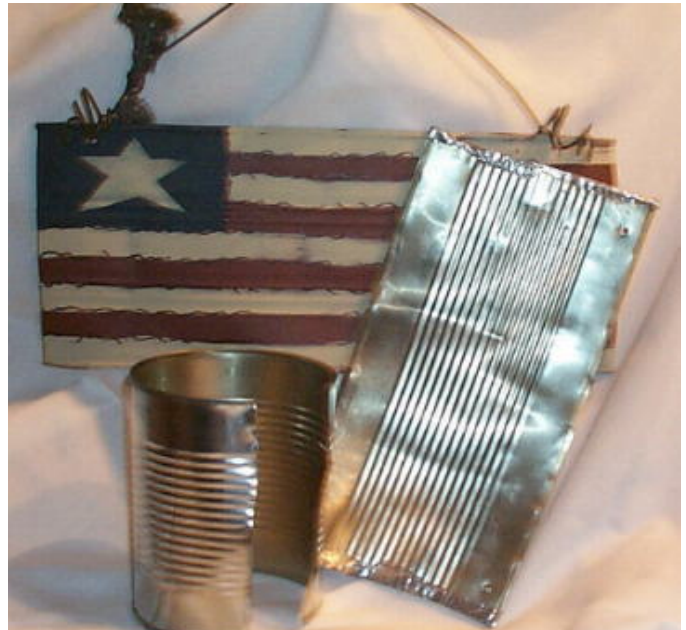
Simply open each end of the can and then cut it open with a pair of tin cutters.

You will need to bend back the edges about 1/4" so the edges are not sharp.

Then just flip it over and paint on it.

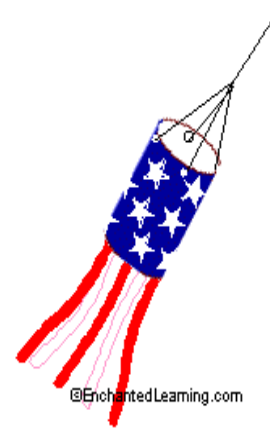
Finish it off by punching two small holes in the top and hang it with a piece of wire.

Try other cans as well. Coffee or vegetable cans work great too.



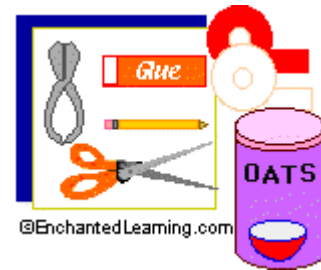
# Patriotic Wind Sock Craft

You can make a patriotic wind sock from an oatmeal box, construction paper, string, and crepe paper streamers.



## Materials needed:

- A cylindrical cardboard oatmeal box
- Construction paper (blue and white)
- Red and white crepe paper streamers
- Glue
- String
- Scissors
- Hole punch



**Step 1.** Cut the bottom off a cylindrical cardboard oatmeal box.



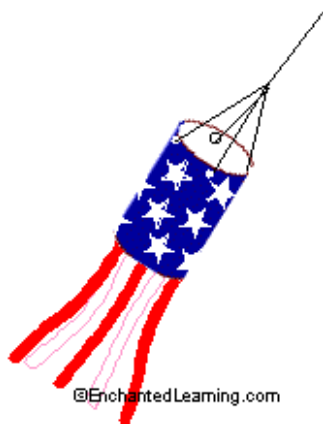
**Step 2.** Cover the box with blue construction paper and then glue on white construction paper stars.



**Step 3.** Cut some red and white crepe paper streamers and glue or staple them to one end of the wind sock.



**Step 4.** Punch four holes along the top of the wind sock.

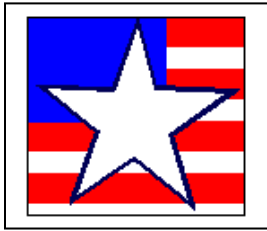


**Step 5.** Cut two pieces of string about a foot long. Tie the strings to the wind sock (tie the opposite ends of a string to holes on opposite sides of the cylinder).

**Step 6.** Tie a longer piece of string to the smaller pieces - you'll hang the wind sock from this piece of string.

Hang your patriotic wind sock from your window or porch.

# Cut a 5-Pointed Star in One Snip

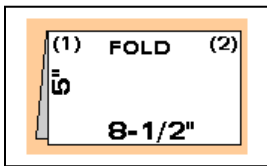


**George Washington's** original pencil sketch for the flag indicated 6-pointed stars, a form he apparently preferred.

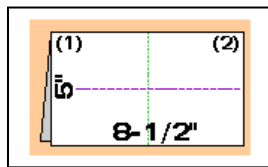
**Betsy Ross**, however, recommended a 5-pointed star. When the committee protested that it was too difficult to make, she took a piece of paper, folded it deftly, and with a single snip of her scissors, produced a symmetrical five-pointed star. This seeming feat of magic so impressed her audience that they readily agreed to her suggestion.

**To you we pass along the secret . . .**

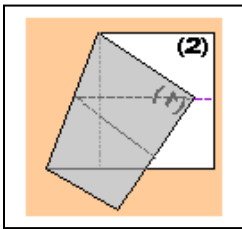
Take a thin piece of paper 8-1/2" x 10" (or an exact proportion thereof), fold it as indicated and cut yourself a perfect 5-pointed star.



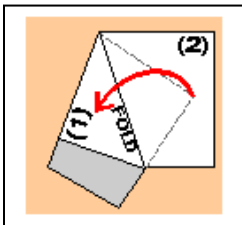
**Step 1.** Fold an 8-1/2" x 10" piece of paper in half.



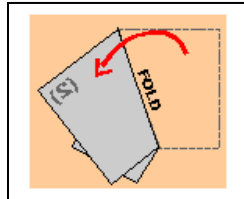
**Step 2.** Fold and unfold in half both ways to form creased center line. (Note: be sure paper is still folded in half.)



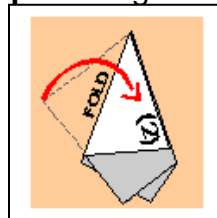
**Step 3.** Bring corner (1) right to meet the center line. Be sure to fold from the vertical crease line.



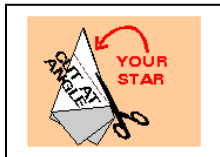
**Step 4.** Bring corner (1) left till edges coincide, then make the fold.



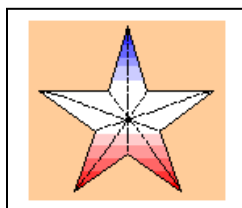
**Step 5.** Bring corner (2) left and fold.



**Step 6.** Bring corner (2) right until edges coincide. Then fold.



**Step 7.** Cut on the angle shown in the picture. Then unfold the small piece.



**Step 8.** Marvel at your perfect (we hope!) 5-pointed star! If your star is not perfect, take a fresh piece of paper (8 1/2" x 10" – not 8 1/2" x 11")

*Thanks to the Betsy Ross House for providing these instructions.*

## *Purchase a U.S. Flag that has flown over the Capitol*



Anyone can purchase a U.S. Flag that has flown over the United States Capitol building in Washington D.C. This can be accomplished writing a letter to your Senator with your request. Their address can be obtained by calling your local Public Library and asking for it or use the [Senators of the 109th Congress](#) web site to locate contact information for your Senator.

You may request that your flag be flown on a certain date such as a birthday or anniversary. Be sure to mail in your request at least 4 weeks prior to the date you have selected. Your flag will be mailed to you and arrive 3-4 weeks after the date you have specified (Since September 11th, 2001 it may take longer to receive your flag). Enclosed with your flag will be a Certificate from The Architect Of The Capitol certifying that your flag was flown as requested. If you mention in your letter that this flag is for *any* specific occasion, that information will be included on the certificate.

# United States Flag Trivia

**Q:** History reports that Betsy Ross sewed the first American flag in what year?

**A:** May of 1776



**Q:** 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." In what year did this take place?

**A:** June 14, 1777



**Q:** What does the U. S. Flag look like today?

**A:** Today the flag consists of thirteen horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with 6 white. The stripes represent the original 13 colonies, the stars represent the 50 states of the Union.



**Q:** The colors of the flag are symbolic, what does each color represent?

**A:** Red symbolizes Hardiness and Valor, White symbolizes Purity and Innocence and Blue represents Vigilance, Perseverance and Justice.



**Q:** Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance in 1892 as part of what anniversary?

**A:** The 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus.



**Q:** Who officially recognized the Pledge in 1942?

**A:** U.S. Congress



**Q:** Bellamy's original text has been altered twice. In 1923, the words "the flag of the United States of America" were substituted for the words "my flag". In 1954 two words were added, what were they?

**A:** "under God"



**Q:** The flag should be lighted at all times, how would this be done?

**A:** Either by sunlight or by an appropriate light source.



**Q:** True or False - The flag should be flown in fair weather, unless the flag is designed for inclement weather use.

**A:** True



**Q:** True or False – The flag should be dipped to show respect to a head of state to a foreign leader.

**A:** False - The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing.



**Q:** When can the flag be flown upside down?

**A:** It is flown upside down only as a distress signal.



**Q:** The flag should not be used for any decoration in general. What can be used for decorations?

**A:** Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.



**Q:** True or False - 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.

**A:** True



**Q:** The flag should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, what is the exception to this?

**A:** A flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, fireman, policeman and members of patriotic organizations.



**Q:** True or False – It is ok to put your troop number on the flag.

**A:** False - The flag should never have any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind placed on it, or attached to it.



**Q:** True or False – The flag can be used for receiving, holding, carrying and delivering something.

**A:** False - The flag should never be used for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.



**Q:** When the flag is lowered,

(A) it should be quick, then laid across the receiver arms.

(B) no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms.

(C) only after dark.

**A:** (B)



**Q:** True or False - To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.

**A:** True



**Q:** True or False - When the flag becomes soiled it must be destroyed.

**A:** False - The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.

