



Flag Ceremonies

Respect for Flag

Flag Code is the guide for all handling and display of the Stars and Stripes.

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

- (a) The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.
- (b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise.
- (c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.
- (d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free. Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for decoration in general.
- (e) The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a manner as to permit it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged in any way.
- (f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
- (g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.
- (h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
- (i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.
- (j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations.
- (k) The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

Resource: <http://www.usflag.org/uscode36.html#176>

How to Display the Flag



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



2. The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right [*that means the viewer's left*], and its staff should be in front of the other staff.



3. The flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-staff" is meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff.



4. When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the right of the flag of the United States (the viewer's left). When the flag is half-masted, both flags are half-masted, with the US flag at the mid-point and the other flag below.



5. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extending from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the flag should be hoisted out, union first, from the building.



6. When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff.



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



8. When the flag is displayed in a manner other than by being flown from a staff, it 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.



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



10. 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.



11. 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.



12. When displayed 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 honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as they face the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker (to the right of the audience).



13. When the flag is displayed on a car, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.



14. When hung in a window where it is viewed from the street, place the union at the head and over the left shoulder. That is, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.

Flag Folding

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. In the end only the blue field with white stars can be seen on the right triangle. This custom of folding is reserved for the United States Flag alone.

How to fold the flag

Step 1



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

Step 2



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

Step 3



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

Step 4



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

Step 5



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

Step 6



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

Step 7



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

Flag Ceremony Guidelines

Members of the Color Guard

The **color bearer (or flag bearer)** is the person who carries the flag. There is one flag bearer for each flag used in the ceremony. **If sashes are worn**, wears a red sash over her **right** shoulder with a square knot tied on the left hip. White gloves optional.

The **color guard** is a team that guards that flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six girls are sufficient. **If sashes are worn wears a red sash around her waist** with a square knot tied on the left hip. White gloves optional.

The **Girl Scout in charge (or caller)** is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony. **Does not wear red sash or gloves.**

Flag Ceremony Protocol

1. Every flag ceremony should have a Color Guard.
2. Girl Scouts who take part in a flag ceremony should be in full uniform—a plain white shirt, khaki or tan pants or skirt, and the appropriate vest or sash for each girl's level. Exceptions may be made for daily flag ceremonies at camp.
3. Members of the Color Guard should not salute nor speak during the flag ceremony, with exception of the caller.
4. Color guard and flag bearers will salute the flag after the caller says, "Color Guard honor your colors." by placing their hand over their heart
5. When flags are on staffs, hold flags on bearer's right hand side (right hand down and left hand across chest).
6. The American Flag is always first to do everything! Flag order line up: American Flag, State Flag, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, Girl Scout Council Flag. You may remove flags depending on their appropriateness for an event.
7. Girl Scouts, not in the Color Guard, use the citizens' salute, placing their hand over their heart whether or not they are in uniform.
8. All Girl Scouts, not in the Color Guard, must stand at attention and salute when the flag is being raised, lowered, passes by in a parade, or when the "Star-Spangled Banner" is played.

Note: If the flags are being held when saluted, the American Flag should be held upright while the other flags dip. This ensures that the American Flag is higher than all other flags during the salute.

Materials

Color Guard in Uniform

Red Sashes

White Gloves

Flags (US Flag, State Flag, WAGGS Flag, Council Flag)

Flag Stands

Caller cards or script

Guidelines for Planning a Flag Ceremony

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 be the flag bearers?
2. Who will be the color guards?
3. Who will be the caller and give directions for the ceremony?
4. After the Pledge of Allegiance, will the Promise and the Law be said?
5. Will there be a song? What song will be sung? Who will start the song?
6. Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
7. In what order will the parts of the ceremony take place?
8. How or will the flags be posted?
9. What is the best formation or variation for the ceremony?
10. When will the group practice?

Flag Ceremonies

Basic Posting Ceremony

Caller Commands for *Opening Ceremony*

“Audience (or Girl Scouts), please rise for the presentation of the colors!”

The audience will rise. Wait until they are quiet.

“Color guard attention!”

This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention.

“Color guard advance!”

The color guard walks forward carrying the flags in formation and stops at predetermined destination. Flag stands should already be in position.

“Color guard post the colors” The color bearers assist the flag bearers in placing the flags in stands (the American flag is posted first, then the other flags).

“Color guard honor your colors” The color guard salutes colors by placing hand on their heart.

“Ladies and gentlemen, (or Girl Scouts) please join me in the Pledge of Alligence.” The caller leads the audience in the Pledge while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Girl Scouts our Promise.” (Optional)

The caller leads the audience in the Promise while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Color guard retreat!”

Before the Color Guard retreats, leaving the flags in their stands.

“Audience (or Girl Scouts), you may be seated.” This is the end of the ceremony. The Caller exits the podium and takes her seat following the path of the Color Guard if appropriate.

Basic Posting Ceremony

Caller Commands for *Closing Ceremony*

“Audience (or Girl Scouts), please rise for the retiring of the colors!” The audience will rise. Wait until they are quiet.

“Color guard attention!” This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention.

“Color guard advance!” The color guard walks forward in formation and takes their places behind their assigned flag.

“Color Guard retire the colors.” Color guard/bearers lift flags out of stands, American flag being lifted first.

“Color guard retreat!”

Color Guard exits the area with the flags in the order they entered.

“Audience (or Girl Scouts), you may be seated.” This is the end of the ceremony. The Caller exits the podium and takes her seat following the path of the Color Guard if appropriate.

Basic Non-Posting Ceremony

Caller Commands for Opening Ceremony (there is no closing ceremony)

“Audience (or Girl Scouts), please rise for the presentation of the colors!”

The audience will rise. Wait until they are quiet.

“Color guard attention!”

This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention.

“Color guard advance!”

The color guard walks forward carrying the flags in formation and stops at predetermined destination.

“Ladies and gentlemen, (or Girl Scouts) the flag of our country, Pledge of Allegiance.” The caller leads the audience in the Pledge while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Girl Scouts our Promise.” (Optional)

The caller leads the audience in the Promise while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Color guard retreat!”

Color Guard exits the area with the flags in the same order they entered.

“Ladies and gentlemen (or Girl Scouts), you may be seated.”

This is the end of the ceremony. The Caller exits the podium and takes her seat following the path of the Color Guard if appropriate.

Variations

There are many possible ceremony variations. Remember: Emphasis should be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Do what is right for your audience, location, and event.

Use these variations when posting the American Flag using a flag pole.

Opening Ceremony

“Color guard advance!”

The color guard walks forward in formation: flag bearer in front, holding folded flag at waist height with the point facing away from their body, followed by four to six color guards in a buddy line.

X X X
X
X X X

“Color guard post the colors” The flag bearer hands the folded flag to the color bearers who unfold the flag while the flag bearer prepares the hooks and halyard (rope used for raising and lowering a flag). The stars should be attached to the hooks first followed by the strips. Audience members should start their salute to the flag when the first hook is attached and end when the Pledge of Allegiance is finished.

Closing Ceremony

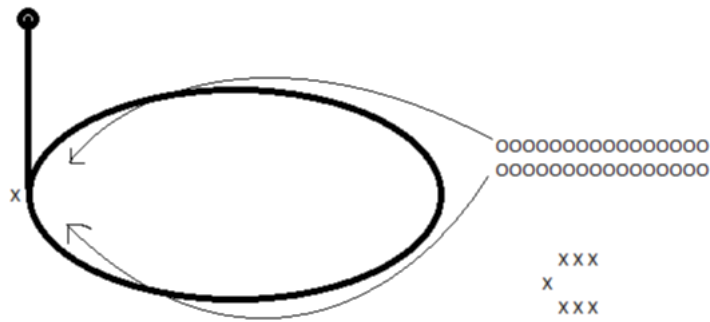
“Color guard advance!” The color guard walks forward in formation: flag bearer in front, followed by four to six color guards in a buddy line.

“Color Guard retire the colors.”

Flag bearer then ceremoniously lowers the flag into the arms of the color guard and removes the hooks. Stripes first then stars. The audience should salute the flag as soon as it begins lowering and end the salute when the final hook is removed. The color guard folds the flag while flag bearer ties the halyard. Once folded the color guard hands flag to flag bearer who holds it at waist height with point facing away from their body and leads the Color Guard in their retreat.

Use the horseshoe formation variation if appropriate for size of audience and location.

Audience members stand in a “buddy line” or “double buddy line” awaiting their entrance to the flag ceremony. The caller is positioned next to the flag pole or stands where she will give her commands from.



“Girl Scouts attention!”

Wait until they are silent.

“Girl Scouts advance!”

The “buddy line” splits to form a horse shoe around the flag pole or flag stands.

“Color guard attention!”

This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention.

“Color guard advance!”

The color guard walks forward in formation.

“Color guard post the colors”

The color guard will post the colors in a manner appropriate for ceremony.

“Girl Scouts the flag of our country, Pledge of Allegiance.” The caller leads the audience in the Pledge while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Girl Scouts our Promise.” (Optional)

The caller leads the audience in the Promise while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

“Color guard retreat!”

The Color Guard then exits the area in a “buddy line,” leaving the flags in their stands.

“Girl Scouts, dismissed.” This is the end of the ceremony. Everyone in the horse shoe exits in the reverse order they entered.

Additional Resources

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."

The Star-Spangled Banner

By Francis Scott Key

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?

Taps

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky.
All is well, safely rest, God* is nigh.