



FLAG ETIQUETTE



The U.S. Flag Code

From handling and saluting to displaying and disposal, there is a code in place when it comes to the American flag.

Old Glory is a symbol of our freedom and liberty, and the vision set forth by our founding fathers. That's why there are so many rules and regulations in place to preserve its heritage.

On June 14, 1923, the National Flag Code was adopted by the National Flag Conference. Putting together the code was a collaborative process.

The conference called together representatives of the United States Army and Navy to describe their own flag-handling procedures — an effort that led to the adoption of these processes by all organizations in attendance.

Some general guidelines from the Flag Code:

- 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.



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- 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, firemen, policemen

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.

History of the Flag

To use proper etiquette, you must truly understand the history of the United States flag. Where did it come from and who created it? Why is it red, white and blue?

The traditional story that Betsy Ross designed the original flag in 1776 has permeated our education system and is the most noteworthy story of how the flag came to be.

Some historians claim that in June 1776, a congressional committee of Gen. George Washington, Robert Morris and Betsy's uncle, George Ross, went to her Philadelphia upholstery shop.

After collaborating on some minor design details, Ross agreed

to sew the finalized emblem, and on June 14, 1777, Congress adopted it as the official U.S. flag.

ANOTHER CREATOR?

Many historians refute the Ross tradition, claiming that there is no official record of a congressional flag committee.

The only documented evidence naming Ross is a voucher dated May 29, 1777, showing that she was paid 14 pounds and some shillings for flags she made for the

Pennsylvania Navy, according to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

OLD GLORY

The name Old Glory was first applied to the U.S. flag by Capt. William Driver, a young captain who lived in Salem, Mass. On his 21st birthday, he was presented a beautiful flag by his mother, which he named Old Glory.

The captain took Old Glory on many sea voyages before eventu-

ally quitting sailing and settling in Nashville. Driver reportedly displayed Old Glory proudly from a rope extending from his house to a tree across the street before finally giving it to his daughter shortly before his death.

The flag remained as a precious heirloom in the Driver family until 1922, when it was sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., where it remains carefully preserved under glass.





The Salute

The salute is one of the most revered forms of respect for the flag and for those who have served to protect it.

You'll notice that when it comes time to salute the flag, everyone present will come to attention. According to the National Flag Foundation, all persons in uniform should give the military salute, as should members of the Armed Forces and veterans who may not be in uniform.

The latter recommendation was put into place by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which contained an amendment to allow un-uniformed service members, military retirees and veterans to render a hand salute during the hoisting, lowering or passing of the U.S. flag.

All other persons should salute by placing their right hand over their hearts. Men wearing a hat, cap or other headwear are to remove it, while women are not required to remove their head covering.

According to the National Flag Foundation, the salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or through the last note of the national anthem, whichever is longer.

Other recommendations from the National Flag Foundation are as follows:

- When the national anthem is played or sung, citizens should stand at attention and salute by placing their right hand over their heart at the first note, holding the salute through the last note.

The salute is directed to the flag. If in uniform, the person should salute in the formal manner. It is proper to salute wherever the national anthem is played.

- When the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, citizens should stand at attention and salute by also placing their right hand over the heart with the first word and holding the salute through the last line of the Pledge. The salute is directed to the flag by facing it during the Pledge.



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Folding the Flag

If you've ever witnessed a flag-folding ceremony, you understand the power that is conveyed during this special occurrence.

While different organizations conduct flag-folding ceremonies in different ways, The American Legion has defined these symbols for the folds of the flag:

FOLD 1: Symbol of life.

FOLD 2: Symbol of our belief in eternal life.

FOLD 3: Made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

FOLD 4: Representation of our weaker nature; 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.

FOLD 5: 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."

FOLD 6: 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.

FOLD 7: Tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

FOLD 8: Tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it

flies on Mother's Day.

FOLD 9: 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.

FOLD 10: Tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first born.

FOLD 11: In the eyes of Hebrew citizens, 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.

FOLD 12: 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.

The Flag in Mourning

A flag at half-staff is a solemn symbol of honor. By order of the President, the flag is flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the government and the governor of a state, territory or possession.

To place the flag at half staff, you should hoist it to the peak for an instant and lower it to a position half way between the top and bottom of the staff.

HALF-STAFF TIMEFRAMES

The flag shall be flown at half-staff for 30 days following the death of the president or a former president, according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Other half-staff flying requirements include:

- Ten days following the day of death of the vice president, the chief justice or a retired chief justice of the United States, or the speaker of the house of representatives;
- From the day of death until interment of an associate justice of the Supreme Court, a secretary of an executive or military department, a former vice president or the governor of a state, territory or possession;
- On the day of death and the following day for a member of Congress; and
- On Peace Officers Memorial Day, unless that day is also Armed Forces Day;



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BLACK RIBBONS

In a case where the flag is fixed to the pole, like in many residential uses, it may not

be possible to fly the flag at half-staff. This is when it may be required to properly attach two black ribbons to the end of the pole.

Two streamers of suitable length made of black ribbon should be attached at the top of the pole, but not fastened to the flag itself. For a flag

that is displayed flat against a wall either vertically or horizontally, affix a streamer at each end of the top edge of the flag.

Displaying the Flag Outdoors

Many American citizens choose to proudly wave the red, white and blue from posts or poles in their yards. It is a showing of great respect for our nation and helps us feel more patriotic.

There are certain actions you must take when displaying your flag outdoors to maintain its prestige. These are spelled out by the U.S. Flag Code. Here are a few examples from www.usflag.org:

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

- When it is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag, the U.S. flag must always be at the top with a couple of exceptions. The church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for Navy personnel when conducted by a Naval chaplain on a ship at sea.

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

PROPER ILLUMINATION

One of the most intricate parts of the U.S. Flag Code concerns displaying the flag at night. If you choose to do so, you must make sure the flag is properly illuminated.



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This means that the stars and stripes can be seen from a reasonable distance, which may require you to install a

dedicated light for a flag on a pole.

Flags on a residential porch may only need the

light of a porch or street light to achieve proper illumination.

Check in with your local

American Legion or armory for more detailed instruction on what may be required in your area.

Proper Disposal

Disposing of an American flag is a sensitive, yet necessary action you may have to take if yours is damaged or weather-beaten.

According to the U.S. Flag Code: The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem of display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

How to burn your flag, from the U.S. Flag Code:

- The flag should be folded in its customary manner.
- Make sure your fire is fairly large and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
- Place the flag on the fire.
- Come to attention, salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.
- After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.

The National Fire Protection Association reminds you to remain vigilant of your local state and fire codes if you choose to burn your flag. Exercise all proper safety measures to make sure your ceremony is safely executed.

FLAG RETIREMENT

If you choose not to burn your flag but would still like to give Old Glory its proper send-off, you may decide to contact a local organization that collects old American flags.

In most communities, these types of services gather and oversee the proper disposal of tattered flags.

Try reaching out to your local chapter of the Boy Scouts of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars or The American Legion. These groups all provide their own form of flag retirement services and can make the experience a convenient one for you.

HAVE YOUR OWN CEREMONY

Now that you know the proper way to burn a retired flag, you may choose to incorporate ceremonial aspects into your flag-burning process.

You can raise the flag on its pole one last time with friends and family, calling them to attention to salute and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Feel free to come up with your own unique speech in honor of the flag's service to your family and community before burning it. This type of ceremony provides the perfect opportunity to teach younger children the importance of patriotism and love for the flag.

