

The Flag of the United States of America

Nothing evokes such strong emotion as seeing the flag, either a ceremony honoring a great event or draped over a coffin as a sign of mourning for a hero or loved one.

Its unfurled banner which symbolizes the love and pride that we have as a nation, is a poignant reminder of America's greatness and our fortune to live in a country which values freedom above all else. It signifies the commitment made by our fallen comrades who battled bravely to defend the honor of this sacred emblem - our American unity, our power, and our purpose as a nation. And it exemplifies the devotion of our leaders who continue to uphold its promise of liberty, justice and freedom for all.

Our nation reveres the flag, not out of a sense of unquestioning worship but out of a deep sense of our national heritage. Strengthened by our noble deeds, splendid accomplishments, and untold sacrifices, the flag reflects America's pledge to uphold democracy and work for peace throughout the world. It is America's strength in honor, as dignified in the stars and stripes of the flag, which helps to establish the moral character of our national foundation.

The flag, endearingly referred to as "Old Glory," represents all people of America. We, the people, are America. It is little wonder that the people of America are moved when saluting the flag as it passes by, reminding us that we are a part of this great land. We are "one nation under God."



✂ When the flag is unfurled for display across a street, it should be hung vertically, with the stars to the north or east.

✂ When the flag is flown with flags of other nations they are to be displayed from separate staffs of same height, and each should be of equal size. International law forbids the display of the flag of one nation to be flown above that of another nation during time of peace.



✂ During a time of national mourning, the flag can be flown at half mast by order or proclamation of the President of the United States. When flown at half mast, the flag should be hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half staff position. The flag should be raised to the peak before it is lowered at the end of the day. On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half mast until noon, then raised to the top of the staff and flown until sunset. Local customs regarding the lowering of company, city, or other flags to half mast are directed by the executive officers of those service areas.

✂ When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be placed with the stars at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should



With Liberty and Justice for All

Even before the American Revolution, flags bearing the familiar red and white stripes, which symbolize the unity of the original 13 colonies of America, began to appear. These stripes were later combined with the British Union Jack to produce the Continental flag that flew over George Washington's headquarters during the siege of Boston.

Almost a year passed after the Declaration of Independence was signed before a new flag was adopted by the Congress. But variations in the flag were persistent, and changes continued during much of the 19th century. The Flag Act of 1818 fixed the number of horizontal stripes at 13, and gave the President authority to determine the star arrangement. The now-familiar stars and stripes were not carried into battle United States Army until the Mexican War.

Finally, in 1912, an executive order was established which defined the design of the flag, including the star arrangement. Later, when Alaska and Hawaii entered the Union, stars representing those states were added to the flag, adapting the traditional horizontal arrangement.

American involvement in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II stimulated patriotic sentiments and interest in the flag. In 1942, Congress established rules and customs concerning the flag, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The years since World War II have seen the refinement of various laws and regulations concerning the flag. Today, it has become an accepted part of the decoration of most public buildings and a symbol regarded as appropriate to almost any setting where citizens gather.

not be lowered into the grave or be allowed to touch the ground.



Respect for the Flag

The Flag Code, a national guideline on ways in which the flag is to be respected, states that no disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America. Specific ways in which a flag should not be used, according to the code, are:



✘ The flag should not be dipped to any person or thing, and can be flown upside down only as a distress signal.

✘ The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. Bunting of blue, white, and red can be used for covering a speaker's desk, draping the front of a platform, or for decoration in general.

✘ The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a way that would allow it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged.

✘ The flag should never have any mark, insignia, letter, work, or other designs of any kind placed upon it.

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

✘ The flag should never be used for advertising purposes. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchief,



Pledge to the Flag

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

After first appearing in a copy of the Youth's Companion in 1892, as a celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, the pledge to the flag received the official recognition of Congress on June 22, 1942. The phrase, "under God," was added to the pledge by Congress on June 14, 1954, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said that "in this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war."

When rendering the pledge of allegiance, persons should stand at attention, face the flag, and, if in uniform, salute, or otherwise place the right hand over the heart. Persons wearing the caps of the veteran's service organizations, such as the Disabled American Veterans, are expected to salute. Others, such as Boy or Girl Scouts in uniform, should render respect to the flag in accordance with the traditions of the organization whose uniform they are wearing.

Our National Anthem

The "Star Spangled Banner" has been designated as the national anthem of the United States of America. During the playing of the anthem when the flag is displayed, persons not in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with their

paper napkins, boxes, or anything that is designed for temporary use. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a flag's staff or halyard.

✂ No part of the flag should be used as an element of costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be worn on the uniform of military personnel, firemen, and members of patriotic or other national organizations, such as uniforms of veterans' service organizations or Scout uniforms.



When lowering the flag, make certain that no part of it touches the ground. It should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag, ceremoniously fold it length wise in half, then repeat with the blue field on the outside. Finally, while one person hold it by the blue field, another then makes a triangular fold in the opposite end, continuing to fold it in triangles until only the blue shield shows.

When a flag is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning.

FLYING OUR FLAG

It is proper to display the flag from sunrise to sunset on all days the weather permits. The flag may also be displayed at night if illuminated by a light. But it is even more important to display the flag on national holidays and days of importance, including:

New Year's Day
 Inauguration Day
 Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday
 Lincoln's Birthday
 Washington's Birthday
 Easter Sunday

right hand over their heart. Those in uniform should begin saluting the flag on the first note of the music, and hold the salute until the last note of the anthem is played.

Again, this applies to those wearing veteran's organizations caps or the uniforms of other patriotic organizations.

Displaying the Flag



When displaying the flag, it is important to remember certain guidelines of proper flag etiquette. They are:

✎ When on display or carried in a procession with other flags, the flag should be positioned to its own right. Also, it should be placed to the right of the speaker or staging area, while other flags are placed to the left.

✎ When the flag is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally from a window sill, balcony, or building, the stars of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff.



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

✎ When the flag is displayed either vertically or horizontally against a wall, the stars should be placed at the top of the flag's right and the observer's left.

Mother's Day
 Armed Forces Day
 Memorial Day (half staff until noon)
 Flag Day
 Father's Day
 Independence Day
 Labor Day
 Constitution Day
 Columbus Day
 Veterans Day
 Thanksgiving Day
 Christmas Day
 Election Days
 State and Local Holidays
 State Birthday

Other days the flag may be flown at half mast may be proclaimed by the President of the United States.



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Guidelines for Display of the Flag

Public Law 94-344, known as the Federal Flag Code, contains rules for handling and displaying the U.S. Flag. While the federal code contains no penalties for misusing the flag, states have their own flag codes and may impose penalties. The language of the federal code makes clear that the flag is a living symbol. In response to a Supreme Court decision, which held that a state law prohibiting flag burning was unconstitutional, Congress enacted the Flag Protection Act in 1989. It provides that anyone who knowingly desecrates the flag may be fined and/or imprisoned for up to one year. However, the Supreme Court in a 1990 decision that the Flag Protection Act violates the First Amendment free speech protections challenged this law.

Important Things to Remember

Traditional guidelines call for displaying the flag in public only from sunrise to sunset. However, the flag may be displayed at all times if it's illuminated during darkness. The flag should not be subject to weather damage, so it should not be displayed during rain, snow and wind storms unless it is an all-weather flag.

It should be displayed often, but especially on national and state holidays and special occasions.

The flag should be displayed on or near the main building of public institutions, schools during school days, and polling places on election days.

It should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

When carried in procession with other flags, the U.S. flag should be either on the marching right (the flag's right) or to the front and center of the flag line. When

When displayed over a street or sidewalk, where it can be seen from either side, be sure the union is to the north on an east-west street, and to the east on a north-south street. The same directions apply to a building lobby or corridor with entrances to the east and west or north and south.

When displayed flat against the wall on a speaker's platform, the flag should be above and behind the speaker with the union on the left side as the audience looks at it (again, the flag's right).

The flag may cover a casket, but should not cover a statue or monument for unveiling. It should never be draped or drawn back in folds. Draped red, white and blue bunting should be used for decoration, with the blue at the top and red at the bottom. On a casket, the union (blue field) should be at the deceased person's head and heart, over the left shoulder. But the flag should be removed before the casket is

displayed on a float in a parade, the flag should be hung from a staff or suspended so it falls free. It should not be draped over a vehicle.

When displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staff, the U.S. flag should be on its own right (left to a person facing the wall) and its staff should be in front of the other flag's staff. In a group of flags displayed from staffs, the U.S. flag should be at the center and the highest point.

When flags of states, cities or organizations are flown on the same staff, the U.S. flag must be at the top (except during church services conducted at sea by Navy chaplains).

When other flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the U.S. flag should be hoisted first and lowered last. It must be on the right of other flags and no other flag should stand higher than it. Flags of other nations should be flown from separate staffs. International custom dictates that flags of different nations be displayed at the same height in peacetime and be approximately the same size. If the flag is suspended outdoors from a rope stretched from a building to a pole, the flag should be hoisted out from the building with the union first. When the flag is displayed other than from a staff, it should be flat or suspended so that it falls free.

When displayed against something, such as a wall, the union should be at the top and to the flag's own right, the observer's left - whether displayed horizontally or vertically.

lowered into the grave and should never touch the ground.

The flag may be flown at half-staff to honor a newly deceased federal or state government official by order of the president or the governor, respectively.

On Memorial Day, the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon. Whenever the flag is displayed at half-staff, it should be first raised to the top. Lowering from half-staff is preceded by first raising it momentarily to the top.

Other Things Not to Do with the Flag

Out of respect for the U.S. flag, **never**:
Dip it for any person or thing, even though state flags, regimental colors and other flags may be dipped as a mark of honor.

Display it with the union down, except as a signal of distress.

Let the flag touch anything beneath it: ground, floor, water, merchandise.

Carry it horizontally, but always aloft.

Fasten or display it in a way that will permit it to be damaged or soiled.

Place anything on the flag, including letters, insignia, or designs of any kind.

Use it for holding anything. Use it as wearing apparel, bedding.

(Information provided by Kenneth Klee, Americanism Director, Michigan Overseas Veteran Newspaper, April 2003).

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