



OLD GLORY

“Old Glory” – This famous name was coined by Captain Stephen Driver, a Salem, Mass., shipmaster. In 1831, as he was leaving on one of his many voyages, some friends presented him with a beautiful flag of 24 stars. As the flag opened to the ocean breezes for the first time, he exclaimed, “Old Glory!” Old Glory has now become a nickname for all American flags.

The United States flag is the most prominent symbol of our country. It represents the values of liberty, justice, and equality and is a unique representation of freedom and national unity throughout the world. It is important that citizens of the United States give the flag the respect it deserves.

The First Stars and Stripes Flag

In the early years, before the United States became a country, colonists from many nationalities settled in America and carried with them the flags of their many countries. Columbus sailed under the Spanish flag, and many early pilgrims carried the flags of Great Britain and other countries. To establish independence and unity, the Continental Congress created the first Stars and Stripes flag on June 14, 1777.

No one knows with absolute certainty who designed or who made the first Stars and Stripes flag. Congressman Francis Hopkinson seems most likely to have designed it. Elizabeth (Betsy) Ross, a widow from Philadelphia struggling to run

her own upholstery business, is often thought to have made the first flag. Historians, however, can find no proof that she actually made the first American flag.

Colors and Symbols of the Flag

The Continental Congress did not indicate why it chose the colors of red, white, and blue for the new flag. They did choose the same colors for use in the Great Seal of the United States and listed the meaning of the colors for the seal as:

Red – valor and hardiness
 White – purity and innocence
 Blue – vigilance, justice, and perseverance.

George Washington is credited with interpreting elements of the new flag

as: The stars were taken from the sky, the red from the British colors, and the white stripes represented the secession from the home country. However, there is no official designation or meaning for the colors of the flag.

13 colonies and were arranged in a circle on a blue rectangle. The circle of stars represented that no one colony would be viewed above another. George Washington is reported to have said, "Let the 13 stars in a circle stand as a new constellation in the heavens."

White stars, on the first Stars and Stripes flag, represented the original

Proper Display of the U.S. Flag

The following are rules for the proper display and use of the U.S. flag. These rules are found in the U.S. Code Title 4, Chapter 1 – The Flag.

General Display

It is the universal custom to display the flag only from **sunrise to sunset** on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. When a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed 24 hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.

The flag should be **hoisted briskly** and **lowered ceremoniously**.

The flag should not be displayed on days of **inclement weather**, except when an all-weather flag is displayed.

The flag should be **displayed**:

- on or near the main administration building of every public institution,
- in or near every polling place on election days,
- in or near every schoolhouse during school days.

No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States.

The flag of the United States of America, when **displayed with another flag** against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right (the viewer's left), and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.



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 U.S. flag at the midpoint and the other flag below.

The flag of the United States 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.



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. The order of precedence for flags generally is National flags (United States first, then others in alphabetical order in English), state (host state first, then others in the order of admission) and territories (Washington DC, Puerto Rico, etc.), military (in order of establishment: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard), then other flags.



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.

The flag should always be allowed to fall free and should never be drawn back nor up in folds. When festoons, rosettes, drapings, or other decorations are desired, bunting of blue, white, and red (in that color order) should be used, but never the flag.

Display during Parades and Ceremonies

The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff or either vertically or horizontally against a wall where the union is uppermost and to the flag's own right (to the observer's left).

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. If there is a line of other flags, the U.S. flag should be in front of the center of that line.



Where the flag passes in a moving column as in a parade or presentation of the colors, all persons, except those in uniform should face the flag as it passes and stand at attention with the right hand

over the heart. When not in uniform, men should remove their hats with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder with the same hand over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. Those present in uniform should render the military salute.

The flag should be included as a distinctive feature in the ceremonial unveiling of a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or the monument.

During a ceremony where the flag is raised or lowered, all persons, except those in uniform, should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform, men should remove their hats with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder with the same hand over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. Those present in uniform should render the military salute.

Display on Vehicles

The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle, boat, or train. When displayed on a motorcar, the staff should be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.



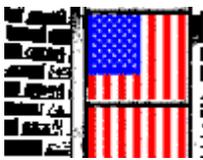
Outdoor Display

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.



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.

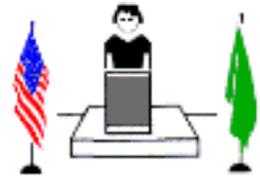
When the flag of the United States is **displayed from a staff** projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff.



When **hung in a window**, place the blue union in the upper left, as viewed from the street. The flag should never be used as drapery or other permanent window covering.

Indoor Display

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 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). *Please note that the old guidelines differed from this updated and simplified one.*



When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker.

In a building with only one main entrance, the flag should be suspended vertically across the corridor or lobby with the union of the flag to the observer's left upon entering. If the building has more than one main entrance the flag should be suspended vertically near the center of the corridor or lobby with the union to the north (when the entrances are to the east and west) or to the east (when the entrances are to the north and south). If the entrances are in more than two directions, the union should be to the east.

Display on a Casket

When the flag is used on a casket, its union should be over the left shoulder of the deceased. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

Half-staff Display



Half-staff is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff. 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. Before lowering the flag it should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day.

When flown with other flags on the same halyard, both flags are half-masted, with the U.S. flag at the midpoint and the other flag below.

On Memorial Day (last Monday in May) the flag should be displayed at half-staff only until noon. By statute, the president is requested to issue each year a proclamation requiring government buildings to half-staff the flag and inviting all the people of the United States to do so as well, on the following days:

May 15 – Peace Officers Memorial Day,
September 11 – Patriot Day,
December 7 – National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

The flag may be flown at half-staff by proclamation of the president or by a state governor.

Respect for the U.S. Flag

The flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, state flags, and organization or institutional flags are to be dipped to the U.S. flag as a mark of honor.

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.

The flag should never touch anything beneath it such as the ground, the floor, water, etc.

The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally but always aloft and free.

The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery.

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.

The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.

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.

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 on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs or printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discarded. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.

No flag or part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. A flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations.

A lapel flag pin should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.

Caring for a Flag

If the flag has become soiled, you should clean it by hand, using a mild soap or if necessary by dry cleaning.

A torn or frayed flag may be mended.

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. Many local organizations such as VFW chapters, Elks, American Legion, or the Knights of Columbus conduct flag retirement ceremonies. Some local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops can also provide this service.

When to Display the Flag

The flag should be displayed on all days, and especially on:

- New Year's Day, Jan. 1
- Inauguration Day, Jan. 20
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, third Monday in January
- Lincoln's Birthday, Feb. 12
- Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February
- Easter Sunday (variable)
- Mother's Day, second Sunday in May
- Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May
- Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May
- Flag Day, June 14
- Independence Day, July 4
- Labor Day, first Monday in September
- Constitution Day, Sept. 17
- Columbus Day, second Monday in October
- Navy Day, Oct. 27
- Veterans Day, Nov. 11
- Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day, Dec. 25
- and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States
- the birthdays of states (date of admission)
- and on state holidays

Flag Day

The Fourth of July is traditionally celebrated as America's birthday. The idea of an annual day specifically set aside to celebrate the flag is thought to have originated in 1885. B.J. Cigrand, a Wisconsin school teacher, arranged for students in her school district to observe June 14 as "Flag Birthday." This date was the 108th anniversary of the official adoption of the first Stars and Stripes flag. In 1949, President Harry Truman, by an Act of Congress, designated June 14 of each year as National Flag Day.

The Flag Code

The National Flag Code was adopted by the National Flag Conference on Flag Day, June 14, 1923. Before this, there were no federal or state regulations governing display of the U.S. Flag. Attending the conference were representatives of the Army and Navy and 66 other national groups that had evolved their own procedures for flag display. Congress did not adopt the Code until Dec. 22, 1942.

The U.S. Flag Code is a guide for handling and display of the U.S. flag. It does not impose penalties for misuse of the flag. Those are left to the states and to the federal government (for the District of Columbia).

Criminal penalties for certain acts of desecration to the flag were contained in Title 18 of the code. This statute was struck down by the Supreme Court decision, *United States vs. Eichman*, on June 11, 1990.

According to the code, no federal agency has the authority to issue official rulings legally binding on civilians or civilian groups. Different interpretations of the code continue to be made. Therefore, actions not specifically included in the code may be acceptable as long as proper respect for the flag is shown.

Common Flag Code Violations:

- ❖ *Flying the flag at night, without illumination.*

There has been some discussion that this rule may have changed since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. There have been no changes, and a flag should only be displayed 24 hours a day if it is properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
- ❖ *Carrying the flag flat, vertically, or horizontally, as in a ceremony at an athletic event.*

The flag should always be aloft and free.
- ❖ *Lowering the flag to half-mast in honor of a deceased employee. This happened recently when the founder of a well-known company died.*

Only the president or the state governor can order the flag lowered to half-staff.
- ❖ *Wearing a flag printed on a t-shirt or other item of clothing.*

The flag should never be used as wearing apparel or apparel accessory such as a handbag.
- ❖ *Using the flag in an advertisement or other commercial manner. This is often seen in newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials, especially during July 4th promotions. Do you have a credit or phone card with a flag on it? Have you ever seen a corporate flag on the same flag pole with the U.S. flag?*

The flag should never be use for advertising purposes. The company flag should never be displayed on the same pole as the U.S. flag.
- ❖ *Use of tablecloths, napkins, paper plates, stationery, and other items with flags printed on them. The American flag often is used as a postage stamp. Have you seen a cake decorated with a flag drawn in icing?*

These all are apparent violations of the flag code. The flag should not be printed on anything designed for temporary use and discarded. The flag should also never be used where it can be easily torn, soiled or damaged in any way. According to ushistory.org, the cutting of the flag cake into pieces and eating, digesting, etc., of the flag does not show respect for the flag and is not appropriate.
- ❖ *Placing a flag patch on an athletic uniform.*

The Flag Code states, "No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform."

Sources of information about the U.S. flag:

How to make an American flag:

<http://sewing.about.com/library/weekly/aa091301a.htm>

Where to purchase American flags made in the United States:

www.annin.com

www.carrot-top.com

www.americanflags.com

www.flagstorusa.com

How to Obtain a Flag Flown Over the U.S. Capitol:

Flags that have been flown over the U.S. Capitol may be purchased by contacting your U.S. senator or representative. Flags are available in two sizes – 3 feet by 5 feet and 5 feet by 8 feet. Fabrics available are cotton and nylon. Each flag will be accompanied by a certificate signed by the Architect of the Capitol.

References:

Ayer, Eleanor. *Our Flag*. The Millbrook Press: Brookfield, Conn. 1992.

The American Legion, <http://www.legion.org>

Independence Hall Association, <http://www.ushistory.org>

United States Flag, <http://www.usflag.org>

Veterans of Foreign War, <http://www.vfw.org>

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