

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes. The flag is draped and has a soft, natural lighting.

FLAG

Etiquette

GUIDE

The Significance of Flag Day

Each year on June 14, Americans celebrate National Flag Day to commemorate the inception of our flag. This day reminds Americans that our flag is more than just a banner but speaks for America's rich history and development as a free country.

On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress passed the Flag Resolution which stated: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

While today's flags still alternate red and white, the number of stars has increased as new states came into the union. The current version featuring 50 stars was introduced in 1960, when the Admission Act officially recognized Hawaii as the 50th state of the United States.

FLAG DAY HISTORY

The National Flag Day Foundation credits Bernard J. Cigrand for the first public celebration of Flag Day. In 1885, Cigrand displayed a 38-star flag on his desk at the school in which he taught. He then assigned his students to write essays about the flag and in its importance.

It wasn't until 1916 that President Wilson issued a proclamation stating that a nationwide observance was in order.

Many states and communities held Flag Day celebrations after Wilson's proclamation. It wasn't until 1949 that President Truman signed an act of Congress declaring the 14th of every June as National Flag Day.



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HOW TO CELEBRATE

There are many ways to show your respect to the American flag on National Flag Day. Properly displaying the

flag outside your home or business is a great way to celebrate Flag Day. Look around for local Flag Day ceremonies. This is a good chance to celebrate an

American tradition and have the chance to donate to a great cause. Have a community barbecue with neighbors to honor Old Glory. You also might be

able to find a flag burning ceremony. It can be a humbling experience to watch an American symbol being properly retired.

Showing the Flag Respect

It is common to see American flags flying high during summertime. Recreational areas such as parks, banquets and festivals typically feature several flagpoles throughout the property.

Learning how flags are cared for and properly displayed can give you a new perspective on the respect the American flag deserves.

The Flag Code specifies the traditional ways in which we give respect to the flag. Here are a few of the specific instructions on how the flag is to not be used, as reported by usflag.org.

- The flag should never be dipped to any person. It is only allowed to be flown upside down as a signal of distress.

- Never use the flag for any advertising purposes. It should not be embroidered, printed on or otherwise impressed on articles such as cushions, boxes or anything intended to be thrown away after use.

- No part of the flag should ever be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform. Military personnel, fireman, police officers or members of patriotic organizations may use a flag patch.

- The flag should never have something attached to it, such as a letter, word, number, figure or drawing of any kind.

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

- When lowering the flag, it should never contact the ground and should be received by waiting hands and arms.

ANTHEM ETIQUETTE

The National Anthem requires special attention being paid to the

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American flag. You will likely find yourself in a situation in which the Star-Spangled Banner is performed. Learn how to pay your respects during the anthem.

Once there is an announcement that the national anthem will begin, you should stand up and remove your hat. People who have not served in the military should place their right hand over their heart until the last note is played. Those who have served or are serving in the military should give and hold a salute during the anthem.

The flag should be the focal point during the anthem, even more so than the performer. Be sure to keep your eyes fixed to the flag until it is complete.

Anyone who has witnessed a live performance of the National Anthem might be surprised to learn that according the Flag Code, it is improper to applaud after the performance. Keep this in mind the next time you witness a live rendition.



A Final Salute

American military members are given a final salute with a beautiful flag ceremony during their funeral. A somber but meaningful tradition, it is our military's way of thanking its members for their dedicated service.

Military honors are reserved for military members who died while on active duty or while in the Selected Reserve. Also, veterans who were honorably discharged who completed at least one term of their enlistment or term of obligated service in the Reserves are also eligible to receive these honors.

Learn the flag's role and other key components to a military funeral.

THE FLAG'S ROLE

At the service, there will be an American flag draped over the coffin of the deceased serviceman or woman. With the family's approval, the flag may be pulled away to allow for an open-casket funeral.

The flag should also be treated with utmost respect during this honorable funeral. This means flowers or pictures should never be placed on top of the flag. There are crescent-shaped arrangements available for resting on a coffin and avoiding contact with the



flag.

The placement of the flag is also important. It should be placed so the blue field with stars is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased.

FLAG-FOLDING CEREMONY

Following the traditional 21-gun salute and the somber performance of Taps, the

funeral concludes with a flag-folding ceremony.

Folding of the flag consists of 12 folds, each one represents a different aspect of America, God and other factors that our country depends on. Here are the steps to properly fold a flag as reported by The American Legion:

Step 1: Straighten out the flag to full length and fold

lengthwise once.

Step 2: Fold it lengthwise a second time to meet the open edge.

Step 3: A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

Step 4: The outer point is then turned inward, to form a second triangle.

Step 5: The diagonal or tri-

angular folding is continued toward the blue union until the end is reached, with only the blue showing and the form being that of a three-corner hat.

Once the flag has been folded, it is then given to a member of the deceased's family. It is used to represent an expression of gratitude for the sacrifice they have made.



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Disposing of a Flag

When your American flag has served you well but is worn out and no longer a fitting emblem for display, the U.S. Flag code states that it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Flags should never be repurposed for clothing or craft projects.

You might wish to burn your flag in a private ceremony so it is not misconstrued as a derogatory action toward America.

HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME

The U.S. Flag code says a flag should be destroyed when it is torn and tattered beyond repair. You also should look for other signs of

wear, such as fading or soiled spots.

Once you have determined your flag is due to be respectfully burned, be sure you have a new one available as a replacement.

HOW TO DISPOSE OF A FLAG

There is a specific process you must follow to properly retire a flag. Depending on

whether you are performing the ceremony in your backyard or an event in your community, here are the minimum steps that should be included, as stated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

- The first step of respectful flag burning is to fold the flag in the customary manner. This involves the traditional 12 folds that represent different American customs and

values.

- You should then build a large fire that is of proper intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.

- Once the fire is sufficient, safely place your flag in the flames.

- Now, the attendees of the ceremony should come to attention, salute the flag and say the Pledge of Allegiance. Have a brief period of silent

reflection.

- Once the flag is entirely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.

Some organizations who perform flag-burning ceremonies may have additional traditions they prefer to follow. Out of respect and to learn something new, follow along with the unique steps provided by these groups.

Indoor Flags

Whether you are planning to display a flag in your home, business or a public place, there is a protocol to follow. When on display, the flag is to be accorded a place of honor. This means always positioning it properly.

You have surely seen American flags displayed around your neighborhood and during television press conferences. But did you know that the position it is displayed in is due to regulations within the U.S. Flag Code? The amount of the thought that goes into properly displaying a flag might surprise you.

DISPLAYING WITH A SPEAKER

When the flag is featured on a speaker's platform, there are two acceptable positions.

- **Flat display:** If the flag is not being displayed from a staff, it is to be flat against a wall. While it may lay vertically or horizontally, the flag's union should be at the top, to the flag's right and to the observer's left.

- **From a staff:** When displayed on a podium, the flag should be in advance of the audience and in the position of honor at the speaker's right as he or she faces the audience.

DISPLAYING WITH OTHER FLAGS

The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when multiple flags of states, localities or societies are grouped for



display.

If the American flag is displayed with one other flag, the staffs are to be crossed. The United States flag is always positioned to its right, with its staff crossed in front of the other flag.

DISPLAYING IN A WINDOW

If an American flag is to be displayed in a window, remember that it is on display to those outside. That means its union should be positioned to its right when being viewed from the street or

sidewalk.

These regulations ensure that our flag is always being displayed with the respect and honor it deserves. When viewing flags around your neighborhood, make note of whether they are being exhib-

ited properly. If you notice any imperfections with the presentation of the flag, the one responsible may not be familiar with the code. It might be worth noting the issue if you are familiar with the owner.

A Time Line of the Flag

It was 1777 when the Continental Congress resolved that the flag of United States contain 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, “representing a new constellation.”

According to usflag.org, the different colors of the flag all hold specific meanings.

- **White:** Signifies purity and innocence.
- **Red:** Represents hardiness and valor.
- **Blue:** The color of the Chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice.

Since the flag’s inception, the flag has seen many stars added to its union, as the United States acquired new territories. The following time line, provided by ushistory.org, showcases the times when new stars were added and which states they represented.

1777: The first nationally approved flag represented Delaware, Pennsylvania, New

Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina and Rhode Island.

1795: Two stars and two stripes were added to a new version of the flag to represent Vermont and Kentucky. This was the only version of the flag to contain more than 13 stripes, with 15.

1818: The end of the 15-strip flag, this version added five more stars and returned to 13 stripes, to represent the 13 original colonies. The states added to the union were Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana and Mississippi.

1819-1877: For decades, states earned their own place in our flag’s union sporadically. These

states are Illinois, Alabama, Maine, Missouri, Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, Nebraska and Colorado.

1889: Improper planning by flag manufacturers caused this version to forgo an official debut. Manufacturers believed the two Dakotas would be admitted as one state, so the flag lacked one star. It is said that these flags still exist. If so, they would make a great collector’s item.

1890-1960: Another era during which stars were added to the union over a long period of time. These states are North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming,

Utah, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Alaska and finally Hawaii.

NOTABLE JOURNEYS

1945: The same flag flown over Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 was flown over the White House in August when the Japanese accepted surrender terms.

1963: The flag was placed on top of Mount Everest by Barry Bishop.

1969: Neil Armstrong placed the American flag on the moon.

2001: The flag from the World Trade towers survives and becomes a symbol of sacrifice in service, loss and determination.



Choosing an American Flag

Before honorably destroying your tattered flag, you should have a new one readily available. When choosing a new American flag, you have different options in materials, size and the quality of construction.

Regardless of which style you choose, be sure to buy an American-made flag. This allows you to support the U.S. economy and buy a far superior product.

Here are some of the materials used to produce American

flags:

- **Nylon:** This is a popular choice in American flags being displayed indoors and outdoors. It is light and durable, resists outside elements and dries quickly. Because its lightweight, it flies efficiently in

slight breezes and shines bright in the sunlight.

- **Tough-TEX Polyester:** If you live in extreme weather conditions or areas with high wind threats, this is great choice. It is considerably heavier than nylon and contains a special weave that has the look and feel of cotton. It is a long-lasting option.

- **Cotton:** Cotton is the traditional flag fabric. It is designed to withstand outdoor use but may require extra care to maintain the integrity of its materials.

CHOOSING A SIZE

The proper size for your display depends on the size of flagpole you will use to hoist it. The following guide will show you what size flag will work best for your situation.

A traditional home kit features a flag of 3 feet by 5 feet. A proper flagpole on which to display this size flag is 20 feet. A taller flagpole requires a larger flag size to look spectacular. A 25-foot flagpole should feature a 4-foot-by-6-foot flag, while a 30-foot pole looks its best with a 5-foot-by-8-foot flag.

You may see flags as large as 30 feet by 60 feet. These are suitable for poles over 200 feet tall.

HOW LONG SHOULD A FLAG LAST?

The lifespan of the flag you choose will greatly depend on its exposure to the elements. Bringing a flag that lacks weather resistance indoors during rain or high wind can increase its longevity. Keep in mind that long exposure to sun also will cause your flag to fade prematurely.