

A close-up photograph of the American flag, focusing on the blue field with white stars and the red and white stripes. The flag is draped and slightly wrinkled, creating soft shadows and highlights. The background is a solid dark blue.

Flag Etiquette GUIDE

Oh Say, Can You See?

On Sept. 14, 1814, amateur poet and attorney Francis Scott Key watched members of the U.S. military raise the American flag over the British bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.

He was inspired to capture the moment in verse. He penned "The Star-Spangled Banner" while he was detained on a ship by the British during the bombardment of the fort.

According to the Library of Congress, Key's song wasn't declared the official national anthem until 1931 during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. The song carried a strong sense of American pride long before it was officially recognized.

A FAMILIAR MELODY

While "The Star-Spangled Banner" represents great emotion, the melody was borrowed from a song written by a group in London in the mid-1760s. The Anacreontic Society was a group of amateur musicians that hired a composer named John Stafford Smith to create music written for the group's president. The tune "To Anacreon in Heaven" was meant to give the society a song to showcase their amateur sing-

ers and an excellent vocal range for those more accomplished. Once the melody made its way to North America, it was borrowed to create the campaign song for John Adams' campaign.

HISTORY IN SPORTS

The anthem, flag and American sports have a long and meaningful relationship. It was Sept. 5, 1918, during the first game of the World Series between the Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs when the tradition of playing the song during sporting events began. The country was in the midst of World War I and Chicago suffered a bombing only a day earlier. The mood was somber.

During the seventh-inning stretch, the United States Navy band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" everyone sang along. The sense of much-needed unity was so powerful that baseball stadiums began incorporating the anthem as a part of the game.

Respectful Disposal Tips

There will come a time when a flag is tattered beyond repair and needs proper disposal. According to the U.S. Flag Code, a flag should be retired when it is in such condition that is no longer a fitting emblem for display and must be destroyed in a dignified way.

MAKE IT AN HONORARY EVENT

The preferred way to retire a flag is by burning, which requires extreme caution and respect to be performed properly. Encourage your community members or neighbors to attend the flag-burning ceremony to reflect on and honor the banner.

You can show your respect and gratitude to active-duty service members by asking them to attend the event in uniform. Children can also benefit from witnessing a ceremony. It can teach them how to proper levels of respect to the flag.

To ensure your flag-burning ceremony is honorable and follows the Flag Code, follow these steps from the Veterans of Foreign Wars:

- With the help of an assistant, fold the flag in its customary manner.
- Make sure the fire is of adequate size to completely destroy the banner.
- Place the folded flag in the fire.

• Guests should come to attention, salute the flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance before taking a moment of silence to reflect.

• Once the flag is completely consumed, safely extinguish the fire and bury the ashes.



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STAY SAFE

In addition to following the strict ordinances regarding your area's burning laws, there are several other safety factors to consider so everyone stays safe. Follow these tips from

the National Fire Protection Agency when respectfully burning a battered flag:

• Avoid burning on dry and windy days as it is easier for fire to spread out of control during these conditions.

• You should also make sure to have supplies available to extinguish a fire in case it blazes out of control.

• Always ensure that someone of authority is near the fire to ensure the flames

remain manageable.

• Aside from fire risks, there is a threat caused by toxic fumes that may be released while burning newer versions of flags, which are made from synthetic materials.



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Celebrate Flag Day

June 14 is Flag Day. It is a chance for Americans to celebrate the history of stars-and-stripes flag, adopted in 1777.

HISTORY

According to the National Constitution Center, the first Flag Day celebration was in 1877.

Years later in the 19th century, teachers across the nation began celebrating the day to introduce the country's history to their students. Educators began lobbying to Congress that the important date required an official place on the calendar. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first proclamation that June 14 should be considered Flag Day. It wasn't until 1949 that it was made official by an act of Congress.

SHOW SUPPORT

In honor of the educators who raised the importance of Flag Day, modern teachers can hold special celebrations in their classrooms. Here are some ways you can support Flag Day:

- Create a lesson plan about our country's history and the struggles our ancestors endured to make it what it is today.
- Explain to your students the proper way to honor the banner during the national

anthem and Pledge of Allegiance. According to the United States Flag Code, non-military members should remove any non-religious headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, with the hand covering their heart.

Even if you don't teach, you can still participate in making Flag Day important in your community. Consider volunteering to display flags around the neighborhood and encourage business owners in

your area to fly flags.

MAKE DONATIONS

Don't forget to honor your local veterans this Flag Day. There are numerous organizations that can benefit from increased awareness and funding. Consider hosting a community event like a picnic or barbecue where donations are made toward these important groups. A public gathering is a good way to raise money while bringing your neighborhood closer.



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Rules for Displaying the Flag

The Flag Code is an intricate set of rules compiled by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the United States House of Representatives.

While there are no penalties in place for displaying the flag in ways that go against the rules; guidelines are in

place to showcase the utmost respect for Old Glory.

To display the flag the way it is intended, follow these suggestions from the American Legion.

- Do not display the flag on days where weather is inclement unless you are using an all-weather flag. While most banners feature a resistant material, using one in questionable conditions can lead to early degradation.
- Display the flag at half-staff when the president or governor orders it.

This is a way for the nation to unite and mourn the death of an important person or after a national tragedy.

- Display the flag vertically when it is not positioned on a staff. Hang the banner so the blue union is uppermost and to the flag's own right (to the observer's left).
- Do not allow the flag to touch the ground. The Flag Code says the banners should not touch anything beneath it. While accidents may occur, the idea is that the historic symbol

should be handled with care to protect it from becoming soiled or damaged.

- Do not fly the flag at night unless it is properly illuminated.
- Fold the flag in the shape of a triangle. When performed correctly, the blue union should be the only visible part of the flag.

The Legion also suggests that to honor the life of a fallen veteran or highly regarded state and national figures, draping a flag over the casket can be used as tribute.

Flying the Flag at Half-Staff

It has been a long tradition in our country to fly the American flag at half-staff during times of national mourning. This signifies a monumental loss has occurred in the country and citizens should reflect and honor the lives of who perished. There are certain steps you must take before properly displaying your flag at half-staff.

- Before finding its position in half-staff, a flag must be briefly hoisted to the peak of its staff for an instant.
- After it has peaked, slowly lower the banner into the half-staff position.
- Before a flag is being taken down for the day, it must be once again raised to its peak before being lowered.

OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION

While flying the flag at half-staff has been a symbol of grief for centuries, it wasn't until March 1, 1954, that a proclamation regarding proper usage was issued. According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, President Dwight Eisenhower decreed:

- The flag will fly at half-staff for 30 days at all federal buildings throughout the nation after the death of a president or former president.
- It will fly 10 days at half-staff after the death of the vice president, current or retired chief of the Supreme Court or the speaker of the House of Representatives
- In the case of a death of a governor of a state, the flag will be flown half-staff at all federal facilities in their state from the day of death until interment.
- The president may order the flag to be flown at half-staff during tragic events of the death of foreign dignitaries or former officials.



Where the Flag Is Always Displayed

While proper etiquette discourages flying the flag 24 hours a day, presidential proclamations and laws do authorize it in certain places. Consider taking a vacation to see the locations deemed historic enough to constantly showcase Old Glory.

FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE — BALTIMORE

**Presidential Proclamation
No. 2795, July 2, 1948**

Visit the historic location where Francis Scott Key penned the standing verse of “The Star-Spangled Banner” after witnessing the American flag raised in victory during the Battle of Baltimore in the War of 1812. The staff still stands in the exact spot it did in 1814.

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS MEMORIAL — ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

**Presidential Proclamation
No. 3418, June 12, 1961**

The flag constantly flies at this emotional tribute to the men of the United States Marine Corps who have given their lives for their country since 1775. The memorial is a historic statue which captures the moment an American flag was raised after an intense battle for Mount Suribachi in Iwo Jima during World War II.

ON THE GREEN OF THE TOWN OF LEXINGTON — LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

**Public Law 89-335,
Nov. 8, 1965**

This site was host to the opening shots of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, on April 19, 1775 --

the beginning of the Revolutionary War. The former battle grounds are now a public park where several memorials are featured.

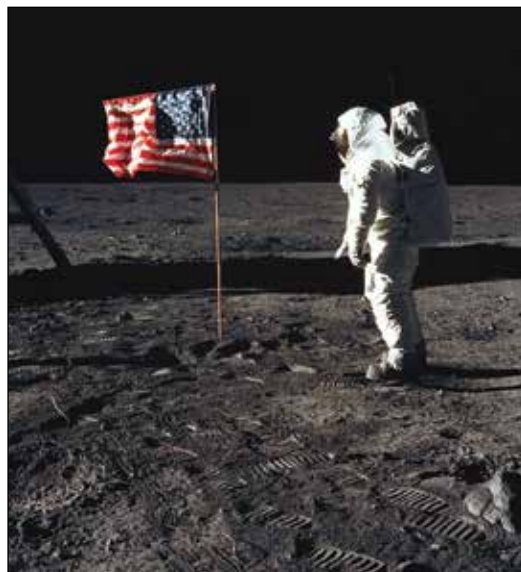
THE WHITE HOUSE — WASHINGTON D.C.

**Presidential Proclamation
No. 4000, Sept. 4, 1970.**

In some countries, a flag will only fly over a president or monarch’s residence to signify they are inside. In America, the banner flies 24 hours a day.

THE MOON — OUTER SPACE

In 2012, NASA excitedly reported that all but one of the six American flags on the moon are still standing. Their stars and stripes have reportedly faded, but it marks the achievements of our country’s astronauts who have ventured into space.



NASA / CREATIVE COMMONS



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Whether you're an educator yourself or a parent who loves their country (and its flag), impress the kiddos in your life with these fun facts about the history of Old Glory.

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Fun Flag Facts

- The colors of the United States flag are no accident. Red stands for bravery, valor and zeal; white symbolizes purity and innocence; blue for loyalty, devotion, vigilance, perseverance and justice of our ancestors.
- Nicknames for the flag include: the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory and the Star-Spangled Banner.
- The blue union holds 50 stars to represent the states that make up the United States, the stripes symbolize the 13 original states
- The flag was created to celebrate the independence of the 13 American colonies from Britain.
- On June 14, (now Flag Day) 1777, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act which ultimately established the new flag for America.
- The first official flag featured its signature red and white stripes but had a bare blue union. Stars were added later to signify the different states as they entered the union.
- The United States banner has similarities in color and design of other countries, such as Liberia, Malaysia, Puerto Rico and Chile.
- The current design of the flag has been the same since 1960, when Hawaii joined the union.
- The United States flag should always be on top of a staff if multiple flags are flown.