

Flag Etiquette



Flying the Flag at Night

According to the United States Flag Code, American flags should be flown from sunrise to sunset. Lowering the banner at night is considered another way to show our utmost respect to the symbol and those who served. However, with enough illumination, it is perfectly acceptable to represent your patriotism throughout the night.

The flag may be displayed 24 hours a day if well lit during the hours of darkness. The Congressional Research Service reports that the dignity accorded to the banner is preserved by lighting that prevents its being enveloped in darkness.

If you feel your flag should wave during nighttime hours, it's important to have a sufficient light source to display its recognizable stars and stripes. Here are some ideas to consider when creating a patriotic display.

CREATE A LIGHT SOURCE

If your flagpole is not around an electrical source, you have a few different options to provide light. Remember your budget when you decide which avenue is the best for your yard.

- **Extension cord:** One way to achieve a beam of light is investing in a light bulb rated

for outdoor use. Check your local hardware store for a spike-mounted beam so you can easily transport it out of your way during daytime hours. You also could choose a heavy-duty extension cord designed to handle the electricity required for extended periods of time.

- **Outdoor outlet:** If you would rather have a permanent light fixture in your yard to display Old Glory, assistance from a licensed electrician is a must. They can tap into your home's current electrical source and install an approved outdoor outlet.

- **Solar lights:** Modern solar power is incredibly efficient as a light source; just be sure it has the power and durability to maintain its shine overnight.

ALL-WEATHER FLAG

If you intend to wave your flag 24 hours, it's crucial to have a banner that can with-



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stand the extended use and inclement-outdoor elements. According to the U.S. Flag Code, "The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except

when an all-weather flag is displayed." An all-weather flag provides you with a banner that is made of high-quality materials while being able to flow in the breeze.

During your search, look for flags made from a nylon material for extra-long use or heavy-weight cotton to maintain a traditional appearance while boosting durability.

Respect for the Flag

The Flag Code was adopted to protect our nation's symbol of freedom and accomplishment of those who have served. If you are unfamiliar with the rules of the banner, it's possible to be unintentionally disrespectful.

Learn the basics from Chapter 4 U.S.C 8, to understand how to honor the flag, per the Government Publishing Office.

- 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 or merchandise.

- 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 in any way.

- 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, word, figure, design, picture or any drawing of any nature.

- 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 in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroi-



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dered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like.

- No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform.

However, a patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen and members of patriotic organizations.

- 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.

Retiring a Battered Flag

When you deem a flag too battered to be displayed honorably, retirement requires a respectful ceremony.

Laying this symbol of America to rest is a humbling experience and should be done with care. The Flag Code expresses that the preferred way of disposal is through a dignified manner, preferably burning.

Do you know how to tell when your banner is ready for a respectful retirement? Consider these factors to determine when and how to release Old Glory from its display.

THE RIGHT TIME

Before assuming your flag is due for a replacement, it's important to inspect it carefully. Many times, exposure to outdoor elements takes a toll on a flag's cleanliness and can make it appear too weathered to continue to serve. However, when its physical integrity is in tact, a simple washing can bring it back to life.

When analyzing the integrity of your flag's material, look beyond easily cleaned obstructions. You will know it is beyond repairable when you notice prominent holes or frayed edges that will alter its size and texture after mending.

WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO RETIRE A FLAG?

The Flag Code doesn't restrict anyone from retiring a banner, so use your best judgment to choose someone who will take the responsibility seriously. Here are some ideas to consider if you plan to conduct a ceremony, from the Independence Hall Association.

- One flag should be used in the cer-



AIRMAN 1ST CLASS AARON JENNE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

emony to represent all banners included in the retirement service. The remainder of symbols should be collectively incinerated;

- The solemn service should be conducted outdoors, in conjunction with a campfire program;

- The ceremony should include two color guards, one representing the flag in use and another for the banner to be

retired; and

- A leader of the service should call the group to attention, order a salute, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, order the flag retired and remain at the scene until the fire is safely extinguished and ashes are burned.

OTHER OPTIONS

Of course, the preferred method of a

dignified retirement is by burning. If the experience is out of your comfort zone, however, a good avenue to seek is your local Veterans of Foreign Wars club or American Legion. These knowledgeable experts can point you in the right direction of a flag-retirement service or host a ceremony to ensure it is done properly and respectfully.

Restore and Repair your Flag

Light damage or a dirty appearance doesn't always mean a flag should be retired.

In fact, the Flag Code encourages banners to be cleaned or mended when necessary. Before committing to a retirement ceremony, try to prolong a flag's duty with maintenance or repairs.

While it is disrespectful for a flag to touch the ground, it can happen during regular raising and lowering. It's important to eliminate the dirt or grime immediately to avoid a lasting stain.

If you are unsure on how to properly wash your American flag, don't hesitate to visit a local-dry cleaner. Most experts can analyze the current condition and decide a best course of

action. It's important to follow their cleaning instructions, as improper techniques may cause irreversible damage to your banner.

Here are a couple of ways to prolong the life of your symbol of American tradition and heritage.

AT-HOME WASHING

For those who can clean a flag without the help of a professional service, special care should be administered.

If possible, reach out to the manufacturer for specific cleaning instructions.

For most materials, it's easy to get great results by hand-washing your banner in cold water, with a mild detergent. Make sure to lay the flag flat while it dries and avoid hanging or folding it while wet. This will help its recognizable colors stay in place without bleeding into one another.

Once you have completed the

cleaning, inspect it to ensure the filth has been removed and there are not issues like holes or frays.

Routine cleaning is important to maintain and examine the integrity of a flag as elements like dirt, salt and air pollutants can have a negative impact.

REPAIR

If you notice small tears in the fabric of your banner, immediate repair it to limit the amount of damage. A small imperfection can be exposed during rippling winds or poor weather conditions.

This correction is usually best left to the experts as frequent modifications can alter the appearance and size, leading it to a state where retirement is necessary.

Search for a flag-repair facility in your area or seek assistance from patriotic organizations to find a professional.

Celebrating Flag Day

“The flag of the United States be 13 alternate stripes red and white, that the Union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation.” This resolution by John Adams was adopted by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777, placing our nation’s banner in the spotlight as a respected symbol.

As new states gained independence and entered the United States, the number of stars and stripes increased. However, in 1818, Congress enacted a law to restore the original 13 stripes and only include additional stars to symbolize incoming states. A century after enacting the Flag Resolution, the first Flag Day was observed on June 14, 1877.

While Woodrow Wilson proclaimed a day of recognition for the banner in 1916, it wasn’t until 1949 when regulators officially designated June 14 as Flag Day, a national day of observance. Do you know how you are going to celebrate this year? Consider sharing the occasion with your peers and loved ones.

IN THE COMMUNITY

June 14 is a day to celebrate the historic symbolism of our nation’s banner. You can do your part by donating your time or resources to benefit the occasion.

Reach out to local leaders to inquire about volunteering to help raise flags



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throughout your community. Many businesses and public parks in your area may need help acquiring and displaying the banner. You also can offer to donate flags to ensure there are enough throughout the area.

Consider hosting a community event inviting peers and neighbors to celebrate the day. Make it an event where others reflect on what the flag means to them and praise the active or retired

service people in their lives.

IN THE CLASSROOM

If you are an educator, Flag Day is an awesome opportunity to teach your students about their responsibility to respect the symbol. Take the following ideas from the National Education Association when developing a positive lesson plan.

- **History of Flag Day:** Discuss the

origins and importance of the holiday.

- **Changes to the flag:** The banner hasn’t always appeared the same, its history is an interesting and entertaining story to show students how the country has evolved; and

- **Overview of the War of 1812:** Explain how the significance of this conflict had in shaping the Star-Spangled Banner and its connection to the flag.

Pledge of Allegiance

“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.”

In classrooms across the country, millions of students partake in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Unfortunately, many have merely memorized the words without understanding the significance it has to their country and freedom. If you are a parent or mentor, it's important to educate our youth about its significance.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Pledge of Allegiance gained its first major publicity through an official program called the National Public Schools Celebration of Columbus Day. It was September 8, 1892 when the prose was printed in the Youth's Companion leaflet and distributed to schools throughout the country.

While it has seen a few revisions since its original form was penned by Francis Bellamy, it became a staple in classrooms while remaining unrecognized by Congress. According to the American Legion, it wasn't until 1942, when the Pledge was officially included in the United States



STAFF SGT. BERNARDO FULLER/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Flag Code and 1945 when the official name of the Pledge of Allegiance was adopted.

ITS IMPORTANCE

When discussing the Pledge of Allegiance with younger children, explain that it is an opportunity to display their loyalty as a citizen to our country. It should be consid-

ered an act of unity for students to stand together and pay their respect to America's banner.

Children should be encouraged to learn more about the meaning of the Pledge, rather than only recite the words. It is intended to inspire curiosity about the country's history and help build a stronger

sense of patriotism.

PROPER ETIQUETTE

Much like the National Anthem, there is a proper way to show your respect to the flag during the Pledge. Here are the steps, from the U.S. Flag Code.

- The pledge is to be recited by standing at attention;
- Face the flag and place the

right hand over the heart;

- People in uniform must face the flag, remain silent and take the military salute; and

- Those not in uniform must remove any non-religious headdress with their right hand, place it on their left shoulder, in such a way that their right hand is over the heart.

Where to See Historical Flags

The American flag has a rich history. The stories behind some historical banners offer humbling perspectives of a growing nation. Fortunately, many of the most famous flags are still on display in facilities throughout the country.

Check out a few of the locations open to the public for citizens to pay their respects and witness the flags that hold a special place in history, in person.

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

The flag considered the source of lyrics which would become our National Anthem is proudly on display in D.C. The Star-Spangled Banner was penned by Francis Scott Key after being held captive during the War of 1812. Key was inspired by a lone United States flag flying over Fort McHenry after a failed invasion by the British.

The banner on display features 15 stars and is considered one of the most meaningful banners in the country's history.

9/11 FLAG 9/11 Memorial and Museum, New York City, N.Y.

September 11, 2001 will forever hold a heart-wrenching place in our nation's history. Terrorist attacks would claim the lives of thousands of citizens and first responders and destroy some of the most famous buildings in the world.

An iconic image from the destruction

showed three firemen raising the American flag over the wreckage of the World Trade Center. Considered lost for many years, it was eventually recovered in 2016, when it was donated to the 9/11 Museum and Memorial, where it rests today.

13-STAR FLAG Historical Society, New London, Ct.

The Nathaniel Shaw Flag, which was named after its original owner, is one of the few remaining authentic 13-star flags flown during the American

Revolution. While the banner has required restoration to appear presentable, it gives us a peek at the humble origins of our nation.

USS ARIZONA

Arizona State Capitol Museum
The flag displayed over the USS Arizona when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, forcing us into World War II is showcased at the Arizona Capitol Museum in Phoenix. Artifacts retrieved from the sunken ship also are featured.



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The U.S. flag that flew on the battleship USS Arizona when it sank during the Pearl Harbor is on display in the first floor of the Arizona Capitol Museum.