



Flag Etiquette

History of Flag Day

To better help you teach your students or children about the importance of the American flag, here is a brief history of Flag Day provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

HISTORY OF OLD GLORY

During the siege of Boston, which was taken over by the British army, Gen. George Washington ordered the Grand Union Flag to be hoisted above his base at Prospect Hill. The original flag had 13 alternate red and white stripes and the British Union Jack in the upper left corner.

On June, 14 1777, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act to establish an official flag for the new nation. Between 1777 and 1990, Congress and the president have enacted several laws changing the shape, design and arrangement of the flag as our nation has grown. Adding additional stars to reflect the new admission of each state.

Here is a list of the acts added between 1777-1990:

- Act of January 1794 provided for 15 stripes and 15 stars after May 1795.
- Act of April 4, 1818, provided for 13 stripes and one star for each state, to be added to the flag on the Fourth of July following the admission of each new state.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- Executive Order of June 24, 1912, established proportions of the flag and provided for arrangement of the stars in six horizontal rows of eight each, a single point of each star to be upward.
- Executive Order of Jan. 3, 1959, provided for the arrange-

ment of the stars in seven rows of seven stars each, staggered horizontally and vertically.

- Executive Order of Aug., 21, 1959 provided for the arrangement of the stars in nine rows of stars staggered horizontally and eleven rows of stars staggered vertically.

TODAY'S FLAG AND ITS MEANING

Just like the flag folding process holds meaning with each fold, each color of the flag carries its own meanings.

Our flag today consists of 13 horizontal stripes, seven red, alternating with six white. The

stripes represent the original 13 colonies; the stars represent the 50 states of the Union.

- Red symbolizes hardiness and valor.
- White symbolizes purity and innocence
- Blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice.



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Flag-Folding Basics

As a part of showing the United States flag the utmost respect, the flag should be folded a certain way and stored or kept safely.

The American Legion demonstrates how to appropriately fold the flag.

FOLDING PROCEDURE

First, you begin by straightening the flag to full length and to fold

lengthwise once.

Fold it lengthwise a second time to meet the open edge, making sure the union of stars portion remains outward in full view. A triangular fold is then started bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

After you've folded the first triangle, the outer point is then turned inward, parallel with the open edge, to form a second triangle. Continue the triangular folding through the blue union portion of the flag until the end is reached with only the blue showing.

MEANING OF THE FOLD

If you didn't know, the way the flag is folded carries a meaning. Legion.org shares the meaning behind the traditional way the United States Flag is folded.

AmericanLegion.org says the flag-folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our country was originally founded. In the U.S Armed Forces, during the ceremony of retreat, the flag is lowered, folded and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's honored dead. The following morning the flag is brought out and

represents the symbol of the nation's belief in the resurrection the body.

FLAG COLORS

The flag is not just a cloth that represents our country and all its glory. The flag has meaning behind its colors and its design. The flag-folding process, if done correctly, should only be folded about 12 times.

The proper way to destroy a worn out non-serviceable flag is by burning. Although the flag code suggests individuals should do so discretely so it is not perceived as a protest or desecration.



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Flag at Half-Staff

If you have a flag pole in your yard or are planning to install one in your yard, there are things you should know about flag positioning.

Here is some information on the proper way to handle a half-staff flag.

WHAT IS HALF-STAFF

The mourning flag or “half-staff” means the position of the flag is half the distance between the top and the

bottom of the staff. USA.gov says the president, through a presidential proclamation, a state governor or the mayor of the District of Columbia can order flags to be flown at half-staff.

Most of the time, it is marked to mourn the death of a government official, military member, first responder or in honor of Memorial Day or other national holiday of remembrance. The heads of departments and agencies may also order the flag to be flown at half-staff on buildings, grounds or naval vessels under their jurisdiction.

According to VeteransAffairs.gov, before March 1954, no regulations

existed for flying the flag at half-staff. On March 1, 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower issued a proclamation on the proper times.

WHEN TO FLY HALF-STAFF

According to Veterans Affairs, the flag should be flown half-staff for 30 days at all federal buildings, grounds and naval vessels throughout the United States and its’ territories and possessions after the death of the president or former president. It is to fly at half-staff for 10 days after the death of a vice president, the chief justice or a retired chief justice of the Supreme Court, or of the death of the speaker of the House of

Representatives.

The flag should also be flown at half-staff at all federal buildings, grounds and naval vessels on the day of and the day after the death of a U.S. senator, representative, territorial delegate or resident commissioner. The president may order the flags to be flown at half-staff to mark the death of other officials, former officials or foreign officials. The president may also order the flags to be flown half-staff after tragic events.

When flown half-staff, the flag should be run up to the top of the staff before being lowered slowly to the half-staff position.

Displaying the Flag

Many men and women have fought to protect the United States flag throughout our country's history, so it's important we uphold complete respect and care for the flag so many have sacrificed their lives to protect.

If you are hosting an event, parade or some sort of gathering where the flag will be present, there are some key flag etiquettes you'll need to know:

WHEN TO DISPLAY

Having the utmost care and respect for our flag is a responsibility all Americans should uphold and feel proud of. According to the Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1, section 4, the universal time to display the flag is sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flag staffs in the open.

There may be a flag displayed 24 hours a day if properly illuminated during hours of darkness.

The section continues the flag should be hoisted and lowered ceremoniously. The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when the



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flag is an all-weather flag.

The section also states the flag should be displayed on all holidays.

The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution, polling place on election days and schoolhouses.

POSITION AND MANNER

Now that we know when to display the flag, the next step is to learn how to display the

flag appropriately. If you are flying the flag on a pole with other flags than the U.S. flag, the U.S. flag must be flown higher than the other flags around. If the flag is displayed on a speaker's platform, the flag should be displayed above and behind the speaker.

On days where the flag is flown half-staff, the flag should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff posi-

tion. The flag should again be raised to the peak before being lowered.

RESPECT FOR THE FLAG

The flag of the United States should be handled with the utmost care and respect. There are some things you should never do with and to the flag.

Section 8 of the United States Code for the flag states the flag should never be displayed with the union down. The union portion of the flag is

the portion that is blue and shows a star for each state. The only exception for the union being down is if you are in dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.

The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground or water. The flag should also never be cared flat or horizontally, it should always be carried aloft and free.

Never use the flag to carry, hold or deliver anything.

Teaching Flag Etiquette

As time goes on and our country gets older, the meaning behind the flag can become less important to kids.

It's important teachers and parents today pass down the history and meaning behind our nation's flag. Here are some tips on lessons to teach.

CREATE A LESSON PLAN

Teachers have the best chance to teach their students about the American flag and appropriate etiquette. It's also important to encourage other teachers and even parents of your students to teach their kids about the flag.

Get together with principals and other teachers or parents in your school system who can create a special flag day event for all students. Invite leaders to speak to the student body of the importance of the flag and what it has meant to them in their lives.

Encourage students to participate in some kind of group project together or individual projects to share what they have learned about the flag and what it has taught them.

TEACH AMERICAN HISTORY

Take the time as you are teaching your students and kids about the flag to teach them about the rest of the United States history and how the flag ties into it all. They



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should learn how the U.S. began and how it evolved into the America we know today. Be sure to mention the states began as colonies that eventually grew and fought for

their independence.

Find online sources and software that can show a visual timeline of the states and how they changed over time.

Teach State Flag Etiquette

Flag Day isn't the only time to learn about the U.S flag but it also is the time teach your students about your state's flag and its history. Each state flag has its own history and its

own design. Be sure to mention how your state flag was created. Explain how Congress approved the design of a national flag on June 14, 1777.

Retiring Old Glory

If you have a flag that needs to be retired and replaced, there are some flag rules you should be aware of when it comes to retiring Old Glory.

Here are some tips for when the time comes to retire the flag.

CLEAN YOUR FLAG

It is not easy to tell whether you should dispose of your flag or not. Sometimes your flag may just be a little dirty from being outside in the weather. Cleaning your flag regularly can restore it to its original appearance, regular cleaning can also extend the life of the flag considerably. Check the label on your flag packaging to see if your flag can be machine washed or if it requires hand scrubbing. Washed flags should also be hung to dry or laid flat.

Try and keep best care of your flag at all times, repair small tears or stains on the flag as soon as you notice them to extend the life of the flag. Note the end farthest away from the staff called the “fly” is usually the first end of the flag to be damaged; try and take best care of this end as you can.

WHEN TO RETIRE THE FLAG

If you have a flag that needs to be retired, here are some tips to help you do so respectfully. Burning the flag when it is



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no longer serviceable is not a form of protest or disrespectful.

The United States Flag Code, Title 4, Section 8 states “The flag, when it is in such condition that is no longer a fitting emblem of display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.”

If you do decide to retire

your flag by burning, here are a few things to note:

- Do so away from people and in a closed area so as not to make people think it is a form of protest.
- Tearing the flag before burning it can help make it easier and quicker to burn. Note some gases may be

released as you burn it, so be careful not to stand too close to the fire when it burns.

If you live in a neighborhood that doesn't allow you to have open fires in the area, there are some options for you.

- Get in contact with your local Boy Scout chapter, Veterans of Foreign Wars or the

American Legion. All these groups can take care on the responsibility of retiring the flag.

- Investigate your city to see if there are any drop off boxes in your town close to you. Some cities have mailbox-type bins where you can drop retired flags.

Flag Facts

Flag Day should be celebrated with honor and fun. You should be proud of the flag and what it represents for our country.

Here are some flag facts you can tell everyone on Flag Day, according to the National Flag Foundation.

Our country has existed for 244 years, and in those years there have been a lot of different types of flags. Did you know there have been 27 different versions of the American flag? The 1777 original flag had 13 stripes and 13 stars to represent the original American colonies. As states were added to the United States, a star was added to the flag.

In our flag etiquette section, we talked about how the flag should mostly be flown throughout until sunset. While it is federal law that the flag should be displayed from sunrise to sunset, there are measures that can be taken to show the flag for 24 hours. Make sure you properly illuminate the flag so it can be seen in the dark.

The current design of the American flag wasn't made by a professional at all. It was made by a 17-year-old high school student. Robert G. Heft, of Lancaster, Ohio, submitted the design in a contest in 1958. It was chosen from among 1,500 different designs



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by President Dwight Eisenhower. That goes to show no matter how old or who you are, you can make an effect in this country somehow.

There have been many dif-

ferent flags throughout the existence of the United States. Our current flag's design, however, has lasted more than 50 years. It might be due to the fact that no states have been

admitted since 1959. The last states to be admitted to the union were Alaska and Hawaii.

Earth is not the only place to have seen our nation's flag. Six American flags have made

been on the moon. All flags to have seen the moon came from the Apollo missions. Missions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 all ended with an astronaut placing a flag on the moon.