



Flag Facts

FCE Citizenship Lesson 2014

Goal of lesson:

Participants will gain:

- Knowledge of the history of the U.S flag
- How to properly display the U.S. flag
- Ways to respect and care for the U.S. flag

*This lesson may be used as written or you may split it into sections and use it as multiple lessons.



“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!” which 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 now find 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 destination or meaning for the colors of the flag. White stars, on the first Stars and Stripes flag, represented the original 13 colonies and were arranged in a circle on a blue rectangle. This represented that no one colony would be viewed above another.

Proper Display of the U.S. Flag

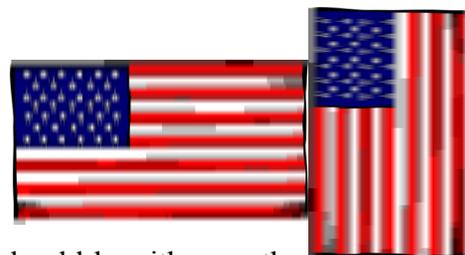
The following are rules for the proper display and use of the U.S. flag. These rules are found in the U.S. Code Title 4, Chapter 1 - The Flag.

General Display

- It is the universal custom to display the flag only from **sunrise to sunset** on buildings and on stationary flagstaffs in the open. 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 display 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.
- 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, 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 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. 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 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).
- When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker.

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.
- On Memorial Day 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 on any other day 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.
- 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.

Respect for the U.S. Flag (continued)

- 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 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 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.
- 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 conduct flag retirement ceremonies.

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 the misuse of the flag. Those are left to the states and to the federal government (for the District of Columbia).
- 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.

Acknowledgments

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>
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