



United States Flag Code

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Editor's Note: After years of seeing the flag incorrectly displayed and often disrespected, I thought we would run an article on flag etiquette.

Standards of respect

The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing, unless it is the ensign responding to a salute from a ship of a foreign nation. This tradition comes from the 1908 Summer Olympics in London, where countries were asked to dip their flag to King Edward VII: the American team flag bearer, Ralph Rose, refused in support of an Irish boycott over Great Britain's refusal to grant Irish independence, and teammate Martin Sheridan is often stated as famously proclaiming that "this flag dips to no earthly king." This tradition was codified as early as the 1911 U.S. Army drill regulations.

The flag should never be displayed with the union (the starred blue union) down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.

The flag should not be used as "wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery", or for covering a speaker's desk, draping a platform, or for any decoration in general (exception for coffins). Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.

The flag should never be drawn back or bunched up in any way.

The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.

The flag should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed, or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard.

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 not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, firefighters, police officers, and

members of patriotic organizations.

Flag lapel pins may also be worn (they are considered replicas) and are worn near the heart.

The flag should never have placed on it, or attached to it, any mark, insignia, 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.

The flag should never be stepped on.

In a parade, the flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle, railroad train, or boat. When the flag is displayed on a motorcar, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to

the right fender.

When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.

The flag should be cleaned and mended when necessary.

If the flag is being used at a public or private estate, it should not be hung (unless at half staff or when an all weather flag is displayed) during rain or violent weather.

When a flag is so tattered that it can no longer serve as a symbol of the United States, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning. The American Legion, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA and other organizations regularly conduct dignified flag-burning ceremonies, often on Flag Day, June 14.

The flag should never touch anything beneath it. Contrary to an urban legend, the flag code does not state that a flag that touches the ground should be burned. Instead, the flag should be moved so it is not touching the ground.

The flag should always be permitted to fall freely (This was not the case during the Apollo 11 moon landing when the US flag was reinforced by a horizontal bar at the top to allow full display even in absence of an atmosphere and the resulting lack of wind activity.)

Displaying the flag outdoors

When the flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a window, balcony, or a building, the union should be at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff. When it is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag, the flag of the United States must always be at the top except that the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for Navy personnel when conducted by a Naval chaplain on a ship at sea.

When the flag is displayed over a street, it should be hung vertically, with the union to the north or east.

If the street runs north-south, the stars should face east. For streets running east-west, the stars should face north. If the flag is suspended over a sidewalk, the flag's union should be farthest from the building and the stars facing away from it.

When flown with flags of states, communities or societies on separate flag poles which are of the same height and in a straight line, the flag of the United States is always placed in the position of honor—to its own right. The other flags may be the same size but none may be larger.

No other flag should be placed above it. The flag of the United States is always the first flag raised and the last to be lowered.

When flown with the national banner of other countries, each flag must be displayed from a separate pole of the same height. Each flag should be the same size. They should be raised and lowered simultaneously. The flag of one nation may not be displayed above that of another nation in time of peace.

The flag should be raised briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously.

Ordinarily it should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset, although the Flag Code permits night time display "when a patriotic effect is desired." Similarly, the flag should be displayed only when the weather is fair, except when an all weather flag is displayed. (By presidential proclamation and law, the flag is displayed continuously at certain honored locations like the United States Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington and Lexington Green.)

It should be illuminated if displayed at night.

The flag of the United States of America is saluted as it is hoisted and lowered. The salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or through the last note of music, whichever is the longest.

Displaying the flag indoors

When on display, the flag is accorded the place of honor, always positioned to its own right. Place it to the right of the speaker or staging area or sanctuary. Other flags should be to the left.

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

When one flag is used with the flag of the United States of America and the staffs are crossed, the flag of the United States is placed on its own right with its staff in front of the other flag.

When displaying the flag against a wall, vertically or horizontally, the flag's union (stars) should be at the top, to the flag's own right, and to the observer's left.

A little history . . .

Prior to Flag Day, June 14, 1923, neither the federal government nor the states had official guidelines governing the display of the United States' flag.

On June 14, 1923, the National Flag Code was constructed by representatives of over 68 organizations, under the auspices of the National Americanism Commission of The American Legion. The code drafted by that conference was printed by the national organization of The American Legion and given nationwide distribution.

On June 22, 1942, the Code became Public Law 77-623; chapter 435. Little had changed in the code since the Flag Day 1924 Conference. The most notable change was the removal of the Bellamy salute due to its similarities to the Hitler salute.

The Freedom to Display the American Flag Act of 2005 prohibits real estate management organizations from restricting homeowners from displaying the Flag of the United States on their own property.

The Army Specialist Joseph P. Micks Federal Flag Code Amendment Act of 2007 added a provision to fly the flag at half-staff upon the death of a member of the Armed Forces from any State, territory, or possession who died while serving on active duty. It also gave the mayor of the District of Columbia the authority to direct that the flag be flown at half-staff. Federal facilities in the area covered by the governor or mayor of the District of Columbia will also fly the flag at half-staff as directed.

The Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Sec. 595.) allows the military salute for the flag during the national anthem by members of the Armed Forces not in uniform and by veterans.



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