



ETIQUETTE
of the
STARS and STRIPES

AS REVISED BY
PUBLIC LAW 94-344

THE UNITED STATES FLAG
*Its History - How to Display
and Respect It*

Veterans of Foreign Wars

FOREWORD

The original "Etiquette of the Stars and Stripes" was compiled and published many years ago by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Several million copies have been distributed by VFW Posts and their Ladies Auxiliary units.

The VFW "Etiquette of the Stars and Stripes" has become a standard Flag reference for schools and colleges, also for civic, patriotic and fraternal organizations.

Within these pages are answers to most of the questions pertaining to proper display and use of our National Flag.

This pamphlet uses information from the current Federal Flag Code. Also, the VFW Rituals and Customs are referenced.

The Flag is very much a part of our daily lives. We should always respect it because it represents everything we are as Americans - everything we hope to be.



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."

The pledge of allegiance to the flag should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.

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HISTORY OF THE FLAG

The Flag of the United States of America is one of the oldest of the national standards of the world; older than the Union Jack of Great Britain or the Tricolor of France.

During the early days of the Revolutionary War a variety of flags were used by the different colonies and military commands. Prominent among these were the "Pine Tree" and "Rattlesnake" flags with various arrangements and mottoes.

Late in 1775 a committee of Congress with Benjamin Franklin at the head, after consulting with Washington, then in command of the army at Cambridge, decided upon the form for a new flag. This flag consisted of thirteen stripes, red and white, with the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew on a blue field in the canton or union. This preceded the Declaration of Independence and indicated that the colonies had not wholly broken from the mother country. This flag was first unfurled by Washington, January 2, 1776. It was probably this flag which was raised by Paul Jones on his vessel and carried by the American fleet which sailed out of Philadelphia in February, 1776.

During 1776 and 1777 a number of flags with thirteen stripes came into use and the need of a definite national emblem was realized. On June 14, 1777, Congress passed an act stating "That the Flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." This was the birthday of the Flag as we now know it and June 14 is now celebrated as "Flag Day." This new flag was probably first displayed on land during the battle at Fort Stanwix, New York, although there are a number of authorities who claim that the first Stars and Stripes displayed in battle was at

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the Battle of Bennington, Vermont, August 16th, 1777. At any rate, this flag, as displayed, remained the national standard until 1795. The first display of the Stars and Stripes by the Continental Army was when the Flag was hoisted over Fort Stanwix, New York, on August 3, 1777.

In the meantime Vermont and Kentucky had become states, and on January 13, 1794, Congress voted that the Flag should have fifteen stripes and fifteen stars. This Flag remained in use for twenty-three years, and it was "The Star-Spangled Banner" of which Francis Scott Key wrote in 1814.

In April, 1818, Congress passed an act providing that the Flag should have the thirteen horizontal stripes, alternate red and white, and that the union should display twenty stars, representing the number of states then in the Union. It also provided that on the admission of every new state to the Union a star should be added on the following July 4th and this has been the regulation every since, accounting for the number of stars now shown.

STARS AND STATES

There is no legal or official designation of stars in the Flag as representing certain states. However, one can presume the first state admitted to the Union to be represented by the star in the upper left-hand corner and the latest state admitted to be the star in the lower right-hand corner. Then reading across from left to right, row by row, top to bottom, the order would be as follows:

Del. (1787); Pa. (1787); N.J. (1787); Ga. (1788); Conn. (1788); Mass. (1788).

Md. (1788); S.C. (1788); N.H. (1788); Va. (1788); N.Y. (1788).

N.C. (1789); R.I. (1790); Vt. (1791); Ky. (1792); Tenn.

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(1796); Ohio (1803).

La. (1812); Ind. (1816); Miss. (1817); Ill. (1818); Ala. (1819).

Me. (1820); Mo. (1821); Ark. (1836); Mich. (1837); Fla. (1845); Texas (1845).

Iowa (1846); Wis. (1848); Calif. (1850); Minn. (1858); Ore. (1859).

Kans. (1861); W. Va. (1863); Nev. (1864); Neb. (1867); Colo. (1876); N.D. (1889).

S.D. (1889); Mont. (1889); Wash. (1889); Idaho (1890); Wyo. (1890).

Utah (1896); Okla. (1907); N.M. (1912); Ariz. (1912); Alaska (1959); Hawaii (1959).

COLORS IN THE FLAG

The red, white and blue colors and their arrangement in the Flag are often interpreted as expressing the very character of our nation. The Continental Congress of 1777 declared that the white stars in a field of blue shall represent a "new constellation." George Washington described the white in the Flag as symbolizing our desire for liberty - the land of the free. We say the red signifies the courage and sacrifices of the nation's defenders, and the blue has been likened to the loyalty and unity of our citizens.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FLAG

The Flag of the United States of America (illustrated clearly in color and detail on the cover of this booklet), has 13 horizontal stripes - alternating 7 red and 6 white - with the red

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stripes at top and bottom. The canton, or union of navy blue, occupies the upper left-hand quarter next to the staff and extends from the top to the lower edge of the fourth red stripe. The 50 stars in the blue field equal the number of states admitted officially to the Union. The stars are arranged with one point up, in 9 horizontal rows. Rows 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 have 6 stars each. Rows 2, 4, 6 and 8 have 5 stars each with stars centered diagonally between stars in the longer rows above and below.

To determine the proper size Flag for a flagpole, figure 25 percent of the height of the flagpole, from the ground, as the correct LENGTH for the Flag.

FEDERAL FLAG CODE

Public Law 344, passed by the 94th Congress, is known as the Federal Flag Code. It is the guide for all handling and display of the United States Flag.

It was established for the use of such civilians or civilian groups or organizations as may not be required to conform with regulations promulgated by one or more executive department of the Government of the United States.

The code does not impose penalties for the misuse of the flag. That is left up to the states and to the Federal Government for the District of Columbia. Each state has its own flag code.

FLAG RULES

Here are the rules for proper display and use of the United States Flag, as established by generally accepted custom and by Public Law 94-344 approved by Congress and signed by the President of the United States.

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Rules covered by the code are indicated (parenthetically) by reference to the corresponding code section and paragraph. Example (Sec. 2, a).

1. It is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaffs in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness. (Sec. 2, a).
2. The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously. (Sec. 2, b).
3. The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all weather flag is displayed. (Sec. 2, c).
4. The flag should be displayed on all special days. (Sec. 2, d). (See list on special days on page 15).
5. The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution. (Sec. 2, e).
6. The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days. (Sec. 2, f).
7. The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse. (Sec. 2, g).
8. When the Flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a window sill, balcony or building front the union of the Flag should always be at the peak of the staff unless the Flag is at half-staff. When suspended over a sidewalk from a rope between a building



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and a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the Flag should be hoisted out from the building, union first. (Sec. 3, h).

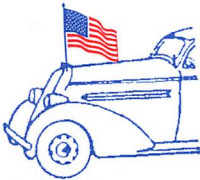


9. When displayed over the middle of the street, the Flag of the U.S.A should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street, or to the east in a north and south street. (Sec. 3, j).



10. When carried in a parade front with other flags the U.S. Flag should always be to the marching right of the other flags, or to the front and center of the flag line. (Sec. 3).

11. When displayed on a float in a parade the U.S. Flag should be mounted on a staff or, if displayed flat, it should be so suspended that its folds fall free, as though the Flag were staffed. (Sec. 3, a).



12. The Flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the Flag is displayed on a motor car, the staff should be fixed firmly to the chassis, or clamped to the right fender. (Sec. 3, b).

13. The Flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free. (Sec. 4, c).

14. During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the Flag or when the Flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the Flag

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and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute.



When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The

salute to the Flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the Flag passes. (Sec. 5).

15. During the rendition of the national anthem when the Flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the Flag with the right hand over the heart. Men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should render the military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note. When the Flag is not displayed those present should face toward the music and act in the same manner they would if the Flag were displayed there. (Sec. 6).

16. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag (see page 2) should be rendered by standing at attention facing the Flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the Flag, and render the military salute. (Sec. 7).



17. When flags of two or more nations are displayed they should be flown from separate staffs of the same height and the flags should be of approximately equal size. (Sec. 3, g).

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18. When flags or pennants of states, cities or societies are flown on the same halyard with the Flag of the U.S.A., the latter should always be at the peak. When flown from adjacent staffs the U.S. Flag should be hoisted first and lowered last. (Sec. 3, f).

19. No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the U.S. Flag, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the Flag during church services for navy personnel. (Sec. 3, c). (See page 17, Public Law 107). No person shall display the flag of the United Nations or any other national or international flag equal, above, or in a position of superior prominence or honor to, or in place of, the flag of the United States at any place within the United States or any territory or possession thereof: Provided, that nothing in this section shall make unlawful the continuance of the practice heretofore followed of displaying the flag of the United Nations in a position of superior prominence or honor, and other national flags in positions of equal prominence or honor, with that of the flag of the United States at the headquarters of the United Nations.



20. When a number of flags of states or cities, or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs with the U.S. Flag the latter should be at the center and highest point of the group. (Sec. 3, e).

21. When displayed with another flag, as illustrated, the U.S. Flag should be to its own right, or the observer's left, with its staff over that of the other flag (Sec. 3, d).

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22. The U.S. Flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, state, city organizational or other flags are dipped as a mark of honor (Sec. 4).

NOTE: There is one exception to the above provision.

U.S. Navy vessels, upon receiving a salute by the dipping of the flag from a vessel registered by a nation which is formally recognized by the U.S., must return the compliment dip for dip.



23. Do not display the Flag of the U.S.A., with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property (Sec. 4, a).



24. Do not let the Flag of the United States touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, floor, water or merchandise (Sec. 4, b).



25. The U.S. Flag should be a distinctive feature of a ceremony for unveiling a statue or monument, but the Flag should never be used as the cover for the statue or monument (Sec. 3, l).

26. On Memorial Day the Flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. (Sec. 3, m).

MEMORIAL DAY



By order of the President, the Flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the U.S. Government and the Governor of a

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State, territory, or possession, as a mark of respect to their memory. (Sec. 3, m). See page 18 for other days.



27. When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the Flags own right, that is, to the observer's left. When displayed in a window, the Flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street. (Sec. 3, i).



28. The U.S. Flag should never be used as drapery, never festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds. It should always be allowed to fall free. Bunting should be used for decoration. (Sec. 4, d).

29. Blue, white and red bunting should be used for covering a speaker's stand, draping a platform front or for general decorations.

Such bunting should always be arranged with the blue above, white in the middle and red below. (Sec. 4, d).

30. When bunting is displayed vertically, the blue will be to the observer's left, white in the center and red on the right.
31. The Flag should never be fastened, displayed, used or stored in such a manner as will permit it to be easily torn, soiled or damaged. (Sec. 4, e).
32. The Flag should never be used as a ceiling cover. (Sec. 4, f).

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33. Never hang or drape the Flag in any position below the seats on a platform. (Sec. 4, d).



34. When used on a speaker's platform, the Flag, if displayed flat, should be above and behind the speaker. Use bunting to decorate a speaker's desk or the front of the platform. (Sec. 3, k).



35. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, 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 or to the right of the audience. (Sec. 3, k).
36. The U.S. Flag should never be used as a table cover or receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying or delivering anything. (Sec. 4, h).
37. The U.S. Flag should never have placed upon any part of it, nor attached to it, any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture or drawing of any nature. (Sec. 4, g).
38. The Flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard.

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Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or hal-yard from which the flag is flown. (Sec. 4, i).



39. When the Flag is used on a casket its union should be over the deceased's left shoulder. Carry the casket foot first. The Flag should not be lowered into the grave, nor allowed to touch the ground. (Sec. 3, n).

40. After a U.S. Flag has been used as a casket cover it may, and should, be displayed in every normal manner.



41. When the Flag is placed upon a grave, see that it will not touch the ground. Do not leave it there indefinitely. In Arlington and other National Cemeteries Flags are removed the following day.

42. When the Flag is so badly torn, soiled or faded that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display the Flag should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. A torn Flag may be mended, or if soiled it may be washed or dry cleaned.

43. Any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the U.S. Flag may be changed or repealed, or additional rules may be prescribed only by the President of the United States, acting as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Any such change shall be set forth in a Presidential Proclamation. (Sec. 8).

WHEN TO DISPLAY FLAG

The Flag should be displayed on all days, especially on

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New Year's Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, third Monday in January; Lincoln's Birthday, February 12; Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February; Easter Sunday (Variable); Mother's Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Independence Day, July 4; Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; Christmas Day, December 25; and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays.

FLAG PRESENTATION

Presentation of the Flag should be preceded by a brief talk emphasizing the importance of the occasion. The following is suggested:

"May the Flag that is being presented to you always be displayed proudly."

"Guard and respect this Flag at all times, for it is the symbol of every high ideal in the American way of life."

"The red in our nation's Flag is made more brilliant by the heroism and sacrifices of our brave defenders; the white more stainlessly pure because of the motives which impelled them; and the blue in the starry field of our banner is made more beautiful by the loyalty and unity of all our peoples - for liberty and justice."

Following the presentation all present should salute the flag, recite the pledge of allegiance and sing the national anthem.

FOLDING THE FLAG

1. Two persons, facing each other, hold the Flag waist high

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and horizontally between them.

2. They fold the lower striped section, lengthwise, over the blue field. Hold bottom to top, edges together, securely.
3. Then fold the Flag again, lengthwise, folded edge to open edge.
4. A triangular fold is started along the length of the Flag from the end to the heading, by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open edge.
5. Outer point is turned inward parallel with the open edge, forming a second triangle.
6. Repeat the triangular folding until entire length of the Flag is folded.
7. When the Flag is completely folded only the triangular blue field should be visible.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- Q:** What should you do with a worn or torn U.S. Flag ? **A:** Such a Flag should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Some VFW Posts and other community groups collect worn flags and conduct a retirement ceremony. Check in your community for who conducts the ceremony.
- Q:** Is it proper to place the Bible, flowers, a lodge emblem or any other object upon the U.S. Flag ? **A:** No. Nothing should ever rest upon the U.S. Flag.
- Q:** Is it correct to half-staff the U.S. Flag on Veterans Day ? **A:**

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No, because this occasion, originally known as Armistice Day, was a day of celebration, not of mourning.

- Q:** How long should a U.S. Flag be left upon a grave ? **A:** Not more than one day.
- Q:** Would it be proper to fly or display a U.S. Flag after it has served as a casket flag ? **A:** Yes.
- Q:** Should a Flag having less than 50 stars be discarded ? **A:** No. While it is better to have a current Flag it is not improper to display an earlier one.
- Q:** If two flags are staffed before the entrance of a building on which side should be the U.S. Flag? **A:** On the left as observed from the street.
- Q:** Is it permissible to wear a button or pin properly depicting the U.S. Flag ? **A:** Yes, such may be worn as a patriotic item.
- Q:** Should one rise and salute each of many U.S. Flags carried in a parade ? **A:** Technically, yes, but it is acceptable to salute the lead flag and stand at attention as others pass.
- Q:** What is the correct way to carry the Flag into a lodge or other meeting room and place it in its stand ? **A:** With the audience standing silently facing the platform the color bearer, followed by escort, marches to the front and faces the audience. Escorts take positions on either side of the Flag bearer. The audience may then recite the pledge of allegiance and sing the national anthem. Flag bearer places Flag in its stand. Audience is seated. Flag detail departs.
- Q:** Should a Flag bearer hold any portion of the Flag against the staff ? **A:** Only when lowering staff through a doorway.

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Q: In addition to Memorial Day, what other days does the President declare the Flag at half-staff? **A:** The Flag is at half-staff from sunrise to sunset on Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15; National Korean War Armistice Day, July 27; Patriot Day, September 11; and National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, December 7.

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"THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER"*

O say, can you see -
By the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hail'd
At the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars,
Through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd
Were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare,
The bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night
That our Flag was still there,
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free
And the home of the brave?

O, thus be it ever
when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes
And the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace
May the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made
And preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must
When our cause it is just,
and this be our motto:
"In God is our Trust."
And the Star Spangled Banner in triumph
shall wave
O'er the land of the free
And the home of the brave.

*Arranged for easy singing reading. The first and fourth stanzas written by Francis Scott Key Baltimore lawyer, in 1814. Congress adopted the song in 1931 as our national anthem, the result of a nation-wide campaign initiated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



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