

UNITED STATES FLAG - PROPER FLAG DISPLAY & FLAG CEREMONIES

(Time: ~ 46 minutes (to "End of Presentation" mark))

NOTE TO ME: Use Flag decals/stickers or similar as prizes for answers to quiz questions throughout Presentation.

The Flag Code

(part of) Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1

Originally Adopted by the National Flag Conference, Washington, D.C., June, 1923. This has had numerous revisions made to it over the years. I'm not going to cover all of it, you can easily print out a copy from the Internet and read it for yourself. I'm going to go over some of the highlights, some common misconceptions, and some things I found that I thought were interesting.

Some of what I'm going to cover comes directly from the U.S. Flag Code, some from a couple of reports by the Congressional Research Service to Congress, some from a "Q&A"-type Flag information Web site, and some of it from various other Web sites.

If we're going to talk about flags, it might help to know some of the terms that relate to flags:

FLAG TERMS - FROM HERALDIC DEFINITION WEB SITES [Armor, Coats of Arms, &etc.]	
-HISTORICAL & SCIENTIFIC WORDS – A bit of Latin :-)	
Vexilloid	A post or pole bearing a <u>solid</u> symbol or symbols. These types of emblems go far back into antiquity and are the "ancestors" of modern flags.
Vexillum	A military flag used by the armies of ancient Rome, consisting of a square fabric piece suspended from a crossbar, and often surmounted by a figure or symbol.
Vexillology	The scientific study of flags.
Vexillologist	A person involved in the scientific study of flags.
Vexillography	The design of flags.
Vexillographer	One who designs flags.
PARTS OF THE "POLE"	
Staff / Pole	A "stick" used to support a banner or flag. There is some confusion regarding the use of words: pole, staff, and pike. In general a <u>pole</u> doesn't have an implied limitation as to its height, so a flag "pole" may be quite tall. <u>Staff</u> is more often used for those supports that may be carried, as into battle, or in a parade. A <u>pike</u> derives from the medieval spear-like weapon used by formations of soldiers. A pike would therefore be relatively short, with an appropriately sharp upper end [finial.]

Ferrule	A metal tip placed at the bottom of a pole or staff. The ferrule is used to protect the end of the staff from splitting or other damage. If sharp, it may also be used to plant the pole into the ground.
Halyard	A rope used for hoisting [raising] or lowering a flag
Cleat	A wooden or metal "tie-point" for the Halyard.
Truck	A cap that covers the top of the flagpole and keeps the weather out. It also serves to hold the pulley through which the halyard [rope] runs to raise and lower the flag.
Finial	A decoration placed at the top of a pike (pole). Typical finials are balls, spears, or eagles.
PARTS OF THE FLAG	
Field	The basic area of the flag, or the basic colors and design of the flag. Also called the "Ground."
Canton	The "Dexter" [right] area of a heraldic field. Often the upper corner of a flag, next to the staff, where a special design appears. The "right" area as in the bearer's right. [NOTE: Left is "sinister" as in bar/bend sinister [indicates illegitimate birth... Underdog reference :-) .]
Union	A device emblematic of union, used in a flag, occupying the whole field, or a part of it, most often the upper corner. In the U. S. Flag, the Union is where the stars are.
Hoist	1) The edge of the flag that's attached to a pole or other restraining device. 2) The vertical height of the flag. 3) also a verb: To raise a flag to the top of the pole.
Grommet	[I copied this one just for fun:] A longitudinally bifurcated metal washer pressed onto the hoist of a flag, and used as an attaching point. Modern grommets are usually made of brass, but can be made of other metals.
Fly	The width (length) of an extended flag, from the hoist to the free end of the flag. [The free end is also called the "Fly End."]
Fringe	Fabric strands, sometimes intermixed with metallic elements, usually arranged in a twisted pattern and sewn along the unattached edges of the flag. In the U.S. Flag, these are NOT considered to be a part of the flag.
Obverse	1) The "front" side of the flag, usually defined as viewing the flag from its attachment point to the fly edge from left to right. 2) The obverse has the "correct" placement of text or objects [not reversed.]
Reverse	1) The "back" side of the flag, usually defined as viewing the flag from its attachment point to the fly edge from right to left. 2) The reverse has the reversed or mirror image placement of text or objects.

MISC.	
Half-Mast / Half-Staff	A custom of mourning. The custom originated as a sign that the invisible "Flag of Death" was flying above the flag at "half staff." This therefore wasn't actually "half", but rather at a point where the real flag would be if another flag the same size was flying over it. <i>NOTE: The U.S. Flag Code defines this differently, stating that it should be "one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff."</i>
U.S. Flag Code	The U.S. Flag Code doesn't cover all possible situations, and it was never meant to. Rather, it is a set of standards (now located in title 4, United States Code, sections 4 to 10) of flag etiquette. There are no Federal civil or criminal penalties for failing to follow the Flag Code's rules. The U.S. Flag Code does not legally supersede any state laws, or city or county ordinances. Some states <i>have</i> enacted laws to add penalties for violations of the Flag Code. Many of these have been ruled unconstitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court. HOWEVER , some may still be in force.

SOME HISTORY OF THE FLAG:

No one knows with **absolute certainty** who designed the first stars and stripes or who made it.

Congressman Francis Hopkinson seems most likely to have designed it, and, contrary to folklore, few historians believe that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first one.

Until the Executive Order of June 24, 1912, neither the order of the stars nor the proportions of the flag were defined. Consequently, flags dating before this period sometimes show unusual arrangements of the stars and odd proportions, these features being left to the discretion of the flag maker. In general, however, straight rows of stars and proportions similar to those later adopted officially were used.

The original flag, with thirteen stars for the thirteen original colonies was used from 1777 until 1795.

Originally, a new star AND a new stripe were added to the flag for each new state. At fifteen stars and stripes, the hoist exceeded the fly, i.e. the flag was beginning to get "taller" than it was "wide". The number of stripes went back to thirteen, one for each of the original colonies, and each new state only got a star... added to the flag on the July 4th, following the state's admission to the Union.

The five-pointed star was relatively rare until it's use on the American flag in 1777. Since then it's been used on many flags around the world. [Handout with folding instructions.]

There is no official meaning or significance to the colors on the flag.

The American flag is called different things, depending on where or how it's displayed... When on a vessel at sea, it's called an "ensign". When displayed on a car or aircraft, or carried by the calvary, it's called a "standard." When carried by foot, as by the infantry or in a parade, it's called the "colors."

Q: May older, historic U.S. Flags be flown in place of the current U.S. Flag?

Historic U.S. flags may be flown, the same as the current flag. The flag is considered to be a living thing, and it never dies. So, if it was ever an official U.S. Flag, it's still considered to be one. If one is displaying various historical flags, one normally gives the position of honor to the most current, and displays them in order by the date of their use.

(Section) § 4. Pledge of Allegiance to the flag; manner of delivery

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. [As I'm interpreting this, persons in uniform DON'T say the Pledge... are there any military personal present that would care to confirm or contradict this?]

A bit more history: The Pledge of Allegiance will be 130 years old as of Sept. 8th of this year [2022]. It was written to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America, and also as a marketing campaign for a magazine called Youth's Companion, by Francis Bellamy. He was a socialist minister who went into publishing when his congregation fired him for his radical views.

The original "Salute" to the Flag***Q: Does anyone know what the original salute to the flag was?***

The original Bellamy salute, first described in 1892 by Francis Bellamy, who authored the original Pledge of Allegiance, began with a military salute, and after reciting the words "to my flag," the arm was extended toward the flag, with the palm-up, kind of like one is introducing the flag.

As written by Francis Bellamy:

At a signal from the Principal the pupils, in ordered ranks, hands to the side, face the Flag. Another signal is given; every pupil gives the flag the military salute — right hand lifted, palm downward, to a line with the forehead and close to it. Standing thus, all repeat together, slowly, "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands; one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all." At the words, "to my Flag," the right hand is extended gracefully, palm upward, toward the Flag, and remains in this gesture till the end of the affirmation; whereupon all hands immediately drop to the side.

The Youth's Companion, 1892

Shortly thereafter, the pledge was begun with the right hand over the heart, and after reciting "to my Flag, " the arm was extended toward the Flag, palm-down.

In World War II, the salute too much resembled the Nazi salute, so it was changed to keep the right hand over the heart throughout.

There are a couple of other differences between the original Pledge and the one we say today. The phrase "I pledge allegiance to my flag" was later changed to "I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America" [in 1923]; and the phrase "under God" was added [in 1954]. There have been numerous attempts over the years to have that phrase removed, so far, all of them have been unsuccessful.

Note also that there is NOT a pause in the phrase "one nation under God".

§ 5. Display and use of flag by civilians; codification of rules and customs [codification means putting together a system as a code or law.]

The following codification of existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America is 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 departments of the Government of the United States. [To put that into English :-)] This code is for *civilians*, who are not subject to military rules. Each of the armed forces has their own flag regulations, which incorporate the Flag Code, but go into much more detail. If you're in the military, you do it their way... if you're not, you should follow the Flag Code. This code is Federal Law, but there

is not any enforcement or penalties included in the Code, so there's no Federal punishment for breaking this law, which puts it more under that category of suggestions... but following it is still the way to show proper respect for our Flag and Country.]

Congress hasn't always said the Pledge, that's a fairly recent event. The House began doing so in 1988, the Senate in 1999.

§ 6. Time and occasions for display

- (a) 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 24 hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness. [Note that there are probably millions of flags flying unilluminated at night, many of them on gravesites... including Arlington National Cemetery. While this is in violation of the Flag Code, there is no disrespect intended. The Flag Code should be followed whenever possible, but it's not always possible to do so.] [Also note, this refers to outside display. It's not necessary to leave a light on a flag indoors.]
- (b) The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
- (c) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all weather flag is displayed.
- (d) The flag should be displayed on all days. [the Code goes on to list a number of specific days, Memorial Day, Labor Day, &etc.]
- (e) The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.
- (f) The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.
- (g) The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

§ 7. Position and manner of display

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, or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

- (a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff [it shouldn't be made out of flower petals].
- (b) 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 motorcar, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
- (c) 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 of America. ***Q: Is there any time another flag can be correctly flown above the U.S. Flag?*** [One place this is not obeyed is at the headquarters of the United Nations, as the flag of the United Nations may be above the U.S. Flag... but the United Nations isn't, technically, on U.S. soil. At the United Nations, all other nation's flags may be equal with the U.S. Flag.] [One other exception, that ***would*** be considered on U.S. soil [although soil is more figurative than literal here]: during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the U.S. Flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy.]
- (f) When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last.

(g) When flags of two or more nations are displayed, they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in time of peace.

[There are a number of additional paragraphs here, that I'm going to skip over. They deal with the details as to which direction the blue field should be when the flag is hung from a building, over a street, on a wall &etc.]

(l) The flag should form a distinctive feature of the ceremony of unveiling a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or monument.

(m) 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. The flag 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 until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. [This paragraph gives details as to when the President or Governor should order the flag to half-staff, and for how long it should be flown that way, for the deaths of various levels of officials.]

(1) the term "half-staff" means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff;

(n) When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

NOTE: While inside a building, on a staff that sits on the floor, there is not a particular side of the building that the flag needs to be on. The direction is not important inside a building. The US flag should be in the place of prominence in the room. This is usually at the far left corner or centered on the far wall, as you enter the room. [Note that, if the flag is suspended from the ceiling, then the direction of the union [the stars] is important... and slightly complicated.]

§ 8. Respect for flag

No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America; the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, State flags, and organization or institutional flags are to be dipped as a mark of honor. [NOTE: An exception to this rule is followed by naval vessels when, upon receiving a Salute of this type from a vessel registered by a nation that is recognized by the United States, the compliment must be returned. If they dip their flag to us, we dip ours to them.]

(a) 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.

(b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise. [This does NOT mean that it has to be burnt or destroyed if it does. It simply means it's disrespectful to allow it.]

(c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free. [For all of you who watch football games or parades.]

(d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. [This would also include folding chairs & such... sitting on the flag would not be proper respect.] It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up in folds, but always allowed to fall free. Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for covering a speaker's desk, draping the front of the platform, and for decoration in general.

(e) 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.

- (f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
- (g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature. [Flags shouldn't be signed, have patriotic sayings written on them, or marked in any way. - NOTE: Postage stamps.]
- (h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
- (i) 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 [blowing your nose in the flag...], printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins [wiping your mouth on the flag...] or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard [again, Postage Stamps...]. [Flags on cakes would also violate the Flag Code... carving and eating the flag would not be very respectful.] Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown. [State or other flags may be on the same staff, below the U.S. Flag.]
- (j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations [this would include Scouting units.]. The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, the lapel flag pin being a replica, should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.
- (k) 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. [It's not required that it be burnt... with nylon flags, that's not a good idea anyway... but it shouldn't be seen hanging out of a garbage can somewhere.] [Note that flags may be washed and/or repaired, as long as they look good afterwards.] [NOTE: Ceremonies of cutting the stars off of the flag, or otherwise cutting it up are not a part of the U. S. Flag Code and therefore are not anything official... which means they're not required. However, if they're done respectfully, they're also not prohibited.]

§ 9. Conduct during hoisting, lowering or passing of flag

During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all present except those in uniform should face the flag 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. [Note: Salute to the flag [hand over heart or other salute] should be done whenever it's moving... in a flag ceremony, it should be done as soon as the flag enters the room... many wait until it's at the front of the room, or just before they say the Pledge.]

Q: What should military personnel and veterans who are not in uniform do?

– Public Law #110-181, Sec. 594 [January 8, 2008]: “Allows members of the armed forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the flag to render the military salute.”

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

The Star-Spangled Banner, while not actually a “flag” is fairly intimately connected with our flag, and is mentioned in the U.S. Flag Code.

– “The Star-Spangled Banner,” written by Francis Scott Key in 1814 actually has four verses [see handout]. One rarely hears the third verse... it states that there will be no refuge for “hirelings and slaves.” Key was most probably referring to hired mercenaries and escaped slaves who were fighting for the British, as that fits the general theme of the song. However, he never explained his words, so some do take a less favorable interpretation.

– The original flag from the “Star-Spangled Banner,” that flew over Fort McHenry, was made by Mary Pickersgill of Baltimore, Maryland in 1813. It measured 30 by 42 feet and she was paid \$405.90 for her efforts.

§ 170. National anthem; Star-Spangled Banner

The composition consisting of the words and music known as The Star-Spangled Banner is designated the national anthem of the United States of America.

§ 171. Conduct during playing

During 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.

Q: What is done during the National Anthem? – What about if there’s no visible flag?

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... basically, you salute the band.

One does not applaud after the National Anthem. It’s sung to honor our country, not the singer.

I mentioned earlier “Half-Staff” and “Funeral Flags” as covered under the “Manner of Display” section of the U.S. Flag Code... and I skipped over some of the other sections that deal with such. I’m going to use some information from the Q&A page of “The Flag Guys” Website to give you a few more details, and some of their interpretations of these two uses of the flag.

The flag of the United States will be flown at half-staff whether or not the flag of another nation is flown at full staff alongside the United States flag. So other nation’s flags may be flown higher than a U.S. Flag at half-staff.

When the US flag is at half-staff, other domestic or non-national flags (state, city, company) should be flown at half-staff.

Q: Where is the U.S. flag never half-staffed?

There are some places where the flag is NEVER half-staffed.

- 1) - The Moon
- 2) - The flag is never half-staffed on the battlefield.
- 3) - There are locations so remote that it is not lowered to half-staff, simply because it’s not practical, but there are no locations where the flag is “officially” not half-staffed either by Congressional or Presidential authority.

Additionally, half-staffing the flag is done on a voluntary basis by civilians, so there are certainly many flags that are never half-staffed.

There are some days when the flag is automatically half-staffed, without a specific Presidential order:

- 1) - May 15, Peace Officers Memorial Day - Sunrise to Sunset
- 2) - Memorial Day - Sunrise to Noon only
- 3) - September 11 [Patriot Day] - Sunrise to Sunset
- 4) - National Firefighters' Memorial Day - normally on the Sunday during Fire Prevention Week in October- Sunrise to Sunset
- 5) - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day - Sunrise to Sunset

These are considered to be days of national mourning. This is why the flag isn't flown at half-staff on Veterans' Day, as that's a day of celebration.

Mayors or other local officials can't order the US flag to half-staff. According to the Flag Code, only the President of the United States, a state's Governor, or the Mayor of the District of Columbia can order the U. S. flag lowered to half-staff. And state Governors and the Mayor of D.C. may only order it to be half-staffed upon the death of a present or former official of their respective government, or upon the death of a member of the armed forces from their jurisdiction.

To honor someone locally [a mayor, firefighter, police officer, &etc.], it's recommended that you fly your city's flag at half staff instead of the U. S. Flag.

If a company had a deceased employee, it's recommended that you half-staff your company flag, which has the advantage of informing passers by, employees, clients, &etc., that someone important to your company has died.

The Flag Code spells out many specifics as far as when a flag *should* be half-staffed. And it does say that only the President and a state's governors are able to order half staff. However keep in mind, that orders from The President or any other government official apply only to flags displayed by government entities. The President and the Federal Government can not order that civilians half staff a flag.

It would seem to follow that if The President or The Federal Government can not order private citizens to participate in a government half staffing then they can also not prohibit a private half-staffing. So, is it proper to half-staff flags without a governmental decree?

In indicating when a flag should be half staffed, The flag code spells out many specific instances. But then it also gives the vague instance described as "*in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law*" to indicate when a flag may be half-staffed. "Recognized customs" can mean a lot of things and indeed in practice it means different things to different people when it comes to local or personal half-staffings.

Some people object to personal half-staffing. Some would focus on the fact that the Code mentions only the "death of other officials or foreign dignitaries." The Code is silent altogether regarding the deaths of persons who are not an official or foreign dignitary.

So again, are private citizens allowed to take the matter of half-staffing into their own hands? According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, entitled: The United States Flag: Federal Law Relating to Display and Associated Questions [2011], they are... to quote:

"Again, the provisions of the Flag Code on flying the flag at half-staff are, like all the Code's provisions, a guide only. They do not apply, as a matter of law, to the display of the flag at half-staff by private individuals and organizations. *No federal restrictions or court decisions are known that limit such an individual's lowering his own flag, or that make such display alone a form of desecration.*"

So, if you choose to half-staff your own U. S. Flag, for whatever reason, that's allowed by the Flag Code.

The U.S. Flag code makes no provisions for how to show mourning if a flag is on a fixed pole or staff and can't be half-staffed [Most Scout Unit flags are on fixed staffs.] You can affix a streamer or ribbon of black crepe to the staff immediately below the spearhead of the U.S. flag. This streamer should be about 1-1/2 times the hoist [the flag's "height"]. It's normally attached with a bow-knot, and allowed to hang naturally. Another option is to tie black bow knots, without streamers, to the flag's fastening points. [This would also apply to flags mounted on a building wall, hung over a street &etc.]

FUNERAL FLAGS

The Flag Code makes no reference to the use of casket flags, after the funeral. Some people feel that, once folded, the flag should remain so forever. Others feel that it would be an honor to display the flag again to show patriotism. Casket flags are 9-1/2'x5' which is almost twice larger than the usual 5'x3' house flag.

It is appropriate for any patriotic person to make and be granted the same honor as military to have a flag drape the coffin. Only those who served in the military, however, are provided the flag for free. It would be recommended that during the service that it be explained that the flag is draping the coffin as an expression of the deceased's patriotism and love of country, and not to mark them as a military veteran.

The flag for one who dies on active duty is provided by one's branch of service. Flags for other Veterans are provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Civilians must purchase the flag at their own expense.

There is a tradition to bury a war veteran with a small flag or should it be requested, it is proper for a veteran to be buried with his or her body wrapped in the flag.

At times, after a funeral flag is folded, three spent cartridges are tucked into a fold of the flag. These are symbolic. During a lull in battle, both sides would fire three volleys each, which would signal a short cease-fire. Each side could then remove their dead from the field of battle, without worrying about being shot themselves.

It is appropriate to have more than one internment flag for presentation at the gravesite. At Richard Nixon's funeral, both of his daughters were presented with a flag.

A note that was sent to "The Flag Guys" Website, regarding funeral flags: "As a retired Funeral Director & current Scoutmaster, I also thought you could include a great tip for those flags. I have twelve of them in our troop. People have given them to us following funerals (usually of aunts, uncles, etc) when they really had no use or desire to keep them. We honor those flags by caring for them and using them to teach our new scouts about flag folding, presenting, caring, etc. We also publicly collect flags to retire at each of our monthly campouts AND publicly on Memorial Day. So, the suggestion for unwanted funeral flags: Contact your local Boy Scout Troop and let them have them for training purposes!"

When wearing the flag as a uniform patch, there are a few things to consider. To wear the flag properly, the field of stars is worn closest to one's heart. Further, when worn on the sleeve of a military uniform, the flag should appear to be advancing and not retreating. Thus, if the patch is to be worn on the LEFT sleeve, use a left flag (normal). For patches worn on your RIGHT sleeve, use a "right" or "reversed field" flag. [NOTE: The BSA doesn't do this.]

Since the Flag Rules do not specifically address the positioning of the patch, a decision is left to the discretion of the organization prescribing the wear. Some elect to use the "left" flag on both sleeves. If one is planning to wear only one patch, it is recommended that it be a "left" flag on the left sleeve.

Military guidelines specify that in support of joint or multi-national operations, the "right" flag is worn on the right sleeve, 1/4" below the shoulder seam or 1/8" below any required unit patches. (Class A uniform excepted.)

Some people find the "right flag" disrespectful of the flag and some call it the "wrong flag." They seek to gain support to encourage a change in the regulations to always use a "left flag" even on a right sleeve.

FLAG CEREMONIES

FLAG BEARER: The person who carries the flag - one flag per person. The Flag Bearer stands silent and at attention throughout the ceremony and does not repeat the Pledge of Allegiance nor sing the National Anthem.

COLOR GUARD: They guard the honor of the flag and watch to see that the flag does not touch the ground. They stand behind the flag bearer, or to each side if in a line of more than one flag. Two per flag is traditional, but any number may be used. They stand silent and at attention throughout the ceremony and do not repeat the Pledge of Allegiance nor sing the National Anthem. They may actually stand with their backs to the flag, facing the audience... they're 'guarding' the flag, not watching it.

COLOR GUARD COMMANDER: The person who "calls out" the parts of the ceremony. They stand in front and to one side of audience.

[NOTE: This would make five people the MINIMUM for a flag ceremony with two flags.]

CARRYING THE FLAG

If the flag is folded, hold it in front of the body at waist level.

If on a staff, the staff should be held at waist level, and angled out from the body, allowing the flag to fly free. It should NOT be held back over the shoulder [it's a flag, not a rifle.]

Q: What should be done if in a room with a low ceiling?

If the ceiling is very low, the flags can be carried "In Trail." This means the flagstaff is held to the right side of the body with the butt of the staff just above the ground or floor. The left hand is placed at the bottom of the hoist -- where the lower edge of the flag meets the staff. The right hand holds both corners of the flag and is placed as low on the staff as possible.

This should form a belly in the now "bloused" flag and should keep the flag from dragging. All flags should be carried in the same manner. The American flag is held the highest.

If the National Anthem is played, all flags EXCEPT the American flag should be dipped until the last note. Salutes are held until the last note is played.

MUSIC FOR RAISING & LOWERING

The traditional bugle call for raising the flag is Reveille. On the first note, one begins to briskly raise the flag.

The traditional bugle call for U.S. civilians lowering the flag is "Taps." In the military, they play "Retreat," then a gun is fired (if available), followed by playing the national anthem or "To The Color" (either live or recorded) and the flag is slowly lowered, completed with the final note of music. The Army plays "Taps" at funerals and as the last call of the night.

"Taps" was composed during the Civil War, by the Union Army's Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield while in camp at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, in 1862, to replace the more formal "Tattoo" (lights out). It is called "Taps" because it was often tapped out on a drum in the absence of a bugler. It was used by both Northern and Southern camps. The call was officially adopted by the U.S. Army in 1874.

COMMANDS FOR A STANDARD FLAG CEREMONY -- PRESENTING THE COLORS

Note: There is NOT any "one correct way" to run a flag ceremony. If it's done with respect, and the flags end up where they should, then you did it correctly. This is a fairly detailed command sequence. Some of these steps can be omitted, or "assumed" [the Color Guard does multiple steps from one command.] These can also be made more detailed e.g. "Prepare to [post colors &etc.]."

Said by the Color Guard Commander:

"Please stand for the presentation of the Colors."

Note: Said before flags enter the room or begin motion.

"Audience Attention"

"Scouts, Attention."

Note: All Scouts stand at attention.

"Color Guard, Attention."

Note: The term "Color Guard" includes the both the Color Guard and the Flag Bearers during a flag ceremony.

"Color Guard, Advance."

Note: Flag Bearers & Color Guard advance to stage or flag pole. If there is more than one flag, the U.S. Flag is first in line or on it's own right.

"Scouts, salute."

Note: This should be said as the flags appear in the room, or begin to move. The salute should be held until the Color Guard Commander releases it.

Note: The Color Guard Commander and Scouts give the Scout salute. Those not in uniform place their right hand over their heart. Military personnel and Veterans may either salute or place their hand over their heart.

"Color Guard, Halt."

Note: The Flag Bearers & Color Guard stand at attention. The Flag Bearers are still holding the flags.

"Color Guard, Cross-over."

Note: The Flag Bearers cross or change position, switching the U. S. Flag from the audience's right to the speaker's right. The U. S. Flag should cross first.

"Will the audience please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance."

Note: Color Guard does not salute or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Nor do they sing the National Anthem. They stand at attention and guard the flags.

"Two"

Note: After completion of the Pledge, Color Guard Commander gives the Command "Two." Upon this command, scouts lower their arm smartly to their side from the salute, but remain at attention. A salute has 2 steps: the first step is the gesture, the second step [two] is the release of the gesture.

"Color Guard, Post the Colors."

Note: The Flag Bearers place the flags into the stands or raise the flags up the poles. Again, the U. S. Flag goes first.

"Color Guard, Honor Your Colors"

Note: Once the flags are posted into the flag stands, or properly raised, the Flag Bearers and Color Guard step back, salute the flag and then stand at attention.

"Color Guard, Reform Ranks."

"Color Guard, About Face"

"Color Guard, Forward."

"Color Guard, Halt."

"Color Guard, At Ease."

"Audience, At Ease... you may be seated."

COMMANDS FOR A STANDARD FLAG CEREMONY - RETIRING THE COLORS

Said by the Color Guard Commander:

"Please stand for the retiring of the Colors."

"Audience, Attention."

"Scouts, Attention."

Note: All Scouts stand at attention.

"Color Guard, Attention."

Note: The term "Color Guard" includes the both the Color Guard and the Flag Bearers during a flag ceremony.

"Color Guard, Advance."

Note: Flag Bearers & Color Guard advance to stage or flag pole.

"Color Guard, Halt."

"Scouts, salute."

Note: The Color Guard Commander and Scouts salute. Those not in uniform place their right hand over their heart.

Note: The salute should be held until the Color Guard Commander releases it.

Note: The Flag Bearers & Color Guard do not salute at this point.

"Color Guard, Honor Your Colors"

Note: The Flag Bearers and Color Guard salute the flag and then return to attention.

"Color Guard, Retrieve the Colors."

Note: The Flag Bearers remove the flags from the stands or lower the flags on the poles.

Note: If flags are on a pole, this command would include removing the flags from the halyards, and possibly folding the flags.

Note: I found no mention of what to do with State or other flags. They should obviously be folded, but I don't know if the tri-fold is reserved for the U.S. Flag or not. Some may find it disrespectful to fold other flags in that manner.

"Color Guard, Reform Ranks."

"Color Guard, About Face"

"Color Guard, Forward."

Note: The U. S. Flag never "retreats" during a flag ceremony.

"Color Guard, Halt."

"Color Guard, Dismissed."

"Two"

"Scouts and audience, Dismissed"

Condominium or homeowners' association cannot restrict one's flying the flag, depending upon where one flies it.

If your flag is being displayed on property that is yours, and yours alone [not a common area], they can't stop you. [Note: This is per the information I found... please investigate this further before you take this issue to court :-)]

Gold fringe can be found on ceremonial flags used indoors and for outdoor ceremonies. The fringe is considered completely within the guidelines of proper flag etiquette. There is nothing in the Flag Code about the fringe being for federal government flags only. The Internet contains many sites that claim that the fringe indicates martial law or that the Constitution does not apply in that area. These are entirely unfounded (usually citing Executive Order 10834 and inventing text that is not part of the order) and should be dismissed as urban legends. Others ascribe meanings of spiritual authority. Gold fringes on flags goes back long before the United States. Flags in ancient India had gold fringe, as did those in France, England, and throughout Europe. The gold fringe is considered to be "outside" of the flag... it's not actually a part of the U.S. Flag.

Contrary to urban legends, the ball ornament on top of the pole doesn't have anything inside of it. Urban legends often state that it contains a razor, lighter, and flare to destroy the flag if we were ever invaded by the Soviets. The ball ornament pre-dates the Cold War... and the Soviets could probably figure out how to make an American flag anyway.

Another urban legend states that the U.S. Flag only flies at the White House when the President is in town. This *is* true of some other countries, but an American flag is always flying on top of the White House whether or not the President and First Family are at home."

At times one may see a "cap" placed on the finial [the top of the staff], as part of retiring the colors. This is a Phrygian cap [frij' ē ən] or Liberty cap. In ancient Rome, it was given to a slave upon manumission [release from slavery] as a sign of his freedom. In the Revolutionary era, the red Phrygian cap evolved into a symbol of freedom in America, France, and elsewhere. The picture of Liberty on early silver dollars shows her wearing a Phrygian cap and today it is seen on the seal of the US Army. Also, those fans of cartoons will recognize it as the headgear worn by Smurfs.

There are no official meanings to the triangular folds in the flag, however, there are a number of flag-folding ceremonies that offer someone's idea of what they should mean.

There is a proper order of precedence for flags of "equal rank" such as military and/or state flags.

The official order of precedence for military flags is: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard. The order is determined by date of establishment of that branch of the armed forces.

For State flags, the order of precedence may be by the date of their entry into the Union, or by alphabetical order.

[End of Presentation - the following may be used to fill additional time, if needed]

A Story from "The Flag Guys" Website:

" I got a call from what was clearly the classic "Little Old Lady". She wanted to know how to go about disposing of her worn out flag. I told her about burning it and told her if it is not possible for her to do so she could bring it to our shop. She asked me many questions about how we would handle the flag, how we would treat the flag, where we would bring it. Would it be done the right way? She was very concerned and very involved. She needed to satisfy herself that her Old Glory would be handled with the care it deserved for its final service. All her questions answered, she thanked me and we said good-bye.

You could appreciate the next part of the story better if you knew the layout of our shop. Our building was not built as a commercial building and the shop entrance is all the way around the back. I admit it is a long walk for some people and it can be quite an effort to get around there. In fact, anytime I see a person making their way in who is challenged by the walk, I just head them off in the parking lot to save them the effort. Nowadays with cell phones, disabled people sometimes just call us from the parking lot or call ahead so we can watch for them. Anyway, later that day I was sitting at my desk in my office from where I can see our parking lot. A car pulls up and out gets a little old lady. I did not yet know it was the same lady who called. I watch her slowly begin the march around to the entrance and I proceeded into the shop area to meet her. After a moment she comes in and approaches the counter saying she had called about having a flag to retire. But I see no flag. Out of here purse comes the tiniest of 4"x6" American flags on a little stick! That is smaller even than the typical flag you get at a parade. It is a desk size flag. She had made that call, asked all those questions, driven to my shop and made that march just to be sure that her tiny little flag would get the respectful retirement it deserved. When I see our American Flag neglected, worn and faded beyond recognition yet still being displayed, I just think of that little old lady, of her long march, and I just smile."

Why I Love Her

By John Wayne

"America, America, God shed His grace on thee..."
You ask me why I love her? Well, give me time and I'll explain.
Have you seen a Kansas sunset or an Arizona rain?
Have you drifted on a bayou down Louisiana way?
Have you watched the cold fog drifting over San Francisco Bay?

Have you heard a bobwhite calling in the Carolina pines
Or heard the bellow of a diesel at the Appalachia mines?
Does the call of the Niagara thrill you when you hear her waters roar?
Do you look with awe and wonder at her Massachusetts shore...
Where men, who braved a hard new world, first stepped on Plymouth's rock?
And do you think of them when you stroll along a New York City dock?

Have you seen a snowflake drifting in the Rockies...way up high?
Have you seen the sun come blazing down from a bright Nevada sky?
Do you hail to the Columbia as she rushes to the sea...
Or bow your head at Gettysburg...at our struggle to be free?

Have you seen the mighty Titans? Have you watched an eagle soar?
Have you seen the Mississippi roll along Missouri's shore?
Have you felt a chill at Michigan, when on a winter's day,
Her waters rage along the shore in thunderous display?
Does the word "Aloha"...make you warm? Do you stare in disbelief
When you see the surf come roaring in at Wa-i-mea Reef?

From Alaska's cold to the Everglades...from the Rio Grande to Maine...
My heart cries out...my pulse runs fast at the might of her domain

You ask me why I love her?...I've a million reasons why.
My beautiful America...beneath God's wide, wide sky.

"And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea."

Explanation of the Pledge Ceremony
- adapted from a recording by Red Skelton

I - Me, an individual, a committee of one

Pledge - Dedicate all of my worldly possessions to give without self pity

Allegiance - My love and devotion

To the Flag - Our standard - Old Glory - a symbol of freedom. Wherever she waves there is respect because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts "Freedom is everybody's job!"

Of the United - United - that means we have all come together

States Of America - States - individual communities that have united into fifty great states - fifty individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united in a common purpose - love for country.

And to the Republic - Republic, a state in which power is given to representatives chosen by the people to govern; and the government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For Which it Stands - This is what our Flag stands for - Our United States

One Nation Under God - meaning so blessed by God

Indivisible - Incapable of being divided

With Liberty - Which is freedom - the right to live one's own life without threats or fear of retaliation.

And Justice - The principle or qualities of dealing fairly with others.

For All - For all - which means, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, it's as much your country as it is mine.