

Flag Etiquette

Standards of Respect

The Flag Code, which formalizes and unifies the traditional ways in which we give respect to the flag, also contains specific instructions on how the flag is not to be used.

Do's	Don'ts
Fly flag upside down only as a distress signal.	Dip the flag to any person or thing.
Use blue, white, and red bunting (with blue stripe on top!) as an alternate to using the flag as decoration.	Use the flag as a drapery, for covering a speaker's desk, draping a platform, or for any decoration in general.
Use flag patch on uniforms for military personnel, firefighters, police officers, and members of patriotic organizations.	Use the flag as any part of a costume or athletic uniform.
Receive the flag with waiting hands and arms when lowered. Fold neatly and ceremoniously before storing.	Let any part of the flag touch the ground or any other object when lowering it.
Clean and mend the flag when necessary.	Place or attach any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind.
Destroy the flag by burning in a dignified manner, only when it is no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our country.*	Use as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
	Use the flag 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.

***Note:** Most American Legion Posts regularly conduct a dignified flag burning ceremony, often on Flag Day, June 14th. Contact your local American Legion Hall and inquire about the availability of this service.

Displaying the Flag Outdoors

- When the flag is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag - of a state, community, society, or Scout unit - the flag of the United States must always be at the top (except 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 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 smaller, but none may be larger. No other flag should ever 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.

Raising and Lowering the Flag

- The flag should be raised briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously. Ordinarily, it should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset. It should be illuminated if displayed at night.
- The flag 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, staging area, or sanctuary. Other flags should be to the left.

The contents of this handout were taken from the [usflag.org website](http://usflag.org) at www.usflag.org/flaquetique.html

Honoring Those Who Served

Honors*:

- Simple Honors: All military members are entitled to simple honors. These include a military chaplain to conduct the service; a U.S. flag to cover the casket; rifle volleys; and the playing of Taps.
- Full Honors: Authorized for those who served as a sergeant major and all officers. In addition to simple honors, the use of a caisson (or similar vehicle), active pallbearers (on funeral detail), escort commander, a color guard, troops, and a band (the size of the troops and band will vary with rank). Additionally, a rider less horse with boots placed backward in stirrups is added for colonels and higher.

**Military Funeral Honors have always been provided whenever possible. However, the law now mandates the rendering of Military Funeral Honors for an eligible Veteran if requested by the family. As provided by law, an honor guard detail for the burial of an eligible Veteran shall consist of not less than two members of the Armed Forces. One member of the detail shall be a representative of the parent Service of the deceased Veteran. The honor detail will, at a minimum, perform a ceremony that includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of Taps. Taps will be played by a bugler, if available, or by electronic recording. Today, there are so few buglers available that the Military Services often cannot provide one.*

American Flag: When it covers the casket, it symbolizes the service of the deceased. The flag is placed so that the field of blue covers the left shoulder of the deceased. This tradition is believed to have originated on the battlefield where caskets were not available, so, instead, the Service members were wrapped and buried in the flag.

Caisson: Used instead of hearse, dates back to early battlefields when the caisson was the most useful means of moving a casket.

Rifle volleys (gun salute): Originated in ancient symbolism, the three volleys of rifles were believed to scare away evil spirits. Today, the tradition is considered the final tribute to the Service member.

Words to Taps (traditional version):

“Day is done, gone the sun
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky;
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.”

This handout was adapted from [the Military Funeral Honors website](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh) at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh>