

Girl Scout's Guide to Flag Ceremonies



Proper American Flag Etiquette

Display of the American flag is governed by law to ensure that it will be treated with the respect due the flag of our great nation. This is known as the United States Flag Code. Some of the rules most useful for Girl Scouts are:

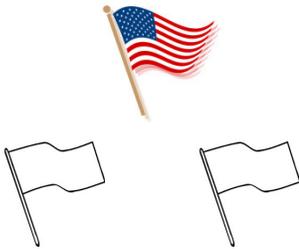
- The American flag must be placed in the center, and higher, when displayed with a group of state, local, or organizational flags flown from staffs. It may also be positioned to the right of other flags. (If girls were to hold the flag while facing their audience, their right side would be the flag's own right.)
- When displayed from a staff in a house of worship or public auditorium, the flag of the United States must hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergy's or speaker's right as he or she faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergy or speaker or to the right of the audience.
- The flag is to be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly with dignity.
- The flag should never be allowed to touch anything beneath it, nor should it ever be carried flat or horizontally—always aloft and free.
- Never use the flag as a cover or place anything on top of it.
- No disrespect of any kind should be shown to the flag of the United States. It should be kept clean.
- The flag, when carried in a procession with other flags, should be either on the marching right or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.
- When you display the flag on a wall or in a window where people see it from the street, it should be displayed flat with the blue part at the top and on the flag's own right (which is the observer's left).
- When displayed after dark, the flag should be illuminated.

Correct Flag Positions for Displays and Ceremonies

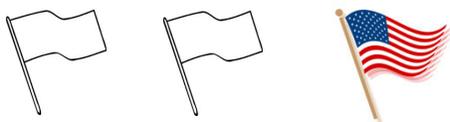
When carrying two flags, the U.S flag is on the right.



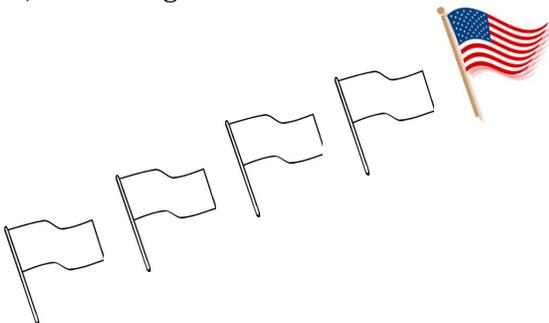
When carrying three or more flags, the U.S flag can be in the center front.



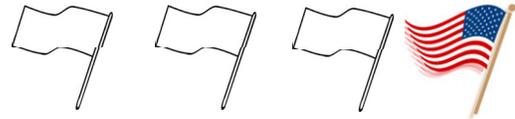
Or with multiple flags in a straight line, the U.S flag is on the farthest right.



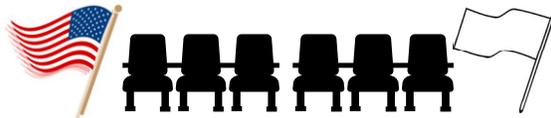
When carrying many flags down a narrow aisle, the US flag is the first



When standing in line, the U.S flag is to the right and at the same level as other flags. If the Pledge of Allegiance is said, the bearer steps to the center and in front of the other flags.



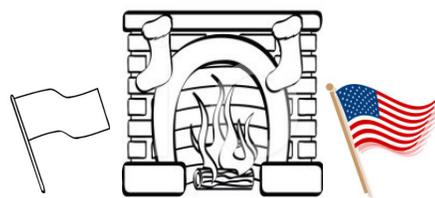
When posting the flags at the same level not on a platform, the U.S flag is right of the audience.



On a platform, the U.S flag is on the right of the speaker.



Against a wall, the U.S flag is to the right of the audience.



Folding the American Flag

Special care should be taken that no part of the flag touches the ground. The Flag is carefully folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, emblematic of the hats worn by colonial soldiers during the war for Independence. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of night.



1. To properly fold the flag, begin by holding it waist high with another person (or persons) so that its surface is parallel to the ground.



2. Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of the stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.



3. Fold the flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside



4. Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the flag.



6. Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle



5. The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner



7. When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible. The Color Bearer carries it with the point forward away from her or his body

Flag Ceremony

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes, dreams, and people it consists of. If your group includes girls from other countries, girls can honor their flags, and conduct an international flag ceremony. Flag ceremonies may be used for:

- Opening or closing meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, outdoor settings, large auditoriums, on stage, even on horseback. All flag ceremonies share one thing—respect for the flag.

Flag Ceremony Guidelines

Keep it simple. Emphasis needs to be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Adults can ask girls these questions when planning:

1. Who will carry the flag?
2. Who will be the color guards?
3. Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
4. What song will be sung? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
5. Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
6. After the Pledge of Allegiance, will the Girl Scout Promise and the Law be said?
7. In what order will the parts of the ceremony take place?
8. When will the group practice?
9. Where will the flags be placed at the end of the ceremony?



Flag Ceremony Terms:

The color bearer (or flag bearer) is the person who carries the flag. There is one color bearer for each flag used in the ceremony.

The color guard is a team that guards the flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six girls are sufficient.

The Girl Scout in charge (or caller) is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony.

Commands for a Flag Ceremony

Opening Ceremony

Girl Scouts attention

Color Guard attention

Color Guard advance

Color Guard post the colors

Color Guard salute the colors

Girl Scouts, the flag of your country

We will now say the pledge of

allegiance (Girl Scout pledge or

anything appropriate) Color Guard

dismissed

(announcements)

Girl Scouts Dismissed

Closing Ceremony

(announcements)

Girl Scouts attention

Color Guard attention

Color Guard advance

("Taps" or anything
appropriate)

Color Guard salute the colors

Color Guard retire the colors

Color Guard dismissed

Girl Scouts dismissed

Basic Script for Posting the Flags- Opening

"Audience (or Girl Scouts) Please rise for the presentation of the colors."

The Audience will rise. Wait until they are quiet for continuing

"Color guard, attention!" This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention

"Color guard, advance!" The color guard walks forward carrying the flags in formation and stops at predetermined destination. Flag stands should already be in position

"Color guard, post the colors" The color bearers assist the flag bearers in placing the flags in stands the American flag is posted first, then the other flags

"We will now say the Pledge of Allegiance"

The caller leads the audience in the Pledge while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention

"We will now say the Girl Scout Promise"

The caller leads the audience in the Promise while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention

"Color guard dismissed!" Before the color guard retreats, the American flag bearer leads the color guard in the 1, 2, 3, right foot rock back salute. The color guard then exits the area in a "buddy line," leaving the flags in their stands

"Please stay standing until the color guard on finished"

This is the end of the ceremony. The caller exits the podium and takes her seat following the path of the color guard if appropriate



Basic Script for Posting the Flags- Closing

"Audience (or Girl Scouts), we will now prepare for to retire colors"

This is the signal that the ceremony is about to begin, and everyone should be quiet and paying attention. They remain seated.

"Please join us in singing "Taps" (Or other appropriate closing song.)"

"Color guard, attention!" This is the signal to the color guard to be ready to start.

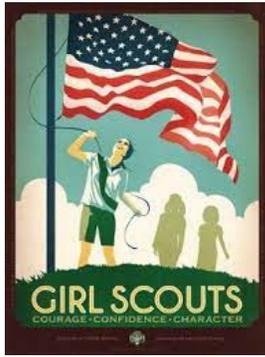
"Color guard, advance!" At this command, the color guard walks to where the flags are posted; they stand at attention. in front of the flag poles or stands and await the next command.

"Color guard, retire the colors!" At this command, the color guard may salute briefly, then the Flag Bearer(s) step forward to remove the flags from the flag stands. The American Flag is removed last. The color guard turs to face the audience.

"Girl Scouts/Ladies and gentlemen, please stand as the Colors are retired."

"Color guard, retire the colors." The color guard uses the same information as they did to present the colors to now retire the colors, typically walking to the back of the room or into a hallway





Outdoor Flag Ceremony Guidelines

The flag should be raised and lowered by hand:

- Do not raise the flag while it is still folded, or partially folded.
- When raising the flag, move it quickly to the top of the flag pole.
- When lowering the flag, move it slowly and with dignity.
- If other flags are to be flown, the American flag is the first one raised and the last one to be lowered, so that it is always in the highest position.
- If carried in an open (unfolded) position, the flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.
- Whenever possible, the flag is always raised and lowered from the leeward side of the flagstaff (on, or toward, the side sheltered from the wind or toward which the wind is blowing; downwind.) This helps keep the flag from wrapping itself around the pole!
- The two Color Guards attaching the flag to the halyards (the ropes used to raise and lower a flag on a mast or pole), stand facing the flag pole, to hoist the flag without entangling the halyards.
- The Color Bearer continues to hold the edge of the flag until it is hoisted clear of her grasp, taking particular care that no portion of the flag touches the ground. When the flag is clear and being raised, the Color Guards step back and stand at attention but do not salute.

The Color Guard

- Members of the color guard stand quietly at attention when they are not actively preparing the flag for raising or lowering. They do not say the Pledge of Allegiance or give a salute during the Pledge, nor do they sing along with any songs that might be used in the ceremony. They may give a brief salute in unison immediately after the flag has been raised and secured, and just before the halyard is loosened to begin the lowering of the flag.
- If members of the color guard wear red sashes (optional) the Flag Bearer(s) wear the sash over the right shoulder, and tied in a square knot at the waist on the left side. The Guards and Caller may wear red sashes tied around the waist, with a square knot on the left side.
- At the flag ceremony, the Flag Bearer enters and exits first, followed by the Guards.
- The first two members of the color guard help to hold the flag while the Flag Bearer fastens it to the halyard, and are responsible for seeing that the flag does not become entangled as it is fastened to the halyard, and that it does not touch the ground.
- Once the flag is attached to both halyards and is free of the ground, the Color Bearer steps back and the first two Guards raise the flag.
- The entire color guard is responsible for unfolding and folding the flag



WHEN A FLAG MUST BE PERMANENTLY RETIRED...

“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.” The Flag Code, Section 4 (k)

It is also permissible to bury a flag. You may modify this ceremony for a flag burial, placing the field and the stripes in a box to be buried, or directly into the ground.

AHEAD OF TIME: A fire should be safely built in a grill or fire pit; it must be burning strongly when the ceremony begins. Have your water buckets and a shovel or rake near-by. (Or, if the flag is being buried, have a hole dug in an appropriate place – one that will not be walked over, for example. A tree, shrub or flowers may be planted over the spot where the flag or the flag’s ashes, are buried.)

If the ceremony is being held in a public area, be sure you have all the necessary permissions! Girl Scouts should be in official uniforms.

The Ceremony

Girl Scouts and guests stand quietly in a horseshoe formation, facing the fire. (Have chairs available for those unable to stand.)

GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE: “Color Guard, advance.”

If the flag is being flown on an outdoor pole or carried on a flag staff: “Color Guard, present the colors... Girl Scouts, Ladies and Gentlemen, the flag of our country: pledge allegiance.”

If the flag is folded: The Color Guard simply faces the audience

Flag Retirement Ceremony Script

“Our flag has been used so much, that it is no longer a fitting emblem to display, so we are respectfully burning it.”

Lower the colors or unfold the flag.

Cut off stripes one at a time, saying one statement with each stripe.

FIRST STRIPE: The 13 stripes stand for the original 13 colonies which are: Massachusetts, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Georgia, and New Jersey.

SECOND STRIPE: The white stands for purity

THIRD STRIPE: The red stands for courage

FOURTH STRIPE: “Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.” – Wilma Rudolph

FIFTH STRIPE: “Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” - Ruth Bader Ginsburg

SIXTH STRIPE: “Technique and ability alone do not get you to the top; it is the willpower that is most important.” - Junko Tabei

SEVENTH STRIPE: “Every great dream begins with a dreamer” -Harriet Tubman

EIGHTH STRIPE: “The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.” – Abraham Lincoln

NINTH STRIPE: “The potential for greatness lives within us all.” - Wilma Rudolph

TENTH STRIPE: - “When they go low, we go high.” – Michelle Obama

ELEVENTH STRIPE: “As women achieve power, the barriers will fall. As society sees what women can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out there doing things, and we’ll all be better off for it.” - Ruth Bader Ginsburg

TWELFTH STRIPE: “The time is always right to do what is right.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

THIRTEENTH STRIPE: “We are the ones we have been waiting for” – Alice Walker

“Each state is being represented by a star on a field of blue, which signifies a new constellation being formed.”

“As we place it into the fire, let it burn brightly and remind us how truly our flag represents our country.”

“Will you please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance and singing The Star-Spangled Banner and then Taps.”

Other Possible Quotes

“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain” – Dolly Parton

“I am thankful for my struggle because without it, I wouldn’t have stumbled across my strength”
– Alex Elle

“Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to Greatness” –
Oprah Winfrey

“My mission in life is not merely to survive but to thrive and to do so with some passion, some
compassion, some humor, and some style.”-Maya Angelo

Taps

Day is done, gone the sun
From the lakes, from the hills, from the
sky All is well, safely rest
God is nigh.
Fading light dims the sight
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright
From afar, drawing near
Falls the night.
Thanks and praise for our days
Neath the sun, neath the stars, neath the
sky
As we go, this we know
God is nigh.

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Pledge of Alligence

I pledge allegiance to the flag
Of the United States of American
And to the Republic
For which it stands
One nation
Under god
Indivisible
With liberty and justice for all

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.