

United States Flag Code

United States Code Title 4 Chapter 1 — The Flag

§1. Flag; stripes and stars on

The flag of the United States shall be thirteen horizontal stripes, alternate red and white; and the union of the flag shall be forty-eight stars[,] white in a blue field.

§2. Same; additional stars

On the admission of a new State into the Union one star shall be added to the union of the flag; and such addition shall take effect on the fourth day of July then next succeeding such admission

§4. Pledge of allegiance to the flag; manner of delivery

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: "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.", should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove any non-religious 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 [use a] military salute.

§6. Time and occasions for display

1. It is [custom to] display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open... [The] flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
2. The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
3. The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all-weather flag is displayed.
4. The flag should be displayed on all days, especially on
 - 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
 - Father's Day, third Sunday in June
 - 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.

5. The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.
6. The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.
7. 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.

1. The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff [.]
2. 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.
3. 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, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during... services for the personnel of the Navy [.]
4. The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags... are grouped and displayed from staffs.
5. 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 [U.S. flag should be on top].
6. 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.
7. When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff [.]
8. When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left [.]
9. When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it 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.
10. When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of... prominence [and in] the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience[.]
11. [At the unveiling of a statue or monument,] the flag should... never be used as [its covering.]
12. 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... On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. By order of the President, the flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the United States... as a mark of respect to their memory [.]
13. 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[.]

§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.

1. 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.
2. The flag should never touch anything beneath it[.]

3. The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.
4. The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free[.]
5. 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.
6. The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
7. The flag should never have... any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing placed upon it.
8. The flag should never be used... for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
9. The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions[,] handkerchiefs[,] or otherwise impressed on... anything that is designed for temporary use and discard[.]
10. No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. [A] flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. 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.
11. 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

§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 persons present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries present should stand at attention[.]

§10. Modification of rules and customs by President

Any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the flag of the United States of America, set forth herein, may be altered, modified, or repealed, or additional rules with respect thereto may be prescribed, by the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, whenever he deems it to be appropriate or desirable; and any such alteration or additional rule shall be set forth in a proclamation [.]