

# Flying Your Flag

*by*

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The American flag is the most recognized flag in the world. Our flag represents inspiration, freedom, democracy, and the potential to realize one's dreams.

For many around the world it is a symbol of inspiration, freedom, democracy, and achieving personal dreams. For others, our flag represents the virtues of democracy and freedom that they despise.

Like our nation, our flag tells the history of American growth. It has followed us through times of peace and war, sadness and joyfulness, defeats and triumphs.

The history of how our flag came about is shrouded in legend and mystery. Questions still exist as to who designed the first flag? What do the colors and stripes really stand for? The general consensus is that Betsy Ross or Francis Hopkinson designed the first recognized flag of the US. There is much debate and this question will probably remain in the future.

As to the colors, stripes, and stars, this is a historical progression of designs. Throughout US history, Congress has approved various designs of our nation's flag. Congress has also established flag specifications and how our flag is to be displayed and disposed of. However, unlike other countries, Congress has not enforced 18 US Code §700 regarding penalties for desecrating the flag.

Our flag consists of 13 stripes of alternating red (7 stripes) and white (6 stripes). The number of stripes represents the original 13 colonies. The red stripes symbolize hardiness and valor, while the white stripes symbolize purity and innocence. Some historians believe that the red stripes also represent those who gave their life in forming our nation.

In the upper left quadrant is a field of blue (canton) which represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice. Within the canton is one star for each state. Speculation is that the stars were placed in the canton signifying a unification of the values that the canton represents.

The flag's width-to-length ratio is 10 to 19. No significance is tied to this ratio other than it was by presidential executive order. There are 3 standard sizes of the American flag:

	Home Use	Public Use
<u>Flagpole</u>	<u>Flag size</u>	<u>Flag size</u>
15'	3' x 5'	4' x 6'
20'	3' x 5'	4' x 6'
25'	4' x 6'	5' x 8'



The following information is an edited version written by the American Legion.

#### **Days Flown at half-staff**

- Memorial Day, the U.S. flag is to be flown at half-staff from sunrise to noon
- Peace Officer Memorial Day (May)
- Patriot Day (Sept. 11)
- National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service (October)
- Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (Dec. 7)

#### **Days Flown at full-staff**

- Armed Forces Day
- Flag Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day.

Unless your governor or the president of the United States declares a half-staff proclamation, the United States flag is to be displayed at full staff. To be notified of when the flag is to be flown at half-staff:

- Sign up for the Flag Alert e-newsletter at [legion.org/newsletters](http://legion.org/newsletters) for notification when the U.S. flag is to be displayed at half-staff.
- Subscribe to the Flag Alert text notifications. First, text Flag to 534466. You will receive a text asking for a valid email address for the two-step authorization. Once that is complete, you will receive the text alerts.

Flag retirement ceremonies are often held on or around Flag Day by American Legion posts. Drop off unserviceable flags at your local post for proper disposal. Section 8, paragraph K of the [U.S. Flag Code](#) states, “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.”

### **Displaying the American flag at a meeting.**

Left to right facing flag order should be:

1. U.S. flag
2. State flag
3. City or county flag
4. POW/MIA flag
5. U.S. Army
6. U.S. Marine
7. U.S. Navy
8. U.S. Air Force
9. U.S. Coast Guard
10. U.S. Space Force
11. Military affiliated organizational flags (no particular order)
  - a. VFW
  - b. American Legion
  - c. AMVETS
  - d. Etc.
12. Non-military organizations

### **More flag resources**

Order American-made flags at <https://www.americanlegionflags.com/>.

Purchase “Let’s Be Right on Flag Etiquette” book [here](#).

[Ask the flag expert a question.](#)

Find more flag resources at [legion.org/flag](http://legion.org/flag).