

Respecting the U.S. 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."

Important Things to Remember

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag should be rendered by standing at attention and facing the flag, with the right hand over the heart. If not in uniform, a person should remove his or her hat with the right hand and hold it near the left shoulder, with the hand over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.

Display the U.S. Flag every day, but especially on national and state holidays. On Memorial Day, the flag is flown at half-staff in the forenoon (sunrise until noon), then raised to its normal position at the top of the staff. When raising the flag to half-staff, first raise it to the top of the staff, then lower it half-way. When lowering a flag that has been flying at half-staff, first raise it to the top of the staff, then lower it all the way. The U.S. flag should be displayed on or near the main building of every public institution, in or near every school on school days, and in or near every polling place on election days. Always hoist the U.S. flag in a brisk manner; lower it slowly.

Things to Avoid

Never show disrespect to the U.S. Flag. Never dip (lower quickly and then raise) the U.S. Flag to any person or thing. Regimental colors, state flags and organization or institutional flags are dipped as a mark of honor. Never display the U.S. Flag with the field of stars at the bottom, except as a distress signal. Never let the U.S. Flag touch anything beneath it — ground, floor, water or merchandise. Never carry the U.S. flag horizontally, but always aloft and free.

Always allow the U.S. Flag to fall free — never use the U.S. Flag as drapery, festooned, drawn back or up in folds. For draping platforms and decoration in general, use blue, white and red bunting. Always arrange the bunting with blue above, the white in the middle and the red below. Never fasten, display, use or store the U.S. Flag in a manner that will permit it to be easily torn, soiled or damaged in any way. Never use the U.S. Flag as a covering or drape for a ceiling. Never place anything on the U.S. Flag and never have placed upon it (or on any part of it or attached to it) any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture or drawing of any nature.

The U.S. Flag should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs and the like; printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes, or anything that is designed for temporary use and discarded; or used as any portion of a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, fire fighters, police officers and members of patriotic organizations. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff from which the flag is flown.

Learn more about the U.S. Flag Code at www.usflag.org/uscode36.html.

Folding the Flag

When the U.S. Flag is no longer in suitable condition for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner -- preferably by burning. Many Veterans groups perform this service with dignified, respectful flag retirement ceremonies.

When your flag isn't on display, fold it into a triangular shape and store in a safe place to show your respect. Here's how to do it:

What You Need

A U.S. Flag and another person to help fold it.

Follow These Steps

Start by holding the flag parallel to the ground, at waist-level, making sure to keep it taut.

Fold it in half, length-wise, so that the Union (that's the part with the stars) faces the ground.

Now fold it in half again. The stars should now face out from both sides of the flag.

*Tip: As you're folding, make sure the crease is perfectly aligned.
You can also smooth it out with your hand to get rid of any air bubbles.*

Now you're ready to start folding the triangles. While your partner holds the flag taut, take the left-hand corner on the end opposite from the stars and fold it up on top of the flag so that the edge is parallel to the right-hand side. The stripes should now run perpendicular to each other, forming a triangle.

Now take the outermost point of the triangle's edge, and fold it over the flag. Continue to do this until the stripes meet the stars. Try to make the folds as tight as possible.

Tuck the remaining flap into the slot formed between the stars and stripes.

You now have a perfectly folded flag that will fit neatly in any drawer.

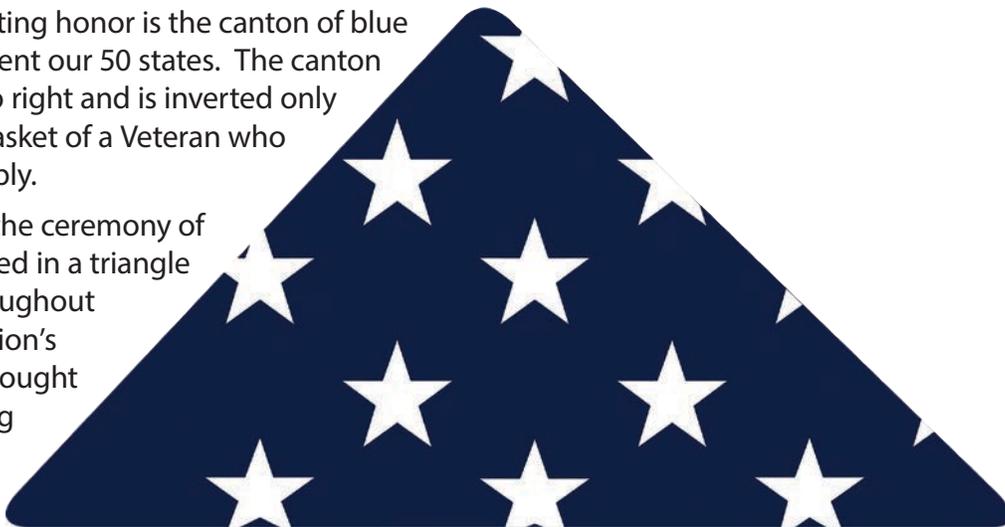
Watch a "Flag-Folding Ceremony" video, performed by members of the U.S. Marine Corps at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVYYdOQ8RvM>.

Meaning of Flag-Folding Ceremony

The U.S. Flag-folding ceremony represents religious principles that guided the founders of our nation.

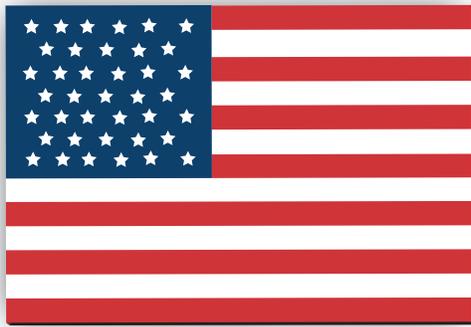
The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars that represent our 50 states. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted only when draped as a pall on the casket of a Veteran who has served our country honorably.

In the U.S. Armed Forces, at the ceremony of retreat, the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's dead. The next morning it is brought out and, with the accompanying sound of reveille, is raised on the flagpole.

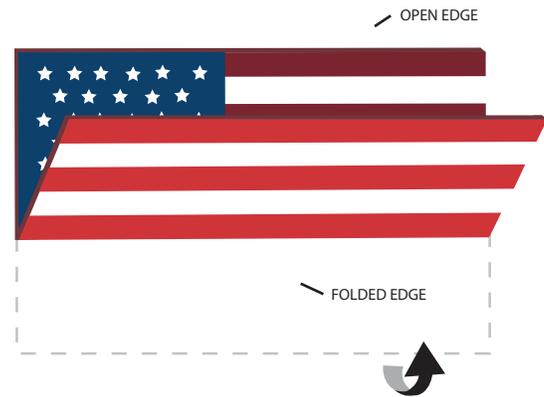


Flag etiquette is an important part of the American tradition that ensures the Stars and Stripes are treated with the dignity it deserves. Established by Congress in 1942, the official U.S. Flag Code created guidelines for the care and display of the flag. Although it does not describe an official method for folding the flag, the rules do state that you should never store a flag in a way where it can get torn, soiled or damaged. You should also never let the flag touch anything beneath it, such as the ground or floor.

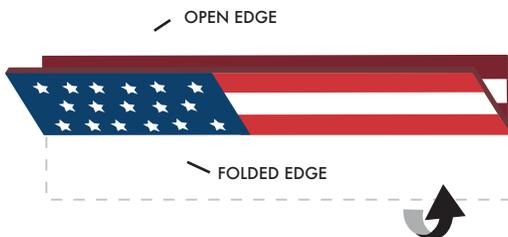
Over time, a triangular shape has become the traditional way to fold the flag and store it in a safe manner. The exact origin of this specific procedure is unknown, but it may trace back to the Gold Star Mothers of America or the United States Air Force Academy.



Hold the flag waist-high with a partner; the flag should be parallel with the ground.



Bring the upper and lower halves of the flag together, folding it lengthwise in half.



Fold the flag lengthwise again, bringing the lower half up to the top. The field of stars should be visible on the left side.



Bring the striped corner of the folded edge up to meet the top edge of the flag, making a small triangle.



Fold the triangle over itself, making the triangle point inward. Continue triangular folding.



The triangular folding continues until the entire length of the flag is folded.