



Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana

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Flag Ceremonies

Mini-Training

American Flag Etiquette

American Flag Ceremony Know-How: The flag ceremony is a tribute to the flag of the United States of America, a symbol of our country's freedom. In order to be inspiring and memorable, the flag ceremony should be well-planned, smoothly performed, and dignified. Through this ceremony, girls learn the meaning of this country's flag and gain an appreciation of respect by learning to handle it correctly and observing its proper use.

A flag ceremony can be basic and simple, or formal and elaborate. A flag ceremony is often used to open or close a Girl Scout troop meeting, or as a part of an Girl Scout Investiture, Rededication ceremony, Thinking Day event, Court of Awards ceremony, or other patriotic event. In camp, there is usually a flag ceremony every morning and evening. If possible, the girls in the color guard should be in Girl Scout uniforms, but it is not required. They should have clear directions and be given ample opportunity to practice.

How to Fold a Flag

- The blue canton (stars) of the flag should be nearest the flagpole and is always on top during the folding procedure.
- Fold the flag in half lengthwise.
- Fold again, forming a lengthwise quarter-fold.
- The blue canton should be on top.
- Starting at the end of the red and white striped field, begin making triangular folds.
- Continue until the flag is completely folded. Tuck the end into the fold.

Flag Etiquette (basic to all flag ceremonies honoring the United States Flag)

1. The United States Flag is always to the right:
 - a. No other flag or pennant should be placed above, or to the right of, the flag of the United States of America.
 - b. When displayed on a speaker's platform in a public auditorium, the flag should occupy the position of honor and be placed at the speaker's right as she faces the audience. Any other flag displayed on the platform should be placed at the speaker's left as she faces the audience.
 - c. When the flag is displayed from a staff in a public auditorium, other than on the platform, it should be placed in the position of honor at the right of the audience as they face the platform.

2. The United States Flag is always kept in front of other flags:
 - a. It is the first flag in a marching column.
 - b. It is nearest the audience when pivoting.
 - c. It is nearest the audience when crossing to posting position.

3. The United States Flag flies the longest. The flag is considered “flying” when it is held:
 - a. Indoors, it is posted last, retrieved first.
 - b. Outdoors, it's raised first, retired last.

The spoken and sung part of the ceremony is done while the flag is flying:

- a. Indoors, the ceremony is done while the flag is held in presentation.
- b. Outdoors, the ceremony is held while the flag is flying from the pole.

Saluting:

- a. The basic salute is the right hand held over the heart.
- b. Saluting is done as the flag passes in parade, during the Pledge of Allegiance, and as it is raised outdoors. Flag bearers and flag guards may salute in unison quickly after posting or raising the flag. However, they do not participate in speaking or singing due to the importance of guarding the flag.

The Color Guard: The **color guard** (a term used to include both the flag bearer and color guards) consists of a **flag bearer** (girl who carries the flag) and at least one **color guard** (girl who guards the flag and stands next to the flag bearer) for each flag in the ceremony. There may be more color guards, if desired.

The color guard should have good posture throughout the ceremony. White gloves are optional, but if used, all members of the color guard must wear them. Sashes (usually red) may be worn by the color guard.

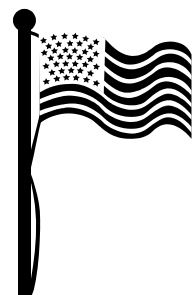
Sash etiquette:

- The **flag bearer(s)** wears her sash over the right shoulder, tied in a square knot on the left hip.
- The **color guards** wear a sash around the waist, tied in a square knot on the left side.
- The **caller, song leader**, and other members of the ceremony may also wear a sash around the waist, tied in a square knot on the left side.

The **flag bearer's** duty is to carry the flag. The **color guard's** duty is to protect the flag. If the flag bearer were to trip, the color guard catches the flag. The **color guard** assists in posting the flag in the stand, or placing it on the flagpole.

The color guard does not take part in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, Girl Scout Promise, songs, or any other part of the verbal ceremony.

Silence: There is absolute silence from the time the color guard moves forward until they return to the starting point.



Procedure: The ceremony begins after the flag has been posted or raised. The ceremony itself varies, but often consists of the Pledge of Allegiance, a song, the Girl Scout Promise, and perhaps an inspirational poem.

The audience salutes the flag (hand over heart) when the flag is in motion or when first loop is fastened to the flag rope. At retreat, the salute begins when the flag is retrieved or starts down the flag rope.

The flag should be displayed on all days, but especially on national and state holidays. It may be flown from sunrise to sunset and at night if properly lit. It should be flown only in fair weather, with the blue field (the canton) on top and to the observer's left.

Procession: The American flag is carried on the right of, or in front of, other flags. The flag should be posted on the right side; this should be the flag's right side (not necessarily the audience's right side). Raise the American flag first before any other flags are raised. Lower the American flag last after other flags are lowered.

Carrying a flag on a pole: The flag bearer holds the flag pole directly in front of her with the heel of the staff at her left side in her left hand. The weight of the flag is supported by holding the staff with the right hand from the upper side.

Half-mast: When raising the flag, hoist it to the top for an instant, then lower it to half-staff and secure.

Taps: Taps may be played while the flag is being lowered. If singing is part of the ceremony, the song should be sung before the flag is lowered.

Flags from two or more nations: Poles must be same height. International usage forbids displaying the flag of one nation above another in time of peace.

Cleaning a flag: Washing or dry cleaning a soiled flag is allowed.

Disposing of a worn flag: A flag that is no longer fit for public display should be retired in a dignified manner, preferably by burning. See below for a Flag Retirement Ceremony.

The flag should never be defaced in any way. It should not be displayed, used, or stored in a way that would cause it to be easily soiled or damaged. It should never be allowed to touch anything that is beneath it.

Flag Ceremony

Participants:

Flag bearer: Carries the flag, either folded in front of her or on a flag pole.

Color guard: One or two girls walk beside the flag bearer and help her post the flag. The flag bearer, color guards, and caller collectively are also called the "color guard."

Caller: Announces the commands so everyone can hear.

Formation:

Indoor: The flag bearers, color guards, and caller stand at the back of the room.

Outdoor: The entire group proceeds in a single file and forms a horseshoe around the flagpole. Those conducting the ceremony stand at one end of the horseshoe formation.

Commands:

Color guard, attention. Flag bearer and color guards snap to attention.

Girl Scouts, attention. Audience stands silently with hands at sides.

Color guard, advance. Audience place hands over hearts while the flag is in motion.

Indoor: Flag bearers and color guards march to the front of the room.

Outdoor: Flag bearer and color guards march to the flag pole and stand facing it.

Color guard, post the colors.

Indoor: Flag bearers and color guards place the flags in the flag stands.

Outdoor: Flag bearer and color guards fasten flag to the flagpole ropes.

Girl Scouts, please say the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Girl Scout Promise.

Patriotic songs and inspirational poems may be included.

Color guard, retreat.

Indoor: Flag bearers and color guard march to the back of the room.

Outdoor: Flag bearer and color guard march to one end of the horseshoe.

Flag Retreat:

Color guard, attention. Flag bearer and color guards snap to attention.

Girl Scouts, attention. Audience stands silently with hands at sides.

Color guard, advance. Color guard marches forward and stands in front of the flag.

Color guard, retrieve the colors.

Indoor: Flag bearer takes the flag out of the flag stand and turns to face the audience.

Outdoor: Flag bearer and color guard lower the flag, unhook it from the pole. They solemnly fold the flag lengthwise twice. Then, starting at the far end away from the star field, the flag is folded in a triangle shape down the length of the flag. When completely folded the edge with the grommets is tucked into the flag to make a neat, triangular package.

Color guard, dismissed. The color guard marches out of the room or flagpole area.

Flag Retirement Ceremony

When the United States flag becomes tattered or worn, it should be disposed of by burning. Please remember, this is a very solemn ceremony and should be done with the utmost care and reverence. Leaders need to explain this ceremony thoroughly to the girls so they don't go home and tell their parents/guardians that "the Girl Scouts burned a flag." Appropriate songs or readings may be added to this ceremony.

1. Lower the flag from the pole (or remove it from the staff) and carry it to the fire.
2. Hold the flag so the stars (as the audience sees them) are at the upper left hand corner. The following is an appropriate reading to start the ceremony:

"Remember as you look at the flag that it is the symbol of our nation. It is red because of human sacrifice and blue because of the true blue loyalty of its defenders. White symbolizes liberty - our land of the free. The stars are symbols of the united efforts and hope in the hearts of the many people striving to keep America great."

3. Cut the field of blue from the stripes - have someone hold this piece.
4. Next, cut each stripe from the "whole" and lay each piece, one at a time, across the flames. These are some ideas for appropriate readings for each stripe:

First Stripe - "The 13 stripes stand for the 13 original colonies: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island."

Second Stripe - "White stands for purity."

Third Stripe - "Red stands for courage."

Fourth Stripe - "Give me liberty or give me death."

Fifth Stripe - "One if by land, two if by sea."

Sixth Stripe - "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America."

Seventh Stripe - "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Eighth Stripe - "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Ninth Stripe - "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or press."

Tenth Stripe - "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Eleventh Stripe - "The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state because they are female."

Twelfth Stripe - "Ask not what your country can do for you: ask what you can do for your country."

Thirteenth Stripe - "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

5. After all the stripes have been burned, the field of blue is laid on the fire – all are silent until the entire piece burns to ash.
6. Out of respect, nothing should ever be added to the ceremonial fire after the flag has been retired.

Recipe for an American Flag Ceremony

Suitable for Younger Girl Scouts

Ingredients:

6 girls

Large pot or bowl

Folded American flag

1 cup of red pieces (can be anything that will pour out of the cup - paper, poker chips, etc.)

1 cup blue pieces

1 cup white pieces

1 cup stars or glitter

Large spoon

Preparation:

Before the ceremony, put the colors and stars/glitter in individual cups. Fold the flag so that the two upper corners are easy to grasp. Place the flag in the pot. When you are ready to start, have the cups of "colors", pot, spoon, and stars/glitter on a table. Recite the following poem while "cooking" the recipe.

Whole Group:

We're going to fix for you a treat that is really grand
And make for you a recipe - the greatest in the land.

Girl 1: In first we'll put a heaping cup of red for courage true.
(Pour the cup of red pieces into the bowl.)

Girl 2: And then we add for loyalty a dash of heavenly blue. (Pour in blue pieces.)

Girl 3: For purity, we'll now sift in a layer of snowy white. (Pour in white pieces.)

Girl 4: We'll sprinkle in a pinch of stars to make it come out right. (Pour in stars or glitter.)

Girls 5 & 6: We'll stir and stir and you will see that what we have made is OLD GLORY!
(One stirs, puts spoon down, then both grasp flag corners and lift from pot.)

Two girls hold the flag, with the blue field on the audience's left, while the Pledge of Allegiance is recited by all. When finished, either fold the flag in a triangle or fasten it to a flag pole and stand it in a flag stand on the flag's right facing the audience.

Make a Flag Ceremony

Suitable for Older Girl Scouts

Place a large basket or container in the center of the stage with a folded flag hidden inside it. The basket can be on a table or on the floor, if it is large enough. Put two flag stands, one on each side of the basket or at the front corners of the stage.

Narrator: Please rise for the presentation of the colors.

Staging notes:

- Girls come single file.
- First the girls carrying components of the flag in front of them.
 - Red streamers or ribbons
 - White streamers or ribbons
 - A square of blue cloth
 - White stars cut from paper or fabric
 - An empty flag pole
- They are followed by the Girl Scout flag on a flag pole. Place the Girl Scout flag in the flag stand on the left facing the audience. Girls stand across the stage behind the basket.

Narrator: RED is for VALOR –

- For the courage of all women who, with a dream in their hearts, crossed the oceans to begin life anew in a free land.
- For the bravery of women who, with hope and faith, crossed the prairie and mountains of our vast land.
- For the steadfastness of those women who, through all adversities, shouldered the country's burdens to emerge as stronger individuals.

Staging Notes: Red streamers are placed in the basket.

Narrator: WHITE is for PURITY –

- For the integrity of all women whose fortitude wove the strands of diverse cultures into an integral national heritage.
- For the piety of all women whose faith formed the foundation upon which our country was built and continues to grow.

Staging notes- White streamers are placed in the basket.

Narrator: BLUE is for JUSTICE –

- For the foresight of all those women who created an atmosphere in which each of their children could develop to their fullest potential.
- For the perseverance of all those women who contributed their talents to further the development of our country.

Staging notes: A large blue square of paper or cloth is placed in the basket.

Narrator: STARS are for DREAMS –

- For the dreams of the future.
- So the generations of tomorrow may fulfill the promise of the past 230 years.
- So the visions of our forebears will be revitalized.
- And so the future will hold forth hope and promise for all generations to come.

Staging Note: Stars are placed in the basket. One girl picks up the flag pole and pretends to stir the ingredients in the basket.

Narrator: Stirring the stories of my stars and stripes, I symbolize the soul of America, typifying her ideas and aspirations, her institutions and traditions.

Staging note: Two girls reach in the basket and remove the folded flag.

Narrator: This flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the symbol of our unity, our power, and our purpose as a nation.

Staging Note: Two or more girls unfold the flag and mount it on the flag pole. Then they stand at attention.

Narrator: Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.
"I pledge Allegiance..."

Narrator: Girl Scouts, please make the Girl Scout Sign and say the Girl Scout Promise.
"On my honor, I will try..."

Narrator: Color Guard, post the colors. (Wait for the flags to be posted)

Narrator: Color Guard, retreat.