

# FLAG ETIQUETTE

## FLAG DAY, JUNE 14, 2016

### The U.S. Flag Code

From handling and saluting to displaying and disposal, there is a code in place when it comes to the American flag.

Old Glory is a symbol of our freedom and liberty, and the vision set forth by our founding fathers. That's why there are so many rules and regulations in place to preserve its heritage.

On June 14, 1923, the National Flag Code was adopted by the National Flag Conference. Putting together the code was a collaborative process.

The conference called together representatives of the United States Army and Navy

to describe their own flag-handling procedures — an effort that led to the adoption of these processes by all organizations in attendance.

Some general guidelines from the Flag Code:

- The flag should be lighted at all times, either by sunlight or by an appropriate light source.
- The flag should be flown in fair weather, unless the flag is designed for inclement weather use.
- The flag should never be dipped to any person or thing. It is flown upside down only as a distress signal.
- The flag should not be

used for any decoration in general. Bunting of blue, white and red stripes is available for these purposes. The blue stripe of the bunting should be on the top.

- The flag should never be used for any advertising purpose. It should not be embroidered, printed or otherwise impressed on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins, boxes, or anything intended to be discarded after temporary use. Advertising signs should not be attached to the staff or halyard.
- The flag should not be used as part of a costume or athletic uniform, except that a flag patch may be used on the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen and members of patriotic organizations.

• The flag should never have any mark, insignia, letter, word, number, figure, or drawing of any kind placed on it or attached to it.

• The flag should never be used for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.

• When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. To store the flag it should be folded neatly and ceremoniously.



### Displaying the Flag Outdoors

Many American citizens choose to proudly wave the red, white and blue from posts or poles in their yards. It is a showing of great respect for our nation and helps us feel more patriotic. There are certain actions you must take when displaying you flag outdoors to maintain its prestige. These are spelled out by the U.S. Flag Code. Here are a few examples from [www.usflag.org](http://www.usflag.org):

• When the flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a window, balcony or a building, the union should be at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff.

• When it is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag, the U.S. flag must always be at the top with a couple of exceptions. The church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services by Navy personnel when conducted by a Naval chaplain on a ship at sea.

• When the flag is displayed over a street, it should be hung vertically, with the union to the north or east. If the flag is suspended over a sidewalk, the flag's union should be farthest from the building.

**Proper Illumination**  
One of the most intricate parts of the U.S. Flag Code

concerns displaying the flag at night. If you choose to do so, you must make sure the flag is property illuminated.

This means that the stars and stripes can be seen from a reasonable distance, which may require you to install a dedicated light for a flag on a pole.

Flags on a residential porch may only need the light of a porch or street light to achieve proper illumination.

Check in with your local American Legion or armory for more detailed instruction on what may be required in your area.

### History of the Flag

To use proper etiquette, you must truly understand the history of the United States flag. Where did it come from and who created it? Why is it red, white and blue?

The traditional story that Betsy Ross designed the original flag in 1776 has permeated our education system and is the most noteworthy story of how the flag came to be.

Some historians claim that in June 1776, a congressional committee of Gen. George Washington, Robert Morris and Betsy's uncle, George Ross, went to her Philadelphia upholstery shop.

After collaborating on some minor design details, Ross agreed to sew the finalized emblem, and on June 14,

1777, Congress adopted it as the official U.S. flag.

#### Another Creator?

Many historians refute the Ross tradition, claiming that there is no official record of a congressional flag committee.

The only documented evidence naming Ross is a voucher dated May 29, 1777, showing that she was paid 14 pounds and some shillings for flags she made for the Pennsylvania Navy, according to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

#### Old Glory

The name Old Glory was first applied to the U.S. flag by Capt. William Driver, a young captain who lived in Salem, Mass. On his 21st

birthday, he was presented a beautiful flag by his mother, which he named Old Glory.

The captain took Old Glory on many sea voyages before eventually quitting sailing and settling in Nashville. Driver reportedly displayed Old Glory proudly from a rope extending from his house to a tree across the street before finally giving it to his daughter shortly before his death.

The flag remained as a precious heirloom in the Driver family until 1922, when it was sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., where it remains carefully preserved under glass.



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