

Fun Flag Facts

Whether you're an educator yourself or a parent who loves their country (and its flag), impress the kiddos in your life with these fun facts about the history of Old Glory.

- The colors of the United States flag are no accident. Red stands for bravery, valor and zeal; white symbolizes purity and innocence; blue for loyalty, devotion, vigilance, perseverance and justice of our ancestors.
- Nicknames for the flag include: the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory and the Star-Span-gled Banner.
- The blue union holds 50 stars to represent the states that make up the United States, the stripes symbolize the 13 original states
- The flag was created to celebrate the independence of the 13 American colonies from Britain.
- On June 14, (now Flag Day) 1777, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act which ultimately established the new flag for America.
- The first official flag featured its signature red and white stripes but had a bare blue union. Stars were added later to signify the different states as they entered the union.
- The United States banner has similarities



in color and design of other countries, such as Liberia, Malaysia, Puerto Rico and Chile.

- The current design of the flag has been the same since 1960, when Hawaii joined the union.
- The United States flag should always be on top of a staff if multiple flags are flown.

Retiring a Battered Flag

When you deem a flag too battered to be displayed honorably, retirement requires a respectful ceremony.

Laying this symbol of America to rest is a humbling experience and should be done with care. The Flag Code expresses that the preferred way of disposal is through a dignified manner, preferably burning.

Do you know how to tell when your banner is ready for a respectful retirement? Consider these factors to determine when and how to release Old Glory from its display.

The Right Time

Before assuming your flag is due for a replacement, it's important to inspect it carefully. Many times, exposure to outdoor elements takes a toll on a flag's cleanliness and can make it appear too weathered to continue to serve. However, when its physical integrity is in tact, a simple washing can bring it back to life.

When analyzing the integrity of your flag's material, look beyond easily cleaned obstructions. You will know it is beyond repairable when you notice prominent holes or frayed

edges that will alter its size and texture after mending.

Who is Authorized to Retire a Flag?

The Flag Code doesn't restrict anyone from retiring a banner, so use your best judgment to choose someone who will take the responsibility seriously.

Here are some ideas to consider if you plan to conduct a ceremony, from the Independence Hall Association.

- One flag should be used in the ceremony to represent all banners included in the retirement service. The remainder of symbols should be collectively incinerated;
- The solemn service should be conducted outdoors, in conjunction with a campfire program;
- The ceremony should include two color guards, one representing the flag in use and another for the

banner to be retired; and

- A leader of the service should call the group to attention, order a salute, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, order the flag retired and remain at the scene until the fire is safely extinguished and ashes are burned.

Other Options

Of course, the preferred method of a dignified retirement is by burning. If the experience is out of your comfort zone, however, a good avenue to seek is your local Veterans of Foreign Wars club or American Legion. These knowledgeable experts can point you in the right direction of a flag-retirement service or host a ceremony to ensure it is done properly and respectfully.



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