

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes, dreams, and people it consists of. If your group includes girls from other countries, girls can honor their flags, too, and conduct an international flag ceremony. Flag ceremonies may be used for:

- Opening or closing meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, outdoor settings, large auditoriums, on stage, even on horseback. All flag ceremonies share one thing—respect for the flag.

Flag Ceremony Guidelines

Keep it simple. Emphasis needs to be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Adults can ask girls these questions when planning:

1. Who will carry the flag?
2. Who will be the color guards?
3. Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
4. What song will be sung? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
5. Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
6. After the Pledge of Allegiance, will the Girl Scout Promise and the Law be said?
7. In what order will the parts of the ceremony take place?
8. When will the group practice?
9. Where will the flags be placed at the end of the ceremony?

Flag Ceremony Terms:

The flag bearer is the person who carries the flag. There is one color bearer for each flag used in the ceremony.

The color guard is a team that guards the flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six Girl Scouts are sufficient.

The caller is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony.

Commands for a Flag Ceremonies

Opening flag ceremony.

"Girl Scouts attention." Used to announce that the flag ceremony is to begin.

"Color guard attention."

"Girl Scouts advance." This can be used if the Girl Scouts need to advance to stand around the flag pole.

"Color guard advance." This signals the color guards to advance with the flags.

"Color guard, please post the colors." This directs the color guard to place the flag in flag stands, or to attach the grommets to a flag pole rope.

"Color guard, please honor the colors." The color guard salutes the American flag. This is done by the color guard placing their right hand over their heart and taking one step back with their right foot and looking at the flag when on a flag pole.

"Please join me in saying the Pledge of Allegiance." This can be followed by a song, quote, poem, or the Girl Scout Promise and/or Law if so desired.

"Color guard dismissed." The color guard leaves. They can return to their starting point or join the group.

Announcements if any.

"Girl Scouts dismissed."

Closing flag ceremony

"Girl Scouts, attention." Used to announce that the flag ceremony is to begin.

"Color guard attention."

"Girl Scouts advance." This can be used if the Girl Scouts need to advance to stand around the flag pole.

"Color guard advance." This signals the color guards to advance with the flags.

"Color guard, please honor the colors." The color guard salutes the American flag. This is done by the color guard placing their right hand over their heart and taking one step back with their right foot and looking at the flag when on a flag pole.

"Color guard, please retire the colors." The color guard removes the flag from stands, or to lower the flag detach from the rope, and fold prior to being dismissed.

"Color guard dismissed." the color guard leaves. They can return to their starting point or join the group.

Announcements if any.

"Girl Scouts dismissed."

Folding the American Flag

Special care should be taken that no part of the flag touches the ground. The Flag is carefully folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, emblematic of the hats worn by colonial soldiers during the war for Independence. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of night.



1. To properly fold the flag, begin by holding it waist high with another person (or persons) so that its surface is parallel to the ground.



2. Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of the stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.



3. Fold the flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside



4. Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the flag.



6. Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle



5. The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner



7. When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible. The Color Bearer carries it with the point forward away from her or his body.

Proper American Flag Etiquette

Display of the American flag is governed by law to ensure that it will be treated with the respect due the flag of a great nation. This is known as the United States Flag Code. Some of the rules most useful for Girl Scouts are:

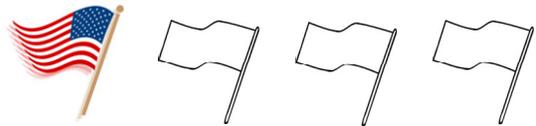
- The American flag must be placed in the center, and higher, when displayed with a group of state, local, or organizational flags flown from staffs. It may also be positioned to the right of other flags. (If girls were to hold the flag while facing their audience, their right side would be the flag's own right.)
- When displayed from a staff in a house of worship or public auditorium, the flag of the United States must hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergy's or speaker's right as he or she faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergy or speaker or to the right of the audience.
- The flag is to be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly with dignity.
- The flag should never be allowed to touch anything beneath it, nor should it ever be carried flat or horizontally—always aloft and free.
- Never use the flag as a cover or place anything on top of it.
- No disrespect of any kind should be shown to the flag of the United States. It should be kept clean.
- The flag, when carried in a procession with other flags, should be either on the marching right or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.
- When you display the flag on a wall or in a window where people see it from the street, it should be displayed flat with the blue part at the top and on the flag's own right (which is the observer's left).
- When displayed after dark, the flag should be illuminated.

Correct Flag Positions for Displays and Ceremonies

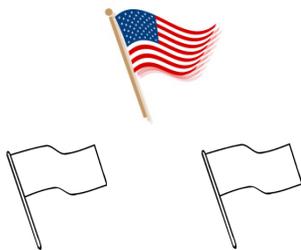
When carrying two flags, the U.S flag is on the right.



When standing in line, the U.S flag is to the right and at the same level as other flags. If the Pledge of Allegiance is said, the bearer steps to the center and in front of the other flags.



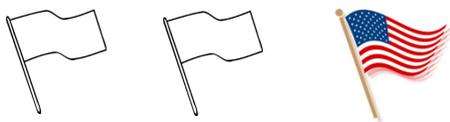
When carrying three or more flags, the U.S flag can be in the center front.



When posting the flags at the same level not on a platform, the U.S flag is right of the audience.



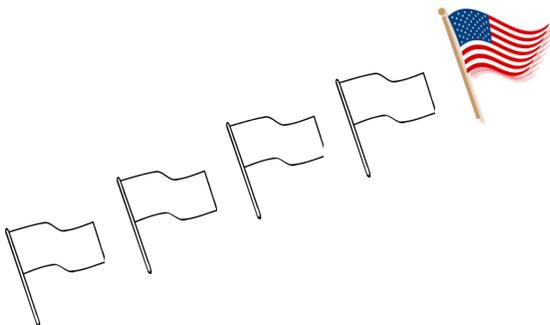
Or with multiple flags in a straight line, the U.S flag is on the furthers right.



On a platform, the U.S flag is on the right of the speaker.



When carrying many flags down a narrow aisle, the US flag is the first



Against a wall, the U.S flag is to the right of the audience.

