

# Lesson 6

## The Stars and Stripes



### Key Terms

the colors  
ensign  
garrison flag  
half-staff  
halyard  
pennant  
post flag  
staff  
standard  
storm flag  
union

### What You Will Learn to Do

- Demonstrate protocol to show respect for and handle the U.S. flag

### Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Do your share as a good citizen in your school, community, country, and the world

### Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Explain the history of the U.S. flag
- Explain the symbolism of the various parts and colors on the flag
- Classify the size and use of each basic type of U.S. flag
- Describe how to show respect for the U.S. flag
- Compare the rules for displaying the flag in different situations
- Describe the correct way to fold the U.S. flag
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

## Introduction

The U.S. flag is the most notable of symbols for our nation. It is important that you know the respect the U.S. flag deserves. This lesson explores the history of the U.S. flag, rules for displaying and folding the flag, and paying respect to it in and out of uniform.

## The United States Flag

Before the United States became a nation, the various colonies, represented by many countries, had their own flags. For example, the Norsemen explored our coastal waters sailing under the banner of a black raven. Columbus carried the Spanish flag across the seas, the Pilgrims carried the flag of Great Britain, and the Dutch colonists brought their flag to New Amsterdam. Additionally, each Native American Indian tribe had its own totem and insignia. The immigrants of many races and nationalities brought their symbols of loyalty to the shores of this country.

The first flags adopted by our colonial forefathers were symbolic of their struggles with the wilderness of a new land. Beavers, pine trees, rattlesnakes, anchors, and various mottoes such as “Hope,” “Liberty,” “Appeal to Heaven,” or “Don’t Tread on Me” adorned those early banners.

In 1776, when George Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts, he stood under the Grand Union flag (see Figure 1.6.1), which continued to show respect for Great Britain. To establish our independence and unity, however, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia created the first Stars and Stripes flag on June 14, 1777.

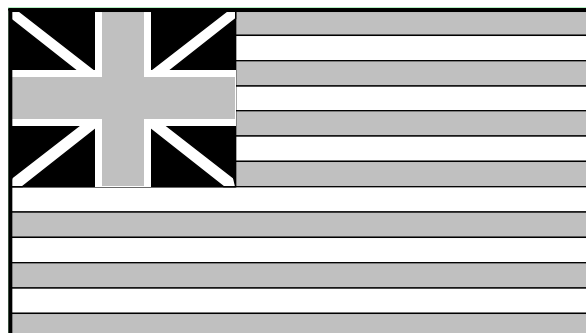
The flag of the United States in 1777 had 13 alternating red and white stripes and a **union**, an emblem standing for unity. The union was a blue rectangle with white stars, representing a constellation. Some historians give Betsy Ross credit for sewing the first flag, but there is no evidence that she designed it. Her fame is traced to a story told by her grandson. Also, there were problems with the design because there were no directions as to how the stars should look. Some had five

### Key Note Term

**Union** – the emblem on a flag symbolizing unity, such as the blue rectangle and stars on the U.S. flag

Figure 1.6.1: The Grand Union flag

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.



**THE GRAND UNION FLAG**



*Figure 1.6.2: First Stars and Stripes flag*

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

points, others had six or eight points; some had the stars in a circle, some had them in rows, and others scattered the stars without any apparent design. The Betsy Ross flag, shown in Figure 1.6.2, had the stars in a circle.

As the United States admitted new states to the union, the nation changed the flag to include them in its design. The first change took place in 1794 when Congress added two stars and two stripes for Vermont and Kentucky.

Fearing that too many stripes would spoil the true design of the flag, Congress passed legislation in 1818 returning the flag to its original design of 13 stripes and 20 white stars in a blue union. The stripes would represent the first 13 colonies, and the nation would continue to add a star for each state that joined the United States.

The arrangement of the stars varied until 1912 when President William Howard Taft issued an executive order to place the stars in six rows of eight stars each—acknowledging the admission of New Mexico and Arizona as the 47th and 48th states. President Dwight David Eisenhower ordered the last two changes to the flag in 1959 adding Alaska and Hawaii as the 49th and 50th states.

There is no fixed order for numbering the stars on the flag, and stars are not assigned to particular states. The stars represent the states collectively, not individually. The colors used in the flag are white for hope, purity, and innocence; red for hardiness and valor; and blue (the color of heaven) for reverence to God, loyalty, vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

### **Note**

On June 14, 1889, George Balch, a kindergarten teacher in New York City, planned appropriate ceremonies for the children of his school, and his idea of observing Flag Day was later adopted by the State Board of Education of New York. On June 14, 1891, the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia held a Flag Day celebration, and on June 14 of the following year, the New York Society of the Sons of the Revolution celebrated Flag Day. On August 3, 1949, President Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14th of each year as National Flag Day.

### Key Note Terms

**the Colors** – the U.S. national flag

**standard** – a term now interchangeable with “the Colors,” although formerly it was used for flags of mounted, motorized, and mechanized organizations

**ensign** – a flag that is displayed or flown from an aircraft, ship, or boat as the symbol of nationality

**garrison flag** – type of flag, flown on holidays and important occasions; 20 feet x 38 feet

**post flag** – type of flag used for everyday occasions; 10 feet by 19 feet

**storm flag** – type of flag flown in bad weather; 5 feet by 9½ feet

## Types of Flags

The branches of the military service use different names for the flag. These names include **the Colors**, **standard**, or **ensign**; however, the term *flag* is correct regardless of size or use.

The three most commonly displayed flags at state and federal government buildings and on military installations are the garrison, post, and storm flags.

- **The garrison flag is 20 feet by 38 feet. Government buildings and military installations fly this flag on all national holidays and for special occasions, such as for special days or events proclaimed by the president.**
- **The post flag is 10 feet by 19 feet; it is for general display on days when it is not appropriate for the garrison flag.**
- **The storm flag is 5 feet by 9½ feet. State and federal governments fly this flag only during stormy or windy weather.**

## Respect for the U.S. Flag

Because the flag symbolizes justice, unity, and pride in the United States, you should honor it with respect and dignity. Even after the flag becomes old and worn, you should not use it for banners or in any disrespectful way. If you do not preserve it, you should destroy it as a whole, privately, respectfully, and traditionally, by burning. Always show the flag the utmost respect, whether you are in uniform or in civilian attire.

### In Uniform

When you are in your uniform, it is very important that you show respect for the flag. Because you wear the Army JROTC uniform, others look to you to be a leader and they will, in turn, follow your lead.

When you are in formation and the Colors are about to pass you, the commander calls the formation to *attention* and *present, arms* when the Colors come to within six steps of the unit. Everyone holds the salute until the Colors are six steps past the unit; then the commander calls *order, arms*, allowing you to drop your salute. If your formation is passing the Colors, six steps prior to reaching them the commander will call *present, arms*; then six steps past them, the commander will call *order, arms*.

When you are outdoors but not in formation, you should turn your head toward the flag and render the hand salute when you pass within six steps of the flag. If the flag passes you, stand at attention, render the hand salute, and hold it until the flag is six steps past you. When indoors, you should stand at attention until the flag is six steps past you.

## In Civilian Clothes

When you are in civilian clothes, you must still take appropriate actions to honor the flag.

- When you are outdoors and the Colors pass you, stand at attention with your right hand over your heart until the Colors are six steps beyond you. If you are wearing a hat, remove and hold it over your left breast with your right hand, ensuring that your hand is still over your heart. If you are outdoors and passing the Colors, remove your hat (if you have one on) and place your right hand over your heart about six steps before reaching the Colors; remove your hand when you are six steps past the Colors.
- When indoors and the Colors pass you, stand at attention until the Colors are six steps past you.

## Rules for Displaying the U.S. Flag

When displaying the flag, you should always raise it briskly and lower it ceremoniously.

It is customary to display the flag from sunrise to sunset, but you can display all-weather flags at all times if properly lit at night. The use of the flag at night, as well as during the day, should follow rules of custom.

Presidential proclamations contain the rules for displaying the flag at **half-staff**. For example, on Memorial Day, we display the flag at half-staff until noon, then raise it to the top of the **staff**. State and federal governments also fly the flag at half-staff when there is death of a president, former president, principal official, or foreign dignitary.

When flying the flag at half-staff, raise it to its peak and then lower it to the half-staff position. When lowering the flag for the day after it has been flown at half-staff, raise it to its peak and then lower it ceremoniously.

### Key Note Terms

**half-staff** – the position of the flag about half-way down from the top of the pole or staff, used to honor and pay respect to military and nationally important deceased persons; also used as a distress signal

**staff** – another word for flagpole used to carry unit guidons or colors

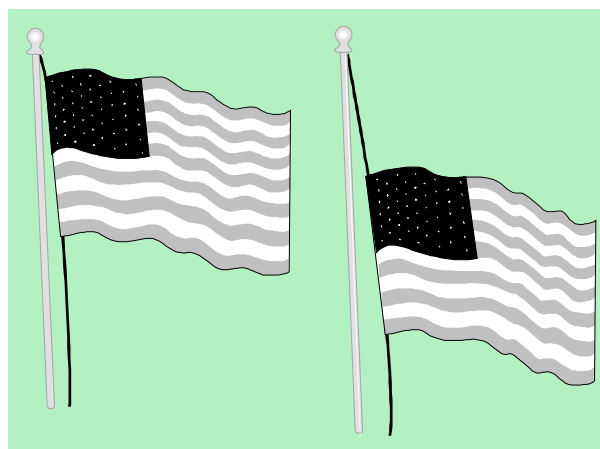
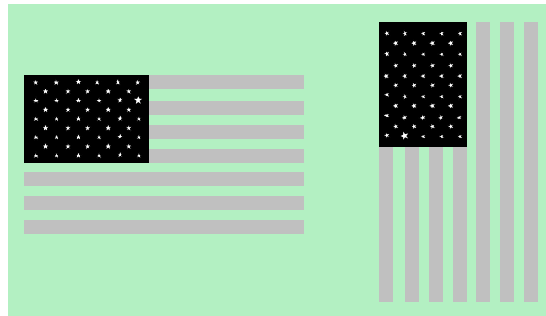


Figure 1.6.3: The flag at full- and half-staff

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

*Figure 1.6.4: Displaying a flag against a wall*

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.



### **Display of the U.S. Flag Alone**

When displaying the national flag from a staff projecting from a windowsill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be at the staff's peak (unless displaying the flag at half-staff).

When displaying the flag flat against a wall, either horizontally or vertically, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, or the observer's left, as shown in Figure 1.6.4.

When displaying the flag in a window, place it with the union to the left of the observer in the street.

When displayed suspended across a street, the flag should be vertical, with the union to the north on an east-west street, or to the east on a north-south street (Figure 1.6.5).

When suspending the flag at the edge of a sidewalk on the side of a building, raise the flag out from the building toward the pole, union first.

When using the flag over a casket, place it so the union is at the head and over the left shoulder, as seen as in Figure 1.6.6.

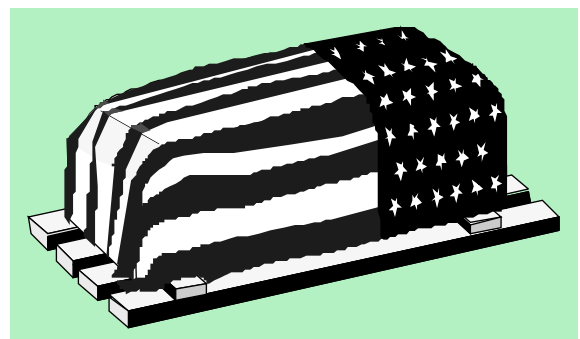
#### **Note**

Never lower the flag into the grave or allow it to touch the ground.



*Figure 1.6.5: Displaying a flag across a street*

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.



*Figure 1.6.6: Draping a flag over a casket*

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

## Group Display

When displaying the flags of two or more nations or states, fly them from separate flag staffs (or flagpoles) of the same height. The flags should be of similar size.

When grouping a number of flags and displaying them from staffs radiating from a central point, center the national flag or place it at the highest point of the group.

When carried in a procession with other flags, carry the national flag either on the far right of the row of marching persons or, if in a line of flags, carry it in the front and center position of that line.

When flying a **pennant** or another flag on the same **halyard** with the national flag, always fly the national flag at the peak of the staff. The only exceptions to this rule are displaying the United Nations flag at the United Nations Headquarters or a church pennant during services at sea.

When displaying the national flag with another flag from a crossed staff, place the national flag on its right with its staff in front of the staff of the other flag.

When displaying the U.S. flag from a staff in an auditorium, meeting hall, or chapel, whether on the same floor level or on a platform, it should be in the position of honor at the speaker's or chaplain's right facing the audience or congregation. Place other flags on the left of the speaker or chaplain; that is, to the right of the audience.

## Folding the Flag Correctly

It is important that the flag be folded in the correct manner. The following is the correct procedure for folding the U.S. flag.

1. Bring the lower striped section of the flag up over the blue field (Figure 1.6.8).
2. Fold the folded edge over to meet the open edge (Figure 1.6.9).
3. Start a triangular fold by bringing the lower striped corner to the open edge (Figure 1.6.10).
4. Fold the outer point inward and parallel with the open edge to form a second triangle (Figure 1.6.11).
5. Continue to fold the flag in triangles until the entire length of the flag is folded with only the blue field and the margin showing (Figure 1.6.12).
6. Tuck the margin into the pocket formed by the folds at the blue field edge of the flag (Figure 1.6.13).

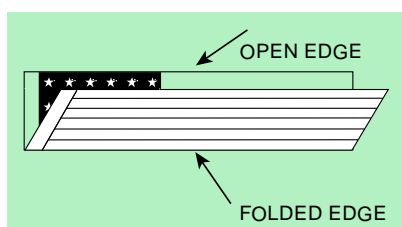


Figure 1.6.8: The first step to correctly fold a flag

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

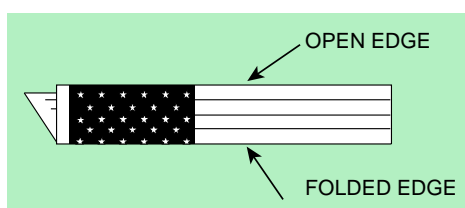


Figure 1.6.9: The second step to correctly fold a flag

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

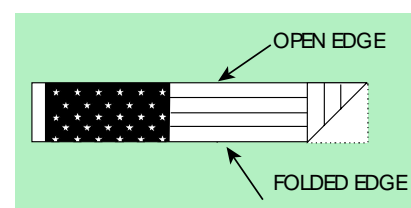


Figure 1.6.10: Start a triangle fold

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

### Key Note Terms

**pennant** – a long, narrow flag tapering to a point or a swallowtail at the end

**halyard** – a rope or tackle used for hoisting or lowering

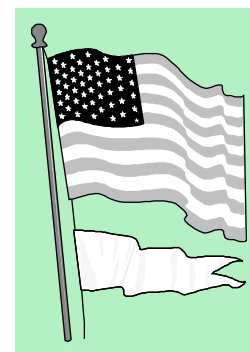


Figure 1.6.7: Displaying a flag with a pennant on the same halyard

Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

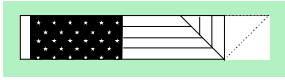


Figure 1.6.11: The next triangle fold  
Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.



Figure 1.6.12: Continue the triangular fold  
Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.



Figure 1.6.13: Tucking the margin into the pocket completes the folded flag  
Courtesy of CACI and the US Army.

When you have completely folded the flag, only the blue field should be visible, and it should have the triangular shape of a cocked hat.

## Pledge of Allegiance

*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.*

This wording varies slightly from the original, which *The Youth's Companion* magazine in Boston drew up in 1892. Schools first used it in that same year to celebrate Columbus Day. Almost 50 years later, the Pledge of Allegiance received official recognition by Congress on June 22, 1942, and they added the phrase, “under God” on June 14, 1954. President Eisenhower said, “We are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s most powerful resource in peace and war.”

## Conclusion

The flag of the United States has a rich heritage and interesting history, from the original Stars and Stripes to the present day 50-star version. It represents an independent nation in its own right. The traditions that it symbolizes will continue to exist as long as citizens treat the national flag with the respect it deserves. Always show respect, and remember; different people respect the flag for different reasons.

Lesson 7 covers the national anthem. You will learn when the anthem was written, by whom, and why. You will also learn the correct way to stand when the national anthem is sung.

## Lesson Review

1. Which flag did George Washington and the Continental Army use?
2. When was the Stars and Stripes flag created?
3. When is Flag Day?
4. When in civilian dress, what should you do when a flag passes in front of you?