

Manners Matter

Activity Guide
Ages 9 to 12

Flag Etiquette

The Right Foot

The “colors”—as the U.S. flag is often called—are more popular than ever these days. But did you know there are rules about how the flag is flown? Unless it is an all-weather flag, it should be brought inside during wet weather. And unless it is illuminated with a spotlight, it also should be removed from display at night. There is even a particular way you are supposed to fold the flag for storage. It’s not appropriate to fold it the same way you would a towel or blanket. It may look complicated, but with a little practice, you can be your household’s own color guard (one who raises, lowers, and folds the flag ceremoniously).



Civil Action

The United States has a flag code that is based on a collection of existing uses and customs in this country. The Federal Flag Code contains rules for handling and displaying the flag. It is

Life Skill

- Social skills

Project Skill

- Display/storage of the American flag

Objective

- Participant folds a flag with the help of a partner.

Success Indicators

- Participant folds a flag properly for storage and knows the basic rules of flag display.

Eti-Kit

- Flat sheet or blanket
- American flag
- Friend or helper
- Box for storage

Courtesy Corner

- The upper left corner of the flag is called the “union.” It is the blue portion that contains the 50 white stars.

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not enforceable (meaning it contains no penalties for breaking these rules), but following the code is considered a sign of respect for a symbol of freedom.

Folding a flag requires two people. Find a partner for practicing. Because the flag should never touch the ground, you may want to practice the proper folding method using a sheet or blanket first. Once you're confident of your technique, try folding the flag.

Use the illustration here as your guide.

Here are some tips:

- At the beginning, each partner should hold the short sides.
- Once the flag has been folded twice lengthwise, you're ready to begin "cornering," or folding the folded strip into triangles. Always begin cornering at the striped end of the flag, not the end with the stars.
- Only one person does the triangular folding until the last step. The other person holds the far end taut and completes the final step—folding down the final square and tucking it inside the folds.

The procedure for unfolding the flag is the same—only in reverse.

For more information about flag display, care, and etiquette, contact someone at your local American Legion or VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) organization, or check the following web sites on the Internet:

- <http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagetiqa.html>
- <http://www.vfw.org/>
- <http://www.usflag.org/flag.etiquette.html>
- <http://www1.va.gov/opa/feature/celebrate/flagdisp.htm>



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Extra Polish

Attend a flag-raising to learn the proper procedure. Some businesses, especially U.S. government agencies like the U.S. Postal Service, raise and lower the flag daily. To learn about ceremonies on special occasions or holidays, check with your local American Legion or VFW.

Finishing School

Share

- What did you learn about flag care and display that you didn't know? What surprised you the most?
- How many places can you think of at which a flag is hoisted (raised) and lowered regularly?

Process

- Why do you think there are rules that govern display of the flag?
- Why do you think there are no penalties for misusing the flag?
- What do you think of passing laws against desecrating the American flag?

Generalize

- Why is it important to know how to show respect?
- How do you think respect for an idea or symbol can be helpful in your everyday interaction with others?

Apply

- In what other ways can you use the skills you learned in this activity?