



# Girl Scouts Guide to Flag Ceremonies

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## What is a Flag Ceremony?

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes and dreams of its people. 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 troop meetings
- Opening or closing special events
- Beginning or closing a day at camp
- Honoring a special occasion or special person
- Retiring a worn flag

Flag ceremonies may take place in meeting rooms, outdoor settings, large auditoriums, on stages, 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. Will a song 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

### Color Bearer

A color bearer (or flag bearer) is a person who carries a flag. There is one color bearer for each flag used in the ceremony.

### Color Guard

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

### Caller

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

# Sample Script for a Flag Ceremony

## OPENING:

**“Please rise for the presentation of the colors.”**

The audience will rise. Wait until they are quiet before continuing.

**“Color guard, attention!”**

This is the signal for the color bearers and guards to stand at attention.

**“Color guard, advance!”**

The color guard walks forward carrying the flags in formation and stops at the predetermined destination. Flag stands should already be in position.

**“Color guard, post the colors.”**

The color bearers assist the flag bearers in placing the flags in stands; the American flag is posted first, then the other flags.

**“We will now say the Pledge of Allegiance.”**

The caller leads the audience in reciting the Pledge while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

**“We will now recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law.”**

The caller leads the audience in the Promise and Law while the color guard/bearers remain silent and at attention.

**“Color guard dismissed!”**

Before the color guard retreats, the American flag bearer leads the color guard in the 1, 2, 3, right foot rock back salute. The color guard then exits the area in a line, as they came in, leaving the flags in their stands.

This is the end of the ceremony. The caller exits the podium and takes her seat following the path of the color guard if appropriate. The audience may now be seated.

## CLOSING:

**“We will now prepare to retire colors.”**

This is the signal that the ceremony is about to begin, and everyone should be quiet and paying attention. They remain seated.

**“Please join us in singing [...]”**

(You may sing a closing song such as “Taps”, recite a poem, or perform some other piece. This step is optional.)

**“Color guard, attention!”**

This is the signal to the color guard to be ready to start.

**“Color guard, advance!”**

At this command, the color guard walks to where the flags are posted; they stand at attention. In front of the flag poles or stands and await the next command.

**“Color guard, retire the colors!”**

At this command, the color guard may salute briefly, then the flag bearers step forward to remove the flags from the flag stands. The American flag is removed last. The color guard turns to face the audience.

**“Girl Scouts/Ladies and gentlemen, please stand as the Colors are retired.”**

Wait for everyone to stand before giving the next command.

**“Color guard, retire the colors.”**

The color guard uses the same formation as they did to present the colors to now retire the colors, typically walking to the back of the room or into an adjacent hallway.

## Proper American Flag Etiquette

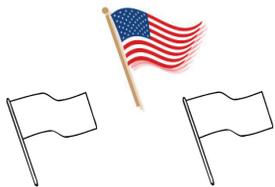
Display of the American flag is governed by law to ensure that it will be treated with the respect due the flag of our great nation. This is known as the United States Flag Code. Some of the most useful rules for Girl Scouts are:

- 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.

### Flag Positions for Displays and Ceremonies



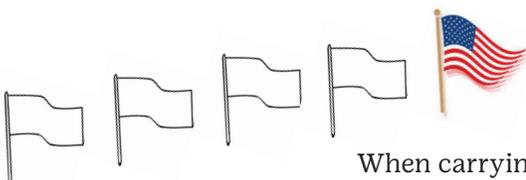
When carry two flags, the U.S. flag is on the right.



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

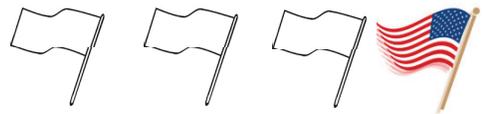


Or with multiple flags in a straight line, the U.S. flag is on the farthest right.

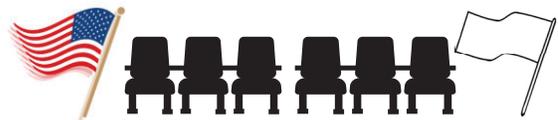


When carrying many flags down a narrow aisle, the U.S. flag is the first.

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



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



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

## 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.



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



6. 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.