

Flag Ceremony Guidebook



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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, dreams, and people it represents. If your group includes girls from other countries, they 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
- Onstage
- Horseback



The American flag is carried by a color guard for protection during a flag ceremony.

All flag ceremonies share one thing—respect for the flag.

Terms Used In a Flag Ceremony

The **color bearer** (or 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 girls are sufficient.

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



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:

- Who will carry which flags?
- Who will the color guards be?
- Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
- Will you sing any songs? If so, what song will you sing? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
- Will a poem or quotation be included? Who will say or read it?
- What order will the ceremony follow?
- When will the group practice?
- Where will the flags be placed at the end of the ceremony?

Example Commands for a Flag Ceremony

Opening Ceremony:

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

"Color guard, attention." Let's color guard know the ceremony is about to begin.

"Color guard, advance." Signals the color guard to advance with the flags, or advance to pick up the flags.

"Color guard, post the colors." Directs the color guard to place the flag in flag standards, or to attach the grommets to a flag pole rope.

"Color guard, honor your flag." Signals the color guard to salute the American flag.

"Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance." (Followed by an appropriate song, quotation if so desired.)

"Please join us in saying the Texas Pledge." (Followed by an appropriate song, or quotation if so desired.)

"Please join us in saying the Girl Scout Promise." (Followed by the Girl Scout Law, an appropriate song, or quotation if so desired.)

"Color guard, dismissed." Prompts the color guard to leave in formation, with or without the flag.

"Girl Scouts, dismissed." Indicates girls may leave in formation or be at ease where they have been standing.

Closing Ceremony:

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

"Color guard, attention." Let's color guard know the ceremony is about to begin.

"Color guard, advance." Signals the color guard to advance with the flags, or

"Color guard, retire the colors."
Prompts the color guard to remove the flag from standards, or to lower the flag, detach it from the rope, and fold it prior to being dismissed.

"Color guard, dismissed." Prompts the color guard to leave in formation, with or without the flag.

"Girl Scouts, dismissed." Indicates girls may leave in formation or be at ease where they have been standing.

Folding the American Flag

Step 1

To properly fold the Flag, begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground.



Step 2

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



Step 3

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



Step 4

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



Step 5

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



Step 6

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



Step 7

When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible.



Handling the Flag of the United States of America

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 flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.
- When the flags are posted in stands or raised on a pole, the American flag is always kept higher than other flags, so it is placed in its stand after other flags are lowered into their standards, or it is raised up a pole first. When it's time to retire the colors, the American flag is taken out of its stand first so it remains the highest flag at all times.
- 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 can 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.
- 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.

Retiring a Worn Flag

Retiring a flag is a special ceremony that ends with burning the flag and disposing of the ashes in a respectful manner.

Be sure to follow all safety activity checkpoints.



Flag Kit Return Checklist

Please use this checklist to ensure that all items included in this kit are returned to GSNETX. Please fold flags and return items in a neat and organized manner. You are responsible for replacing any missing, torn or broken items from this kit.

This Kit includes:

- ☐ Requested Flags:
 - ☐ American Flags
 - ☐ Girl Scout Flags
 - ☐ Texas Flags
 - ☐ WAGGGS Flags
- ☐ Flag poles
- ☐ Flag stands
- ☐ 16 pairs of white gloves
- ☐ 16 red sashes