

Color Guard Resources

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Planning your flag ceremony

Flag ceremonies can be customized based on the occasion and location. While all flag ceremonies should feature respect for the flag and follow the flag code, some elements may be changed depending on the situation. There are many things to consider when planning your flag ceremony:

- How many girls will be participating?
- How many flags will you be using? Which flags?
- What is the layout of the location, including where the girls will be walking and where the flags will be placed?
- Who is the audience?
- Will you be including any songs, poems, or other sayings to the ceremony?
- Will there be a practice time for the girls?

You may need to alter a flag ceremony, like one you use for your troop meeting, if you were instead presenting at a town hall meeting. For example, not reciting the Girl Scout Promise after the Pledge of Allegiance or using a different number of flags.

Color Guard Members

A color guard is made up of three different jobs:

Caller - The designated person who 'calls out' the parts of the ceremony.

- Stands in front and to one side of the audience.
- Needs to speak clearly and loudly for all members of the audience to hear.
- May sometimes be referred to as the "Girl Scout in charge."
- Often one person but can be multiple.

Flag Bearer(s) - The person who carries the flag – one flag per person.

- Hold the staff (pole) at a slight angle in front of the body or hold the folded flag in front of the body at waist level.
- Stands silent and at attention throughout the ceremony and does not repeat the Pledge of Allegiance nor sing the National Anthem.
- Flags always include the American Flag and may include others as well, such as state flags or organization flags.
 - American Flag Bearer (*Person who carries the American flag*) – First flag in the procession is always the American flag – held straight up and higher than any other flag – during a procession or when placed in stand. It is the first to be removed from a stand and the last one to be placed in a stand.
 - State Flag Bearer (*Person who carries the state flag*) – Second flag in the procession is the state flag – held straight up and lower than the American Flag – during a procession or when placed in stand. It is the second to be removed from a stand and the second to the last to be placed in a stand.

- Organization Flag Bearer (*Person who carries the Girl Scout flag*) – Third flag in the procession is an organization flag – held straight up and lower than the American Flag – during a procession or when placed in stand. It is the last to be removed from a stand and the first to be placed in a stand.

Color Guard(s) - Guards the honor of the flag and watches to see that the flag does not touch the ground.

- Stands behind the flag bearer, or to each side if in a line of more than one flag.
- Two per flag is traditional, but any number may be used.
- Stands silent and at attention throughout the ceremony and does not repeat the Pledge of Allegiance nor sing the National Anthem.

A color guard can consist of almost any number of people, but less than 5 members may be difficult, depending on the number of flags.

Handling the Flag

When handling the flag, Girl Scouts should follow these guidelines:

- Follow the Flag Code in carrying, folding, and displaying the flag. See resources below for additional details on the Flag Code.
- All flags should be unfurled and not twisted around the pole. They should never touch the ground, floor, etc.
- Wear a full uniform: khaki pants, white shirt, and Girl Scout sash, vest, or tunic. Red sashes and white gloves are optional.
- If wearing sashes, flag bearers should wear their sashes over their right shoulder and tied on their waist on the left side. The color guard should wear their sashes around their waist, tied at the left.

Things to keep in mind:

- All flags should be unfurled (not twisted around the pole). They should never touch the ground, floor, etc.
- Minimum of 5 girls are needed for a flag ceremony.
 - 1 caller – stands by the podium
 - 2 flag bearers – 1 for American flag, 1 for state flag
 - 2 guards (one for each flag) - stand side by side behind the flag
- Girls always walk with their arms at their sides, not in pockets. Walk slowly, no running; no talking or chewing gum/candy; and hats off during the ceremony.
- Girls should be in uniforms (white shirts and khaki pants) for official flag ceremonies. Have similarly clothed girls walk together. (Girls wearing sashes walk together, girls wearing vests walk together, etc.)
- Flag bearers and the color guard may wear red sashes and white gloves. Flag bearers should wear their sashes over their right shoulder and tied on their waist on the left side. The color guard should wear their sashes around their waist, tied at the left.
- Remember that there are many variations of flag ceremonies and that this may need to be modified for a different venue or activity.
- Girls will make mistakes and it is ok. Always encourage and praise them.

Council Information:

Badge/Patch Connections

Brownies – Celebrating Community

Legacy Badge - Citizen

All Ages – Color Guard Advocacy Patch

Girl Scouts of Utah Council Patch Program

Girl Scouts of Utah Contact

Program Department

programs@gsutah.org | 801-265-8472

Flag Ceremony Availability

Girl Scouts are invited to provide flag ceremonies in many different places. To participate in a ceremony, it's highly recommended troops first complete a council Color Guard training. Send the following information to programs@gsutah.org to be added to our Color Guard roster and be contacted for upcoming ceremony opportunities:

- Troop leader and co-leader names and their emails
- One contact phone number
- Number of Girl Scouts in the troop
- Levels of Girl Scouts in the troop (Brownies, Multilevel K-5, etc.)
- Location of your troop and where you are willing to travel
- Color Guard training completion date

To participate in a flag ceremony, each participant needs to wear white shirts and khaki pants, shorts, or a skirt, and their Girl Scout tunics, vests, or sashes. Troops can borrow flags, flag stands, red sashes, and white gloves from GSU, which are reservable on a first come, first served basis by emailing info@gsutah.org.

Indoor Flag Ceremony - Opening

Caller says:

Girls do the following:

“Color Guard attention”

Used to announce to the audience that the flag ceremony is to begin. This is the signal for the troop/girls to get ready. Girls should stand silent, proud, and tall with hands to their sides.

“Will the audience please rise”

Wait for the audience to rise.

“Color Guard advance”

This signals the flag bearer(s) and color guard to walk forward carrying the flags to flag stands. Carry the flags in the following order:

1st flag is United States flag

2nd flag is state flag(s)

3rd flag is organization flag(s) – GSUSA, GSU, Camps

Alternatively, the US flag can go in the front middle, followed by the state flag(s) and organization flag(s) two by two.

When they reach the front of the room, they walk behind the flag stands and turn to face the audience, always staying in formation, holding the flags.

Make sure flags do not touch the ground.

“Color Guard post the colors”

The flag bearers place the flags in their stands. The US flag is always placed last in stand, is higher than any other flag, and is on the right side of the speaker (see diagrams).

“Color Guard honor the colors”

The flag bearers and color guard honor the colors by tapping their right side three times, then stepping back with their right foot while placing their right hand over their heart.

“Will the audience please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance*: ...”

(Caller places hand over heart and joins the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

The color guard DOES NOT salute the flag or join in the Pledge of Allegiance and Girl Scout Promise. They stand at attention (feet together, facing the flag, arms at their sides).

*You may also add the Girl Scout Promise.

“Color Guard dismissed”

Girls leave in formation – first the flag bearers, then the color guards, walking two-by-two.

Indoor Flag Ceremony - Closing

Caller says:

Girls do the following:

“Color Guard attention”

Used to announce to the audience that the flag ceremony is to begin. This is the signal for the troop/girls to get ready. Color guard should stand silent, proud, and tall with hands to their sides.

“Will the audience please rise”

Wait for the audience to rise.

“Color Guard advance”

This signals the flag bearer(s) and color guard to walk forward carrying the flags to flag stands.

When they reach the front of the room, they walk behind the flag stands and turn to face the audience, always staying in formation.

“Color Guard honor the colors”

Color Guard honor the colors by tapping their right side three times, then stepping back with their right foot while placing their right hand over their heart.

“Will the audience please join me in singing Taps*: ...”

*This may be omitted based on setting.

The color guard DOES NOT salute the flag or join in Taps. They stand at attention.

“Color Guard retire the colors”

The flag bearers remove the flags in their stands. Make sure flags do not touch the ground.

“Color Guard dismissed”

This signals the flag bearer(s) and color guard to leave the area in formation, carrying the flags back to where they started. Carry the flags in the following order:

1st flag is United States flag

2nd flag is state flag(s)

3rd flag is organization flag(s) – GSUSA

Alternatively, the US flag can go in the front middle, followed by the state flag(s) and organization flag(s) two by two.

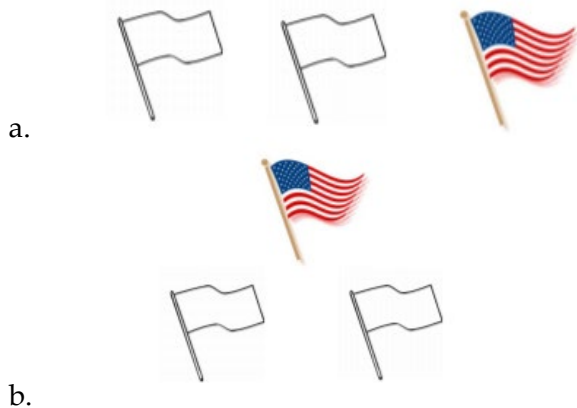
Ideally, you should use the same formation for both opening and closing ceremonies.

Carrying and Placing the Flags

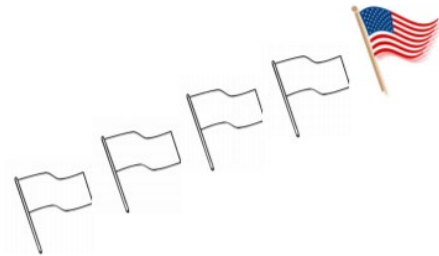
- The American flag should be on the flag's own right (audience's left). No other flag should be placed on the right of the American flag (the flag's own right).
- The American Flag is always placed on the right side of the podium / presiding officer (when facing the audience) or the left side of the audience.
- The American flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right (the flag's own right) or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

Carrying the flag:

When carrying three or more flags, the US flag goes on the right (a) OR in the center front (b)



When carrying multiple flags in a line, such as down a narrow row, the US flag goes first.



When carrying two flags side by side, the US flag goes on the right

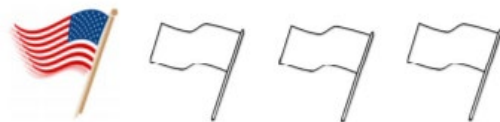


Placing the flag:

When the flags are on a podium, the US flag is at the speaker's right



When flags are on display in a line, the US flag is on its own right



Flag Facts

- The flag in its current format (blue with white stars and thirteen red and white stripes) originated on June 14, 1777, in Philadelphia with the First Flag Act. June 14 is known as Flag Day.
- The flag has thirteen stripes alternating red and white, which represent the original 13 states of the union.
- The first flag had thirteen white stars. Today it has fifty stars, one for each of the fifty states.
- The red stripes represent fearless courage and self-sacrifice of American men and women who fought for our freedom.
- The white stripes stand for liberty and equality for all.
- The blue is the blue of heaven, loyalty, and faith.
- The flag is a symbol of the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights. As Abraham Lincoln stated, "A government of the people, by the people, for the people."
- Public Law 829, "The Flag Code" defines the flag's use and how the flag should be displayed on all occasions and situations.
- The flag is also known as "Old Glory" or "the Stars and Stripes."
- The flag, when flown at half-staff (half-mast), should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. On Memorial Day, the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, and then raised to the top of the staff. The President of the United States determines when and for how long the American flag is flown at half-staff.
- During a ceremony or when the flag is passing in a parade, all persons present (except those in uniform) should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. People should remove their hats or other headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. When the flag is in a parade, the salute starts approximately 12 paces (steps) before it is in front of person and ends approximately 12 paces (steps) after it passes.
- History of when each state's star was added to the flag can be found on the Smithsonian's website: <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/flag-day/flag-facts>. Utah's star was added in 1896. Most stars were officially added to the flag on July 4.

The 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.



"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."

Star Spangled Banner

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream:
'T is the star-spangled banner: O, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O, thus be it ever when freemen shall stand,
Between their lov'd homes and the war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserv'd us as a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause, it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Lyrics written by Francis Scott Keys

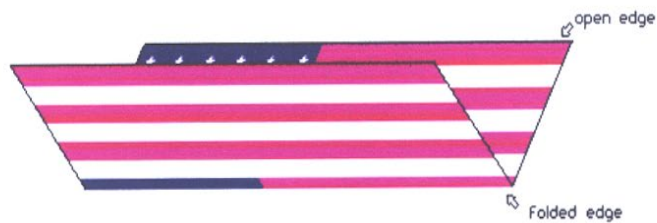
Flag Folding Ceremony

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.