A Brief History of the United States Flag

The states are listed in order of admission to the United States with their date of statehood to the right. Typically, a new star was added to the flag on the 4th of July following the state’s admission.

21 Illinois December 3, 1818
22 Alabama December 14, 1819
23 Maine March 15, 1820
24 Missouri August 10, 1821
25 Arkansas June 15, 1836
26 Michigan January 26, 1837
27 Florida March 3, 1845
28 Texas December 29, 1845
29 Iowa December 28, 1846
30 Wisconsin May 29, 1848
31 California September 9, 1850
32 Minnesota May 11, 1858
33 Oregon February 14, 1859

Fifteen Stripes & Stars

May 1, 1795

The only U.S. flag to have more than 13 stripes and 13 stars was added at one time.

43 Stars - added 5 stars at one time

43 Wisconsin May 29, 1848
44 Oregon February 14, 1859

48 Stars

Flew for 47 years and lasted through two World Wars.

48 Arizona February 14, 1912
49 Alaska January 3, 1959

Present Day Flag

27th Official Flag of the United States since July 4, 1960

50 Hawai‘i August 21, 1959

Flag Facts

First Official Flag

Authorized June 14, 1777
It flew for 18 years before the next flag. We still celebrate June 14 as "Flag Day".

1 Delaware December 7, 1787
2 Pennsylvania December 12, 1787
3 New Jersey December 18, 1787
4 Georgia January 2, 1788
5 Connecticut January 9, 1788
6 Massachusetts February 6, 1788
7 Maryland April 28, 1788
8 South Carolina May 23, 1788
9 New Hampshire June 21, 1788
10 Virginia June 25, 1788
11 New York July 26, 1788
12 North Carolina November 21, 1788
13 Rhode Island May 29, 1790

20 Stars

April 13, 1818

Added 20 stars but went back to only 13 stripes as more practical. Flew only one year before the next star was added.

14 Vermont March 4, 1791
15 Kentucky June 1, 1792
16 Tennessee June 1, 1796
17 Ohio April 30, 1812
18 Louisiana March 1, 1803
19 Indiana December 11, 1816
20 Mississippi December 10, 1817

27 Stars (34 Stars and 35 Stars)

But Wyoming's star waited one year to be added to the flag (missed by 6 days)

39 North Dakota November 2, 1889
40 South Dakota November 2, 1889
41 Montana November 8, 1889
42 Washington November 11, 1889
43 Idaho July 3, 1890
44 Wyoming July 10, 1890
45 Utah January 4, 1896
46 Oklahoma November 16, 1907
47 New Mexico January 6, 1912

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..."
"with liberty and justice..."
"for all..."

The Star-Spangled Banner

By Francis Scott Key (1814)

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

Did you know this is one of only a few national anthems in the world dedicated to a flag?
Flag Day

The first Flag Day celebrations took place in the mid-1880s and by 1894, Flag Day drew some 300,000 people to city parks in Chicago alone. A Proclamation by President Woodrow Wilson on May 30, 1916 officially established Flag Day, but it was not until August 3, 1949, when President Harry Truman signed an Act of Congress, that June 14th of each year became National Flag Day.

The Story About “Old Glory”

This famous name was coined by Captain Stephen Driver, a shipmaster of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1831. As he was leaving on one of his many voyages aboard the brig CHARLES 200GETT - and this one would climax with the rescue of the mutineers of the SIR WALTER - some hands presented him with a beautiful flag of twenty-four stars. As the banner opened to the ocean breeze for the first time, he exclaimed “Old Glory!”

He retired to Nashville in 1837, taking his treasured flag from his sea days by him. By the time the Civil War erupted, most everyone in and around Nashville recognized Captain Driver’s “Old Glory.” When Tennessee seceded from the Union, Rebels reaffirmed to destroy his flag, but repeated searches revealed no trace of the hated banner.

Then on February 25th, 1862, Union forces captured Nashville and raised the American flag over the capitol. It was a rather small ensign and immediately folks began asking Captain Driver if “Old Glory” still existed. Captain Driver went home with some of the soldiers of the 6th Ohio Regiment and removed the seams of his boater. As the stitches held the quilt-top to the batting unstitched, the onlookers saw the 24-starred original “Old Glory”!

Captain Driver gently gathered up the flag and returned to the capitol. Though he was sixty years old, the captain climbed up to the tower to place the smaller banner with his beloved flag. The Sixth Ohio Regiment cheered and saluted - and later adopted the nickname “Old Glory” as their own, telling and re-telling the story of Captain Driver’s devotion to the flag we honor yet today.

National Holidays Flag Should Be Flown

The flag could be displayed on all days, but especially on:

- **JUNE**
  - 1—New Year’s Day
  - 20—Inauguration Day
  - 23—Memorial Day
  - 4—Flag Day
  - 7—Independence Day

- **FEBRUARY**
  - 12—Abraham Lincoln (Birthday)
  - 28—Red Code Day

- **MAY**
  - 3—500th Anniversary of Columbus
  - 15—Lady Day
  - 20—Postal Worker’s Day
  - 25—50th Anniversary of World War II
  - 30—National Flag Code

- **SEPTEMBER**
  - 1—Mon. —Labor Day
  - 7—Recipient Day

- **OCTOBER**
  - 16—Mon.— Columbus Day

- **NOVEMBER**
  - 11—Veterans Day

- **DECEMBER**
  - 1—Christmas Day
  - (flies at half staff sunrise until noon)
  - (flies at half staff sunrise until noon)

For the complete U.S. Code, see: www.suvcw.org/flag.htm

Important Code Facts

Conduct during playing of the national anthem

The flag is flown during the national anthem. Everyone who is present should stand with respect to our flag by placing their right hand over their heart. Men who are not in uniform must remove their hats with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform will give a military salute from the first note to the end.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: manner of delivery

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.

Saluting the flag

During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their hats with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.

Position or place of the flag—Is it on the right or left?

The United States flag is always on the speaker’s right as he faces the audience. Any other flags will be on his left. When hanging vertically over a street the union (stars) should be to the north or to the east. If hanging horizontally or vertically against a wall the union (stars) should always be to the upper left.

See Flag Code, Chapter 10, Section 175

General Guidelines Showing Respect to Our Flag

The flag should never touch the ground. It should always be handled with respect. It is be cleaned and mended properly.

The flag should be lighted at all times. If it is flown 24 hours a day then it must have a spotlight on it at night.

The flag can fly at all times if it is made of “all-weather” fabric. The Flag must not be used as decoration. Red, white and blue striped bunting should be used for that purpose.

A flag should not be used as part of clothing or costume; a flag patch is allowed on the uniforms of military personnel, police officers, firefighters, and members of patriotic organizations.

We must never use the flag to wrap around or carry anything.

The flag should only be flown upside-down as a distress signal.

If the flag is no longer in presentable condition to serve as a symbol of our country then it should be retired properly by burning or burning in a dignified manner. (Many Boy Scout Troops. V.F.W. Posts and American Legion Posts have annual ceremo-

nies for retiring old flags, I do NOT THROW AWAY.

Raising and Lowering the Flag

The flag should be raised quickly but lowered slowly or ceremoniously into waiting hands and arms. It should never touch the ground. The United States Flag should always be saluted as it is raised or lowered. The salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or until the last note of music is played. The flag should be folded to be stored.

For (proper folding technique see www.usflag.org/flag.html)

Parading and Saluting the Flag

The U.S. flag should be to the right of the marchers. If there are other flags, the U.S. flag should be carried to the far right of the row of flags. If there is only one row of flags, watching a parade it is proper to salute the flag as it passes by. (Begin salute six paces before it reaches you until six paces past you.)

The Flag and Mourning

To display a flag at half-staff it should be hoisted to the top of the pole for moment and then lowered to half-staff. On Memorial Day, the flag flies at half-staff until noon then back to full-staff.

Our National Motto

The national motto of the United States is declared to be: “In God we trust.”