

# FLAG DAY 2020

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**“Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.”**

On Aug. 3, 1949, President Harry S. Truman officially declared June 14 as Flag Day.

*Ev'ry heart beats true,  
'neath the Red, White and Blue.*  
—George M. Cohan

## A Brief History of Old Glory

## THE MEANING BEHIND THE 13 FOLDS OF THE UNITED STATES FLAG



## FLAG DAY

Written by the American Legion



## The History of the American Flag

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The history of our flag is as fascinating as that of the American Republic itself. It has survived battles, inspired songs and evolved in response to the growth of the country it represents. The following is a collection of interesting facts and customs about the American flag and how it is to be displayed:

### Origins



Old Glory

- The origin of the first American flag is unknown. Some historians believe it was designed by New Jersey Congressman Francis Hopkinson and sewn by Philadelphia seamstress Betsy Ross.
- The name *Old Glory* was given to a large, 10-by-17-foot flag by its owner, William Driver, a sea captain from Massachusetts. [Inspiring the common nickname](#) for all American flags, Driver's flag is said to have survived multiple attempts to deface it during the Civil War. Driver was able to fly the flag over the Tennessee Statehouse once the war ended. The flag is a primary artifact at the National Museum of American History and was last displayed in Tennessee by permission of the Smithsonian at an exhibition in 2006.
- Between 1777 and 1960 Congress passed several acts that changed the shape, design and arrangement of the flag and allowed stars and stripes to be added to reflect the admission of each new state.
- Today the flag consists of 13 horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with six white. The stripes represent the original 13 Colonies and the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardiness and valor,

white symbolizes purity and innocence, and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice.

- The National Museum of American History has undertaken a [long-term preservation project](#) of the enormous 1814 garrison flag that survived the 25-hour shelling of Fort McHenry in Baltimore by British troops and inspired Francis Scott Key to compose "The Star-Spangled Banner." Often referred to by that name, the flag had become soiled and weakened over time and was removed from the museum in December 1998. This preservation effort began in earnest in June 1999, and continues to this day. The flag is now stored at a 10-degree angle in a special low-oxygen, filtered light chamber and is periodically examined at a microscopic level to detect signs of decay or damage within its individual fibers.
- There are a few locations where the U.S. flag is flown 24 hours a day, by either presidential proclamation or by law:
  - Fort McHenry, National Monument and Historic Shrine, Baltimore, Maryland
  - Flag House Square, Baltimore, Maryland
  - United States Marine Corps Memorial (Iwo Jima), Arlington, Virginia
  - On the Green of the Town of Lexington, Massachusetts
  - The White House, Washington, D.C.
  - United States customs ports of entry
  - Grounds of the National Memorial Arch in Valley Forge State Park, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

## Inspiration

- After a British bombardment, amateur poet Francis Scott Key was so inspired by the sight of the American flag still flying over Baltimore's Fort McHenry that he wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" on Sept. 14, 1814. It officially became our national anthem in 1931.
- In 1892, the flag inspired James B. Upham and Francis Bellamy to write The Pledge of Allegiance. It was first published in a magazine called *The Youth's Companion*.

## On Distant Shores



NASA

- In 1909, Robert Peary placed an American flag, sewn by his wife, at the North Pole. He also left pieces of another flag along the way. It is the only time a person has been honored for cutting the flag.
- In 1963, Barry Bishop placed the American flag on top of Mount Everest.
- In July 1969, the American flag was "flown" in space when Neil Armstrong placed it on the moon. Flags were placed on the lunar surface on each of six manned landings during the Apollo program.
- The first time the American flag was

flown overseas on a foreign fort was in Libya, over Fort Derne, on the shores of Tripoli in 1805.

## Displaying the Stars and Stripes

- The flag is usually displayed from sunrise to sunset. It should be raised briskly and lowered ceremoniously. In inclement weather, the flag should not be flown.
- The flag should be displayed daily and on all holidays, weather permitting, on or near the main administration buildings of all public institutions. It should also be displayed in or near every polling place on election days and in or near every schoolhouse during school days.
- When displayed flat against a wall or a window, or in a vertical orientation, the "union" field of stars should be uppermost and to the left of the observer.
- When the flag is raised or lowered as part of a ceremony, and as it passes by in parade or review, everyone, except those in uniform, should face the flag with the right hand over the heart.
- The U.S. flag should never be dipped toward any person or object, nor should the flag ever touch anything beneath it.

Old Glory Photo Credit: Hugh Talman / NMAH, SI

NASA Photo Credit: Courtesy of [nasa.gov](https://www.nasa.gov)

# THE MEANING BEHIND THE 13 FOLDS OF THE UNITED STATES FLAG

BY: NATIONAL FLAG FOUNDATION



If you've ever attended a military funeral, perhaps you noticed that the honor guards pay meticulous attention to folding the U.S. flag that once draped the casket. Guards make crisp, precise folds a total of 13 times to complete the ceremony. Much like every other aspect of our nation's greatest symbol, each of the 13 folds holds a special significance. Flag etiquette dictates that every time an American flag is to be stored or presented during a ceremony, its handlers should fold it in half twice lengthwise; then starting with the end opposite the blue field, make a taut triangular fold. Handlers continue to fold the flag in triangles until the flag has formed a triangular "pillow" with the blue field showing on the outside. It's a dignified way to treat the flag, and gives a powerful touch to patriotic ceremonies.

This 13-fold procedure was common long before the more modern assigned meanings. The source and date of origin of the meanings is unknown, but for those who participate or witness a formal flag folding ceremony, whether it be on Flag Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Veterans Day, or at a military funeral, the 13 meanings can create an uplifting experience.

## **This is what the 13 folds mean:**

1. The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.
2. The second fold signifies our belief in eternal life.
3. The third fold is made in honor and tribute of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace.

4. The fourth fold exemplifies our weaker nature as citizens trusting in God; it is to Him we turn for His divine guidance.
5. The fifth fold is an acknowledgement to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealign with other countries, may she always be right, but it is still our country, right or wrong."
6. The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we 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.
7. The seventh fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies.
8. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.
9. The ninth fold is an honor to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty, and devotion that the character of men and women who have made this country great have been molded.
10. The 10th fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first-born.
11. The 11th fold, in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
12. The 12th fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.
13. The last fold, when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God We Trust."

## FLAG DAY 2020

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Seventy-five years ago an iconic photograph by Joe Rosenthal helped rally a nation. The flag-raising at Mt. Suribachi showed America's fighters at their finest.

Upon witnessing the placement of the Stars & Stripes prominently flying on Iwo Jima, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal reportedly told Gen. "Howlin Mad" Smith, "Holland, the raising of the flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years."



But the image wasn't just about the heroic Marines. It wasn't about Navy Corpsman John Bradley, who helped raise another flag which was chronicled in an earlier photograph. It was about the symbol that they cherished enough to risk their lives in order to plant atop a hill for all to see. Three of the flag raisers did not survive the battle.

Although many American Flags have been tattered and torn in battle, they are often symbols of hope that even in the most trying of times – America will survive.



Another memorable flag-raising occurred in the rubble of the World Trade Center shortly after the 9/11 attacks. Three New York City firefighters reminded the nation, and the world, that yes – America had taken a blow – but the United States was not defeated and would indeed rise again.

Americans love their flag, which is why President Harry S. Truman, an active and proud member of The American Legion, signed an act of Congress in 1949 which designated June 14<sup>th</sup> as Flag Day.

Our esteem for the Flag is why The American Legion called together 68 other patriotic, fraternal, civic and military groups for the purpose of drafting a code of flag etiquette in 1923. They were enormously successful. It is why American Legionnaires continue to visit classrooms to teach young people about the importance of respecting this precious symbol of freedom.

One of the speakers at the 1923 National Flag Conference was the legendary labor leader Samuel Gompers. He described how union workers felt about Old Glory. "To us," he said, "the American Flag means more than even its colors in themselves portray. It means the leadership of the democratic and humane struggle has been carried on throughout all the ages."



Last summer, former Navy SEAL Dom Raso was feeling exhausted after a three-and-a-half mile run at Virginia Beach. Along the town's oceanfront, he noticed a Flag at the Navy SEAL monument. It was flying crooked and out of place because of a poor connection on a very windy day.

Three times he tried to shimmy up the flag pole. He was unsuccessful. He tried a fourth time and made it to the top.

Video of Dom fixing the Flag went viral on social media.

"This flag pole climb reminded me about EVERYTHING in life," the veteran posted. "There has been way too grave a sacrifice for me not to try. Once I do try, I have to give it my ALL for them..." –unquote.

That's what Old Glory is all about. Materially, it's a piece of cloth but symbolically it means so much more. It represents not just our country, but those who defended and, in some cases, died for it.

While the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic have yet to produce an iconic Flag image rivaling the Mt. Suribachi or World Trade Center photos, the Flag itself is a rallying point.

This was the mindset of American Legionnaires from Post 335 in Sylvester, Georgia as they placed 300 Flags along both sides of U.S. Highway 82 in early April.

Quote – "I know it's not a holiday, but we need to put them out just to let people know that there's hope and we can get through this," Legionnaire Paul Greer said to his post commander.

Included among the Flags which dot a 4,500-foot stretch of the George-Florida Parkway are a couple of signs. "Together We Are Strong, We Will Survive This" is one message. The other, "America United We Stand!" Simple messages made stronger by the Stars & Stripes, and the Emblems of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Riders. Like our Flag, The American Legion is often a source of comfort during challenging times.

When a veteran passed away at the Javits New York Medical Station on April 19th, Post 178 in Millerton, New York, ensured that a casket Flag was provided.

Sadly, the requests for this honor were just beginning as COVID-19 would take the lives of many veterans. Within hours of the first passing, Post Commander Al Andrews sent 15 more Flags to the facility.

"If it's for the veterans, we're pretty much doing whatever we can to help meet a need," Commander Andrews said. "The support, although unique in this pandemic response, is exactly what The American Legion is intended for."-unquote.

As unique as these times are, so is our Flag. Retired Army Major General Patrick Brady earned a Medal of Honor as a dust-off pilot during the Vietnam War. He is also a former chairman of the Citizens Flag Alliance and a dedicated champion of a flag protection amendment to the Constitution.

He recently pointed out the significance of our nation's symbol.

"Our Flag is unique" General Brady said. "It does not represent a dictator or a party or a geography, but a set of values. It is the shroud for the coffins of our dead servicemembers, veterans and public officials; it is the tissue for the tears of those left behind." Unquote.

The American Flag does not run. It does not back down. And neither do its defenders.

Last year when Camping World CEO Marcus Lemonis flew a 40-by-80-foot American Flag on a 130-foot pole outside his Gander RV dealership, he was sued by city officials in North Carolina. The Flag was too large, he was told.

Rather than remove the Flag, Mr. Lemonis settled the case by paying \$14,000 in fines and \$2,000 in legal costs.

But the victory was his, as city officials knew that the patriotic businessman would not budge. The city wisely changed its zoning codes to allow the grand old flag to stay.

Though impressive and attractive, it isn't the fabric, the cloth or even the colors that make the Flag of the United States special.

It is the people who defend it and the nation that it represents which makes the American Flag the envy of the world.

And long will she fly!

Thank you for being here. God Bless America and God Bless our Flag.

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