

Proper Folding of the US Flag

The Folding of the US Flag:

Knowing how to properly fold the Flag of the United States is one way to honor the Flag and the values it represents. Folding the Flag takes can take time to learn, but with practice, it is something that anyone can do. Here is a step-by-step guide on how to fold the Flag of the United States:

Step 1:

A team of two people hold opposite ends of the Flag. Stretch it horizontally at waist height and fold it in half lengthwise with the stripes facing up and the blue field facing down. The Flag should now be half of its original width.

Step 2:

Together with your partner, fold the Flag in half lengthwise again. The union (blue field with stars) should be showing on both sides of the fold. The Flag should be half the width it was at the end of Step 1.

Step 3:

One person holds the Flag by the union while the other starts at the opposite end by making triangular folds. The person at the striped end should make all of the triangular folds while the person at the Union end keeps the Flag taut.

Step 4:

Continue the diagonal or triangular folding towards the blue union until the end is reached, with only the blue showing on both sides and the form resembling that of a three-corner hat or triangle. It typically takes 13 folds before this step is finished—a tribute to the original 13 colonies. The triangular product at the end of this step is meant to resemble the hats worn during the Revolutionary War. Your Flag is now ready to be stored until you are ready to fly it again.

When to Fold the Flag

Folding the Flag takes place after the Flag is lowered from its mast or mount. Flag etiquette directs that the Flag should only be flown between sunrise and sunset except when there is enough light during the night to illuminate it. The Flag should also be taken down in cases of severe weather unless it is made of a waterproof material like nylon. The idea is to only fly the Flag in good conditions, because otherwise, the Flag could be damaged. A damaged Flag should never be flown. If these steps are followed, your Flag will stay in pristine condition and proudly display its stars and stripes for years to come.

The 13 Folds of the Flag

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 dealing 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."