How to Handle a Flag

Flag Ceremony - Flag Retirement - Folding a Flag







Takara Holst Gold Award

How to Conduct a Flag Ceremony

Depending on the number of flags that are apart of the ceremony tells you how many people are needed. At least two people are needed per flag with the addition of one caller. In our example, three flags were used in the ceremony, therefore, 7 people were needed.

To begin the flag ceremony, the speaker will call out "Color guard attention; audience attention." At this point, the crowd and your ceremony team will end conversations and direct their attention to the ceremony.



From there, the caller will command the color guard to "forward march," and they begin to march forward until the caller announces to "halt."





The caller will use the command, "prepare to post the colors," where they unfold the flags, followed by "color guard, present your colors." While this second piece is not required, by popping the flags it respectfully shows off the flags.





After properly presenting each flag at one time, the caller gives the command, "color guard, post the american flag." After the american flag is raised quickly, then the caller commands, "raise the additional flags (by their respective name)."



This will be followed by the caller inviting everyone to say the Pledge of Allegiance by asking, "will you please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance?"

Afterwards, the color guard is instructed to reform from the caller demanding "color guard reform," followed by "color guard return to post, color guard halt." The last command is "color guard at ease, audience at ease."







This concludes the flag ceremony. Afterward, adult leaders can be invited up to talk about current events going on for the event, the schedule, etc.



How to Retire a Flag

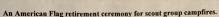
Flag Retirement Ceremony

The following slide is the proper flag retirement ceremony. After, they are explained step by step.



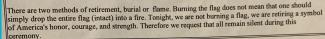
United States Flag Retirement Ceremony

I Am Your Flag



Prelude - Said by Scoutmaster (or equivalent)

When the United States flag (Old Glory) becomes worn, torn, faded or badly soiled, it is time to replace it with a new flag. The old flag should be "retired" with dignity and respect befitting our nation's flag. Only two organizations are permitted by the United States Congress to retire the flag - the Boy Scouts of America and the United States Military.





Scouts stand in flanking line on one side of fire. MC stands at rear of fire facing audience, asks audience to stand. Color Guard (3 scouts minimum) will approach fire from rear of audience, walk past line of Scouts, then stop at rear of fire facing audience.

Color Guard slowly unfurls flag on far side of campfire so it shows through the flames while MC reads the script below.

MC: "I am your Flag. I appear in many places. I have taken many forms and been called many names. I was authorized by Congress in 1818 in the form you see now and have remained unchanged except to add a new star each July 4th after a new state joined the union until I reached my present number of 50."

"I am more than just red, white and blue cloth shaped into a design. I am a silent sentinel of freedom. People of every country in the world know me on sight. Many countries love me as you do. Other countries look at me with contempt because they don't allow the freedom of Democracy that I represent — but country looks on me with respect. I am strong and the people of America have made me strong. My strength comes from your willingness to give help to those who are in the people of Forward peace yet stand ready to fight oppression. You send resources and offer technology to less need. You strive for world peace yet stand ready to fight oppression. You feed starving children. You offer a home to anyone fortunate countries so they may strive to become self-sufficient. You feed starving children. You offer a home to anyone who will pledge allegiance to me."

"Your sons gather beneath me to offer their lives on the battlefields, to preserve the Liberty I represent. That's why I love the American people. That's why I have flown so proudly."

"Scouts and their families are some of my favorite people. I listen to your patriotic songs. I'm there at your flag ceremonies and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love the your pledge.

"Now I am tired and it's time for me to rest in the Sacred Flames of your campfire. My colors are faded and my cloth is tattered but my spirit remains unbroken.

Optional - Extends the length of the ceremony

To set my spirit loose, first cut the +blue field away from my stripes."

MC pauses. Color Guard leader uses scissors to remove blue field.

MC: "Tear each of my 13 stripes and lay it on the fire, one at a time. As you do this, think about the 13 original colonies and the pioneers who carved a nation out of a wilderness. They risked everything to fight for the Independence which we enjoy today."

Color Guard leader uses scissors to start each stripe, then tears it; another Guard hands each stripe to the next Scout waiting in line. Scout takes stripe in both hands, then walks toward fire, places stripe in base of flames, salutes, then walks to form flanking line on opposite side each facing fire.

MC: (continue slowly reading through next section, timing each state to a fresh stripe) "My first state was Virginia, then Massachusetts, then New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and finally Georgia."

"As you cut and rip me apart and watch me burn, do not be sad or feel sorry for me. I have had the great Honor of being your flag of the United Stated of America and the Republic for which I stand, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

MC: "When my stripes are gone, kiss the blue field and lay it across the fire. Then stand silently as you watch each star twinkle and fade into ashes."

Color Guard leader takes blue field, bring it to his lips, then lays it on the top of the fire.

Pause silently until blue field has been consumed.

"Now I am just a memory, but if there is a tear in your eye or a lump in your throat; if you felt a shiver in your spine as you watched me burn, then I will be back the next time you need me and my colors will be fresh and bright and my edges won't be ragged anymore. When I climb to the top of the flagpole, I'll wave at you and remember the love and respect that you have showed me here tonight." So when you see me, stand straight, place your right hand over your heart...and I'll salute you, waving back...and I'll know that...

YOU REMEMBERED!



How to Retire a Flag

In order to conduct a flag retirement ceremony, a minimum of 5 people must be involved. The caller tells about the significance of why we burn or bury flags while the four others are preparing to begin the ceremony.

"I am your flag. I appear in many places. I have taken many forms and been called many names. I was authorized by congress in 1818 in the form you see now and have remained unchanged except to add a new star each July 4th after a new state joined the union until my present number 50."

"I am more than just red, white, and blue cloth shaped into a design. I am a silent sentinel of freedom. People of every country in the world know me on sight. Many countries love me as you do. Other countries look at me with contempt because they don't allow the freedom of Democracy that I represent—but country looks on me with respect. I am strong and the people of America have made me strong. My strength comes from your willingness to give help to those who are in need. You strive for world peace uet stand ready to fight oppression. You send resources and offer technology to less fortunate countries so they may strive to become self-sufficient. You feed starving children. You offer a home to anyone who will pledge allegiance to me."

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"Scouts and their families are some of my favorite people. I listen to your patriotic songs. I'm there at your flag ceremonies and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your heart when I am on parade. How smartly you salute as I pass by and ripple with pleasure when I see it."

"Now I am tired and it's time for me to rest in the Sacred Flames of your campfire. My colors are faded and my cloth is tattered but my spirit remains unbroken.

As the caller reads the story of how to properly retire the flag, the group follows along and completes each step.

"Tear each of my 13 stripes and lay it on the fire, one at a time. As you do this, think about the 13 original colonies and the pioneers who carved a nation out of the wilderness. They risked everything to fight for the Independence which we enjoy today."

"My first state was Virginia, then Massachusetts, then New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and finally Georgia."

"As you cut and rip me apart and watch me burn, do not be sad or feel sorry for me. I have had the great Honor of being your flag of the United States of America and the Republic for which I stand, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

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"Now I am just a memory, but if there is a tear in your eye or a lump in your throat; if you felt a shiver in your spine as you watched me burn, then I will be back the next time you need me and my colors will be fresh and bright and my edges won't be ragged anymore. When I climb to the top of the flagpole, i'll wave at you and remember the love and respect that you have showed me here tonight. So when you see me, stand straight, place your right hand over your heart and i'll salute you, waving back and i'll know that you remembered."

Burial Procedure

Once all that is left is the ashes from the flag and the grommets, the procedure is as follows:

- 1. Make sure it is completely cooled
- 2. Dig two separate holes; one for the grommets and one for the ashes
- 3. Make sure the fire pit is completely clean of ashes
- 4. Respectfully bury each

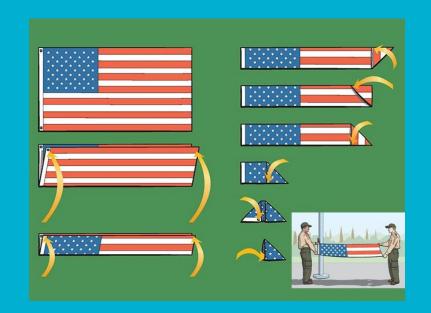
Reminders for the Retirement Ceremony

- The fire should only be used to burn flags, not to cook or boil something at the same time.
- 2. Beware of a burn ban before conducting a ceremony(it is best to still inform the local fire department as to what you plan on doing so they are in the loop).
- The grommets from the flag should not be left in the fire pit for someone else to clean up.

How to Fold a Flag

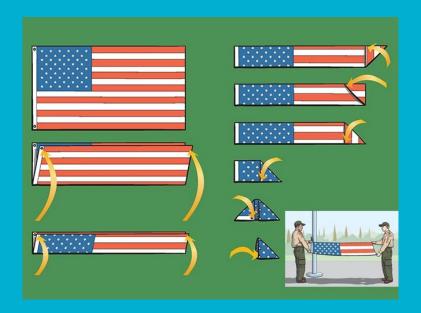
Folding a Flag

- 1. Hold the flag at waist level between two people.
- 2. Then, fold the flag in half lengthwise and then again, in half lengthwise.
- 3. Keep the blue field on the outside.
- 4. While holding the flag by the blue field, the second person should make a triangular fold. Continue triangular folds until only the blue field is visible.



Continued

5. The flag heading that contains the grommets is tucked under the blue field of stars.



Sources

Unknown. I Am Your Flag.

https://www.gsctx.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsctx/documents/volunteers/troop-planning-resources/US% 20Flag%20Retirement%20Ceremony%20Tip%20Sheet.pdf

Boy Scouts of America. The Boy Scout Handbook. Boy Scouts of America, 2010. Pp. 72-76.