

★ The United States Flag ★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is for students to gain an understanding that the flag is both a symbolic representation of the historical founding of the United States and a representation of each of the states. The flag is a symbol known around the world as a representation of this nation.

Objective

1. The student will discuss the importance and meaning of the elements of the United States flag.
2. The student will examine and practice the elements of the United States Flag Code.

Theme-Unity & Freedom

The flag represents the unity of the 50 states as well as every citizen of this union, solidifying and uniting all of the people as a nation. The flag is a common symbol throughout the world representing our collective presence as America, the land of the free.

NCSS Standards

Vg. apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.
IXa. describe instances in which language,

art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding....

IXb. analyze examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.

Xa. explain the origins and interpret the continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government....

Xj. examine strategies designed to strengthen the “common good,” which consider a range of options for citizen action.

Time

45 minutes for the flag activity and 45 minutes for the code activity.

Materials

- ★ United States Flag reading
- ★ United States Federal Flag code
- ★ Poster paper, tape, and glue
- ★ 2 or 3 flags
- ★ Dictionaries
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

- ★ Copy all handouts.
- ★ Collect all poster paper, pens, markers, and dictionaries.
- ★ Arrange a location in the community to display the posters.

Focus

Write “symbol” on the board. Have students discuss what comes to mind. Symbols have been used throughout time to identify groups and individuals who belong to those groups. Heraldry is the ancient practice of devising, granting, and producing distinguished emblems or signs. In heraldry, each element on a flag, seal, badge, crest, or coat of arms has a meaning. Show pictures of a variety of flags and heraldry, both modern and historical. Explain how symbols are used in these to represent various values. Each element and color has significance. For example, stars have symbolized the heavens, religious or spiritual concepts, and knighthood and chivalry. Stripes symbolize the rays of sun and are also considered an ancient military symbol. Have students think of examples of historical and modern heraldic symbols (including flags, seals, badges, crests, coat of arms, etc.) and what they represent and are used for. Discuss the meaning and merit of symbols. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on the U. S. flag and national symbols.)

Activity

Designing A Flag

1. Have students research and discuss the meaning and values represented in their school emblem, flag, and/or mascot (if they have one). An alternative could be a city or state flag/emblem or family crest.
2. Assign groups to design, at home or in class, a school (if there isn't one) or class flag or emblem. An alternative could be a family crest. References on flags and heraldry may be introduced if teachers want symbols and elements to be traditionally accurate. Students will present or write about their creations, describing the symbolism and elements used in their designs and the ideas, events, things, and/or values they represent. (This may be part of the evaluation—see step d.) Students vote on a school or class flag. They may vote based on selected criteria if desired.
3. Have students decide how their flag can be used to identify the school or class. Suggestions include posting the flag in their room or hall, on the classroom door, on their cafeteria tables, on their book covers, etc. Also have students decide how the flag should be properly handled and displayed, writing out these rules as a “code.”
4. Evaluation: Students will describe, through presentation and/or writing, the meaning of the symbols and elements used in their flag, rules for proper handling and display of their flag, and the ways the flag can be used for school/class identification.

Distinguishing Our U. S. Flag

1. Write “national symbol” on the board. Ask students what comes to mind when they think of our national symbols. Have the students brainstorm (make a list) of the top three symbols of America. Discuss their decisions/choices. Have the class vote on the top three nominations. (Hopefully the flag will be in the top 3.) Explain that our nation's best known emblem is our flag which serves as a visible symbol to the world of the ideals of our country. Other national symbols include the Statue of Liberty, Great Seal, bald eagle, “Uncle Sam,” nation anthem, etc. Have students close their eyes and/or try to visualize the U. S. flag. Have them think about the elements in and appearance of the flag and the places and manners in which they've seen it displayed. Have them think about what the flag represents and stands for. What are our ideals?
2. Have students begin the KWL Chart under the “K” section as a pre-test, writing what they know about the U. S. flag in its appearance and meaning as a national symbol, and the places where and ways in which it is displayed. Students may sketch or draw the flag as they know or

remember it. Students then write what they want to know about the flag in the “W” section on the chart.

3. Show an actual flag and/or a picture of the flag. Examine and point out its visible aspects and elements. Why were these designs and colors chosen? Have students (or teacher via read-aloud) read the flag handout and complete the group activity. The class may briefly discuss/review history of the U. S. flag as desired. Mention that the Navy may have liked the colors also because of their visibility at sea. What did the designers of the flag want it to represent? Discuss the significance of the flag, what it represents (including unity), and the meaning and values represented in its various elements. Explain how American symbols should be seen today as powerful reminders of ideals such as freedom, liberty, loyalty, and duty to country.

Our Flag’s Code

1. Have students define the word “code.” Explain the Federal Flag Code to students including its purpose, significance, and relevance. Have students read and discuss with parents the Federal Flag Code for the U. S. Flag.

2. In class, students will divide into several groups to read, understand, and share sections of the Federal Flag Code. Suggestions for how sections might be used are listed below:

Sec. 2 – Students could list important flag days on a chart.

Students could demonstrate the raising and/or lowering of the flag.

Sec. 3 – (3 groups) Students could divide by the number of letters in this section and draw/demonstrate each part of the section. Example: A-E

Sec. 4 – (2 groups) Draw or demonstrate the “nevers” of flag use.

Sec. 5-7 – (1 group) Same as above.

As a whole class, have students share, ask questions about, discuss, and summarize some of the main points of the Code. Write the main points on the board. Discuss the flag’s uses such as how it is used for identifying ships, buildings, military equipment, etc. How and where is the flag displayed? What are some important points to remember about the code? Surprising points?

3. Further discussion and/or journal/essay topics: How and why do we show respect for the flag? What is the purpose of the code? Why do we have one? Why is it important? Consider what the flag code means socially and legally.

4. Students write an opinion paragraph or position/persuasive essay on one of the following topics:

A. The flag may be worn as shirts, shorts, hats, or scarves.

B. The flag may be burned in protest.

C. The flag is our most important symbol.

The Flag in Creative Expression

1. Have students research, select, read-aloud, and discuss a poem or prose expressing the meaning, patriotism, and inspiration of the U. S. flag as a national symbol. They may also illustrate their poem. Make sure students understand and share meanings of words used in their poem or prose. What thoughts, feelings, images, inspiration, values does the flag inspire?

2. Students may write their own poems and prose to express meaning, patriotism, events,

images, inspiration, values, etc. about the flag as a symbol of our nation. Students may post the poems they write on the bulletin board, create illustrations or designs for their poems, and/or collect the poems in a class magazine of flag poetry.

3. Have students write a drama, skit, short story, or infomercial that includes the display of the flag.

4. Have students collect magazine and/or newspaper pictures to create a collage or an interesting, creative visual interpretation of the flag to illustrate their reverence for the U. S. flag. Students may present their collages to the class and/or display them.

Closure

Students will research outside class any questions that were not answered about the flag in the “W” section of their KWL chart. Students may share these. Students will fill out the “L” section of the chart about what they learned about the flag.

Assessment

Students write and possibly present essays, reports, and/or demonstrations on topics related to the flag, its symbolism or representations, its history, its significance, its function, its use, or a related subject.





The United States Flag

The flag of the United States, also known as “the Stars and Stripes,” is a **heraldic symbol** of our country. To **salute** the **flag** and to say the **Pledge of Allegiance** are ways of showing **patriotism**. The colors, number of stars, and number of stripes in the U. S. flag are **significant** because they tell about the history of the United States and what Americans **value**.

The first U. S. flag had thirteen alternating red and white stripes along with thirteen white stars on a field of blue to **represent** the original thirteen **states**. When two new states were added in 1792, the flag was changed to fifteen stripes and fifteen stars. Since 1818, the flag has had thirteen stripes which represent the original thirteen states, and only stars have been added for new states, now totaling fifty. The star is a symbol of the heavens and the **divine** goal to which man has **aspired** from time **immemorial**. Stripes symbolize rays of light **emanating** from the sun. The white stars in a blue field represent a new **constellation**. This section is called the Union Jack and is sometimes flown on ships. Regarding the colors of the flag, white stands for **purity** and **innocence**, blue for **perseverance**, **vigilance**, and **justice**, and red for **hardiness** and **valor**.

The flag with fifty stars came into use on July 4, 1960. In less than two hundred years, the flag “has increased its constellation from thirteen to fifty bright and shining stars. In so doing, it has reflected the story of the American Union which has prospered and grown from a small beginning of 13 colonies along the Atlantic seacoast to its present wealth and power, comprising fifty states which extend from ocean to ocean and beyond” (*Flags of American History*, David D. Crouthers, Hammond & Co., NJ, 1962, p.69).

The United States flag was given the nickname “Old Glory” by William Driver. Driver lived in Tennessee during the Civil War. When Union forces captured the **capitol** in Nashville, Driver said, “Thank God, I have lived to raise Old Glory over the capitol of Tennessee.”

Group Activity

- Step 1: Each person in group reads part of story above to other group members.
- Step 2: Each person uses a dictionary to write definitions for at least three bold words. Every bold word must be defined by at least one group member.
- Step 3: When the group is finished defining all the bold words, each student will read aloud their definitions to the others in the group.
- Step 4: Discuss as a group why you think purity, innocence, perseverance, vigilance, justice, hardiness, and valor are qualities that might represent the American people. Also discuss why it is important for citizens to show respect for the flag. Report to class the meaning of the number of stars, stripes, and colors of the flag and how they symbolize our nation.

Federal Flag Code

Source: Veterans of Foreign Wars Americanism Department

The following document is known as the Federal Flag Code. It prescribes proper display of and respect for the United States Flag. This code does not impose penalties for misuse of the United States Flag. Enforcement of the code is left to the states and to the District of Columbia. Each state has its own flag law. The Federal Flag Code is the guide for all handling and display of the Stars and Stripes. Here is the code in its entirety:

PUBLIC LAW 94-344
94th CONGRESS, S. J. Res. 49
July 7, 1976

JOINT RESOLUTION

To amend the joint resolution entitled “Joint resolution to codify and emphasize existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America.”

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the joint resolution entitled “Joint resolution to codify and emphasize existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America,” as amended (36 U.S.C. 171-178), is amended —

SEC 1 That the following codification of existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America be, and is hereby, established for the use of such civilians or civilian groups or organizations as may not be required to conform with regulations promulgated by one or more executive departments of the Government of the United States. The flag of the United States for the purpose of this chapter shall be defined according to title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1, section 1 and section 2 and Executive Order 10834 issued pursuant thereto.

- SEC 2
- (a) It is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
 - (b) The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
 - (c) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all-weather flag is displayed.

(d) The flag should be displayed on all days, especially on:

New Year's Day	January 1
Inauguration Day	January 20
Lincoln's Birthday	February 12
Washington's Birthday	Third Monday in February
Easter Sunday	Variable
Mother's Day	Second Sunday in May
Armed Forces Day	Third Saturday in May
Memorial Day (half-staff until noon)	Last Monday in May
Flag Day	June 14
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Constitution Day	September 17
Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Navy Day	October 27
Veterans Day	November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25

and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays.

(e) The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.

(f) The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.

(g) The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

SEC 3 That the flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right; that is, the flag's own right, or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

(a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff, or as provided in subsection (i).

(b) The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motor car, the staff should be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

(c) No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may

be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy. (See Public Law 107, page 4.)

- (d) The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.
- (e) The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.
- (f) When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the United States Flag's right.
- (g) When flags of two or more nations are displayed, they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in times of peace.
- (h) When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extending from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the flag should be hoisted out, union first, from the building.
- (i) When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left. When displayed in a window, the flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.
- (j) When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.
- (k) When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker or the right of the audience.

- (l) The flag should form a distinctive feature of the ceremony of unveiling a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or monument.
- (m) The flag, when flown at half-staff, 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, then raised to the top of the staff. By order of the President, the flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the United States Government and the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, as a mark of respect to their memory. In the event of the death of other officials or foreign dignitaries, the flag is to be displayed at half-staff according to Presidential instructions or orders, or in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law. In the event of the death of a present or former official of the government of any State, territory, or possession may proclaim that the National flag shall be flown at half-staff. The flag shall be flown at half-staff:
- thirty days from the death of the President or a former President
 - ten days from the day of death of the Vice-President, the Chief Justice or a retired Chief Justice of the United States, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives
 - from the day of death until interment of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former Vice-President, or the Governor of a State, territory, or possession
 - on the day of death and the following day for a Member of Congress.

As used in this subsection:

1. the term 'half-staff' means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff;
 2. the term 'executive or military department' means any agency listed under sections 101 and 102 of title 5, United States Code; and
 3. the term 'Member of Congress' means a Senator, a Representative, a Delegate, or the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico.
- (n) When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.
- (o) When the flag is suspended across a corridor or lobby in a building with only one main entrance, it should be suspended vertically with the union of the flag to the observer's left upon entering. If the building has more than one main entrance, the flag should be suspended vertically near the center of the corridor or lobby with the union to the north, when entrances are to the east

and west or the east when entrances are to the north and south. If there are entrances in more than two directions, the union should be to the east.

- SEC 4 That no disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America, the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, State flags, and organization or institution flags are to be dipped as a mark of honor.
- (a) The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.
 - (b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise.
 - (c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.
 - (d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free. Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for covering a speaker's desk, draping the front of the platform, and for decoration in general.
 - (e) The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a manner as to permit it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged in any way.
 - (f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
 - (g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.
 - (h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying or delivering anything.
 - (i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.
 - (j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore the lapel flag pin being a replica, should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.

(k) The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

SEC 5 During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or 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 present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.

SEC 6 During rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. Men 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 render the military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note. When the flag is not displayed, those present should face toward the music and act in the same manner they would if the flag were displayed there.

SEC 7 The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:

“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,”

should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men 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.

SEC 8 Any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the flag of the United States of America, set forth herein, may be altered, modified, or repealed, or additional rules with respect thereto may be prescribed, by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, whenever he deems it to be appropriate or desirable, and any such alteration or additional rule shall be set forth in a proclamation.

