



Flag Ceremonies for Girl Scouts

Sample Ceremonies, Guidelines, and Etiquette

"The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing." *Flag Code, Sec. 4 (j)*

Because the American Flag is the symbol of our country – which Girl Scouts promise to serve - many Girl Scout events include a flag ceremony. The ways we show respect for our flag is sometimes called "Flag Etiquette." Both the Flag Code and flag ceremony traditions give us guidelines for how the flag is to be handled. You can find a copy of the Flag Code online at <https://www.legion.org/flag/code>.


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KEY POINTS IN FLAG ETIQUETTE

When the American flag is displayed in the United States, it is always given the position of honor. This means that it is placed either to the **right** of any other flags, in **front** of any other flags, or **higher** than other flags.

“Right” means *the flag’s own right side*. Imagine that you are holding the flag in front of you. Stand so that you are facing the people who will see it. With the flag being held in that position, *your* right is also the flag’s own right! (Which means the flag is on the *audience’s left*!)

“In front” can mean *ahead of or first*. If the color guard is carrying two or more flags (in addition to the American flag), the American flag can be in front (ahead) of other flags, **or** in the center as long as it is carried a little ahead of the others. If several flags are carried in parade fashion, the American flag is always the first in the lineup.

If the American flag is displayed along with state flags or the flags of other organizations, it should be **higher than** the others. The American flag may be larger than the others, or it could be on a taller pole, or on a pole sitting on a little platform. In the United States, no flag should be larger than or flown higher than the American flag, when displayed together. NOTE: *When the American flag is displayed with the flags of other nations, the flags are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height, and the flags should be of approximately the same size.*

At an event where there is a speaker, put the American flag in the position of honor on the speaker’s right. (Which is also the Flag’s right.) Any other flag or pennant should be placed on the speaker’s left (the audience’s right).

The flag should be put away carefully when not in use. If the flag is permanently attached to its staff, it should be furled around the staff. It should then be encased in a cover.

When lowering the flag **alone**, do not try to fold it. Gathering it up so that it does not touch the ground is sufficient; fold it later when you have someone to help you.

Personal Etiquette For Flag Ceremonies

- Girl Scouts always use the **citizen salute** of “right hand over the heart,” even when wearing the official Girl Scout uniform; we do not use a military-style salute (see more, below.) Salute when the flag passes by; when the flag is raised or lowered; during the Pledge of Allegiance; and while the National Anthem (“Star-Spangled Banner”) is played or sung.
- Individuals wearing a hat (a camp hat, for example, not a religious head-covering) remove their hat and hold it in their right hand, over their heart, when the flag passes by; when the flag is raised or lowered; during the Pledge of Allegiance; and while the National Anthem (“Star-Spangled Banner”) is played or sung.
- Saluting details: Girl Scouts stand quietly at attention and salute:
 - when the flag is being raised or lowered. If the flag is being raised on a flagpole outdoors, salute when the first corner of the flag is attached to the halyard and hold the salute until the flag reaches the top and is secured in place.
 - When the flag is lowered, the salute is made as soon as the flag starts down the pole and is held until the last corner is detached from the halyard.
 - When the flag passes in front of you in parade or procession
 - When the National Anthem is being played or sung (if the National Anthem is being played, but no flag is present, turn in the direction of the music and salute)

When to stand quietly at attention, without saluting: when you are in a place where people from another country are saluting their flag, or singing their national anthem.

WHAT DOES THE COLOR GUARD WEAR?

For *formal* flag ceremonies, Girl Scouts are expected to wear the official Girl Scout uniform:

GIRLS wear their official sash, vest, or tunic with a plain white shirt and khaki pants (or skirt). Daisies and Brownies may wear the official Daisy or Brownie uniform components instead. Girls may also wear their official scarf; Daisies and Brownies may wear their official beanies. It’s recommended that girls not wear ultra-casual shoes such as flip-flops for flag ceremonies!

ADULTS wear “navy business attire” with their pins and an official Girl Scout scarf or tie, or the official adult vest. (Many women opt for wearing an official Girl Scout shirt or sweater with an official scarf and navy pants or skirt; check out the Shop at www.girlscouts.org for details.)

What About White Gloves? And Red Sashes?

In the days prior to casual uniform components, a Girl Scout's "dress" uniform included not only the correct dress or skirt and blouse, but the correct socks, hat, shoes and gloves! Girls wore white gloves when they participated in a flag ceremony not because they were carrying or guarding the flag, but because they were in their most formal uniform. Ceremonial or parade gloves are often used by military honor or color guards, and Girl Scout Color Guard members may wear them too – *when* they are in uniform.

The red sashes sometimes seen on color guards was a **camp** tradition; the 1933 *Girl Scout Handbook* says, "Many camps use red sashes to indicate the fact that girls who are wearing them are going to raise or lower the Flag and are not to be interfered with or spoken to until they have finished the ceremony."

As you can see in the illustration below, the Color Bearer wore her red sash over her right shoulder and tied (in a square knot) on her left side. The Color Guards wore their red sash around their waist and tied in a square knot on their left side.

etiquette is interpreted are important factors.

COLOR CEREMONY IN CAMP

In camp the same spirit though the ceremony is different, and the girls who hoist the Flag in responsible for it all day, until at sunset. If it rains,* they the Flag is lowered and prop-dried if need be—before it is away. A Color ceremony in

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A COLOR CEREMONY IN CAMP

Saluting: From 1912 through 1963, Girl Scouts used a three-finger, military-style Girl Scout Salute, which you see the girls giving in the above illustration. Girl Scouts today use the “hand-over-heart” civilian salute.

If girls or adults are wearing a **non-religious** head-covering (such as a camp hat) they remove their hat and hold it over their heart as the flag is raised or lowered or during the National Anthem (“Star Spangled Banner.”)

GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------|--|
| <i>Colors:</i> | The American flag |
| <i>Symbol:</i> | Something that stands for, or represents, something else: a feeling, concept or group of people |
| <i>Field:</i> | The blue part of the American flag, on which there are 50 stars |
| <i>Staff:</i> | A rigid pole, usually of wood or metal, to which a flag is attached so that it can be carried or posted. |
| <i>Post:</i> | To place the flag staff firmly into a stand |
| <i>Stand:</i> | A solid holder sitting on the floor into which the bottom end of |

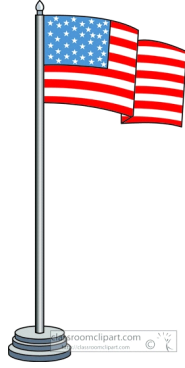
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|-----------------|--|
| | the flag staff is placed |
| <i>Mast:</i> | The staff on a ship from which a flag is flown |
| <i>Pole:</i> | A tall staff, usually metal, which is permanently fixed in the ground |
| <i>Halyard:</i> | A rope used to raise and lower a flag on a mast or pole. |
| <i>Eyelets:</i> | Holes, usually grommets, on the edge of a flag that are used for attaching the flag to a staff or halyard. |

PLANNING A FLAG CEREMONY

Every flag ceremony has a **color guard** (AKA color party.) This is the team that carries and protects the flag. It is called a *color* guard because the American flag is sometimes referred to as "the colors." The people who carry the flags are called **Flag Bearers**. The others on the team, who walk beside or behind the Color Bearer, are called **Guards**; their job is to guard, or protect the flag and to assist the Color Bearer. There is also a **Caller**, or **Girl Scout-in-charge**, (sometimes called a Color Captain), whose job is to announce each part of the ceremony, including commands to the color guard and instructions to those in attendance, and to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and Girl Scout Promise. The Caller may also lead the group in patriotic songs or give an appropriate reading, or may direct another member of the planning group (but not a member of the color guard) to do so. Keep the ceremony simple and dignified. Make sure that the flag is handled correctly and with respect.

Things to consider:

- Who will be the Flag Bearer(s)? **Need:** one per flag
- Who will be the Guards? **Need:** two or four per flag or flag line
- Who will be the Caller? (The Girl-Scout-In-Charge)
- What formation shall we use for the color guard procession? [See below]
- Do we want to sing a patriotic song?
- Do we want to use a poem, a quotation, or reading?
- After reciting the Pledge, do we want to say the Girl Scout Promise? The Law?
- Who can lead the songs or do readings, if they are used?
- What will our order of presentation be?



INDOOR FLAG CEREMONY – GUIDELINES

(When flags are on a staff)

- If other flags are to be displayed, the American flag is *posted last* and *removed first* so that it remains higher than the other flags. (“Posted” means placed in a flag stand.)
- Members of the color guard stand quietly at attention when they are not actively preparing the flag to be posted or retired. Their attention is focused on the flag(s.) They do not say the Pledge of Allegiance or give a salute during the Pledge, nor do they sing along with any songs that might be used in the ceremony. They may give a brief salute in unison immediately after the flag has been posted and secured, and just before the flag staff is removed from the stand at retreat (when the flag is removed.).
- If members of the color guard wear red sashes (usually done at camp, when girls are not uniform,) the Flag Bearer’s sash goes over her right shoulder and across her body, to be tied at her waist on the left. (This is the opposite of a Girl Scout sash.) The Girl Scout In Charge and the Guards wear the sash around their waist, tied in a square not on their left.

TRADITIONAL COMMANDS FOR INDOOR FLAG CEREMONIES:

OPENING: Posting or Presenting the Colors

“Girl Scouts, attention!” and/or **“Ladies and gentlemen, please stand as we present the colors.”** -- This is the signal that the ceremony is about to begin, and everyone who is physically able should be standing quietly and paying attention.

“Color guard, attention!” -- This is the signal to the color guard to be ready to start.

“Color guard, advance and present the Colors!” -- At this command, the color guard walks forward; they carry the flag(s) to the platform (or where ever the flag stands are) and turn to face the audience, keeping the American flag on its own right (the audience’s left.)

"Girl Scouts/Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in pledging allegiance to our 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."

*[After the Pledge, girls may choose to include a patriotic song, poem, or reading. If it is a Girl Scout audience, they could include the Promise and Law.]**

"Color guard, post the colors!" -- This is the signal for the Flag Bearer(s) to step forward and put the flags into flag stand(s). The American flag is posted last; this way, it stays *higher than* the other flags until it is posted in front of or to the right of them. The Color guard may salute briefly after flag(s) are posted. OR...

"Color guard, dismissed!" -- This is the signal for the color guard to leave the assembly in whatever marching formation has been planned.

"Girl Scouts, dismissed!" or **"Ladies and gentlemen, this ends our ceremony."** (or, **"Please be seated."**) -- This command signals that the ceremony is ended; everyone leaves the area quietly and in an orderly way, **or** may be seated, if they are remaining in the same place.

**Remember that the girls in the color guard are still holding their flags! With young girls, particularly, you may want to have the color guard post the colors immediately after saying the Pledge and the Girl Scout Promise, and be dismissed to join the rest of the audience, before proceeding with songs, poems, skits, etc.*

CLOSING: Retiring the Colors ("Retreat")

In the military, the retreat ceremony serves a twofold purpose. It signals the end of the official duty day and serves as a ceremony for [paying respect to the flag](#). At Girl Scouts, the Colors are retired as the **very last thing** before dismissal. After all announcements have been made and any benedictions said or other closing activities completed, the Girl Scout In Charge comes forward:

"Girl Scouts/Ladies and Gentlemen, we will now prepare for Retreat" (or, "to retire the Colors.") -- This is the signal that the ceremony is about to begin, and everyone should be quiet and paying attention. They remain seated.

"Please join us in singing 'Taps'" (or other appropriate closing song.)

"Color guard, attention!" -- This is the signal to the color guard to be ready to start.

"Color guard, advance!" -- At this command, the color guard walks forward to where the flags are posted; they stand at attention in front of the flag pole(s) and await the next command.

"Color guard, retire the colors!" -- At this command, the color guard may salute briefly, then the Flag Bearer(s) step(s) forward to remove the flags from the flag stand(s). The American Flag is removed **last**. *The Color Guard turns to face the audience.*

"Girl Scouts/Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for Retreat" (or, "as the Colors are retired."

"Color Guard, retreat." OR "Color Guard, retire the colors." – The color guard uses the same formation as they did to present the colors to now retire (remove) the colors, typically walking to the back of the room or into a hallway.

"Girl Scouts, dismissed." OR "Ladies and gentlemen, the _____ is concluded."

Two possible color guard formations:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Guard 0 | | <u>Guards</u> 0 0 |
| Bearer X | OR... | <u>Bearer</u> X |
| Guard 0 | | <u>Guards</u> 0 0 |
| (Guards and bearer in one line) | | (Guards walk behind bearer) |

When you want to involve the entire troop, or camp unit, in the flag ceremony, they may form a "guard of honor," walking behind the Color Guard in two lines or rows of three.

ooooo 0 0
X
ooooo 0 0



OUTDOOR FLAG CEREMONY GUIDELINES

The flag should be raised and lowered by hand:

- Do not raise the flag while it is still folded, or partially folded.
- When raising the flag, move it quickly to the top of the flag pole.
- When lowering the flag, move it slowly and with dignity.
- If other flags are to be flown, the American flag is the first one raised and the last one to be lowered, so that it is always in the highest position.
- If carried in an open (unfolded) position, the flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.
- Whenever possible, the flag is always raised and lowered from the **leeward** side of the flagstaff (on, or toward, the side sheltered from the wind or toward which the wind is blowing; downwind.) This helps keep the flag from wrapping itself around the pole!
- The two Color Guards attaching the flag to the halyards (the ropes used to raise and lower a flag on a mast or pole), stand facing the flag pole, to hoist the flag without entangling the halyards.
- The Color Bearer continues to hold the edge of the flag until it is hoisted clear of her grasp, taking particular care that no portion of the flag touches the ground. When the flag is clear and being raised, the Color Guards step back and stand at attention but do not salute.

The Color Guard

- Members of the color guard stand quietly at attention when they are not actively preparing the flag for raising or lowering. They do not say the Pledge of Allegiance or give a salute during the Pledge, nor do they sing along with any songs that might be used in the ceremony. They may give a brief salute in unison immediately after the flag has been raised and secured, and just before the halyard is loosened to begin the lowering of the flag.

- If members of the color guard wear red sashes (optional) the Flag Bearer(s) wear the sash over the right shoulder, and tied in a square knot at the waist on the left side. The Guards and Caller may wear red sashes tied around the waist, with a square knot on the left side.
- At the flag ceremony, the Flag Bearer enters and exits first, followed by the Guards.
- The first two members of the color guard help to hold the flag while the Flag Bearer fastens it to the halyard, and are responsible for seeing that the flag does not become entangled as it is fastened to the halyard, and that it does not touch the ground.
- Once the flag is attached to both halyards and is free of the ground, the Color Bearer steps back and the first two Guards raise the flag.
- The entire color guard is responsible for unfolding and folding the flag

Folding the Flag (Diagram below)

At **retreat**, when the colors are retired, part of the ceremony includes the color guards folding the flag.

Depending on the size of the flag and the size of the girls, you may use 2, 4 or 6 or more girls to fold the flag. Traditionally the Flag Bearer does not help fold the flag; she hands the flag to the Color Guards to be folded, then – when folded – they return the flag to her and she carries it out at the command “Color Guard, Dismissed” (or, “Color Guard, Retreat.”)

You do not have to have a flag to practice folding; a beach towel or even a sheet will work just fine as a substitute. It may help girls to remember the proper way to fold the flag in step 2 (below) by saying, “Remember the ‘B’s” - BLUE goes on the BOTTOM.

If you Google “Folding the flag”, you can watch an Honor Guard folding the flag on YouTube.



An “arch of silence” (no talking after you pass under it!)

Step 1: Begin with the flag parallel to the floor. It is best to use two people when folding the flag.



Step 2: Fold the flag in half lengthwise, crossing the red stripes over the top of the blue square and stars.



Step 3: Holding the flag so that the side with the blue square is toward the ground, fold the flag in half again lengthwise, bringing the folded edge up to meet the open edge (as shown) so that the blue square and stars are on the outside.



Step 4: Starting with the striped end of the folded flag, fold the bottom corner up to meet the open edge of the flag creating a triangular shape.



Step 5: Fold the triangle section in towards the stars, aligning the outside edge along the top.

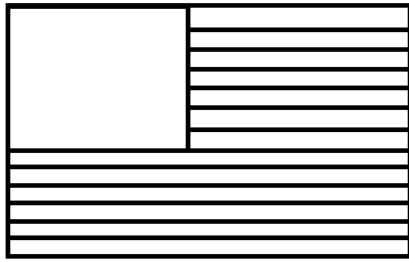


Step 6: Continue folding down and across in this manner until the final corner remains.

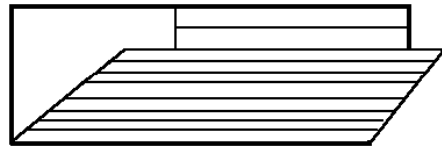


Your final shape should be a blue triangle with stars on both sides.



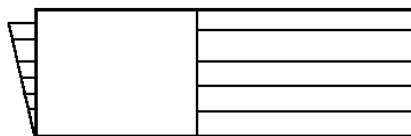


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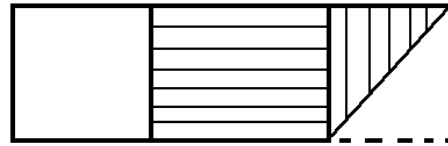
FOLD IN HALF - STARS ON BOTTOM

2



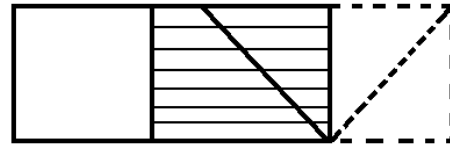
FOLD IN HALF AGAIN - STARS ON OUTSIDE

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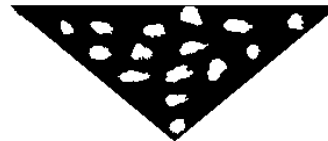


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FOLD INTO A TRIANGLE



5



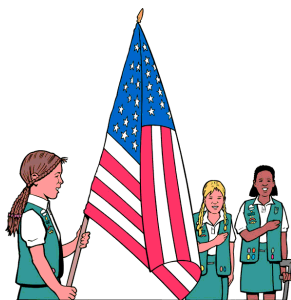
STARS UP

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IT'S A MYTH...

"If you drop the flag/the flag touches the ground, you have to burn it." NO – we do our best to **not** let the flag touch the ground, out of respect, but today's flags can be easily cleaned and used again.

There are also many myths and stories about folding the flag, but most of them were created many years after "Old Glory" was adopted as the American flag. Our flag is folded the way it is because it provides a dignified ceremonial touch that distinguishes folding a flag from folding an ordinary object such as a bedsheet; and because it results a visually pleasing, easy-to-handle shape. Treating the flag with care and respect is what's most important!



SAMPLE FLAG CEREMONIES

BASIC FLAG CEREMONY – OPENING (COLORS) - INDOORS

Formation: Horseshoe/half circle. Girl Scout in Charge stands at open end. Color Guard stands outside circle with flag(s).

Girl Scout In Charge:

"Girl Scouts, attention." {Everyone stops what they are doing and give their attention to the GS in Charge}

"Color Guard, attention." {Flag Bearers and Guards stand up straight, ready to step off on their right foot.}

"Color Guard, present the colors" {Walk to open end of horseshoe; face group}

"Girl Scouts, the flag of our country: pledge allegiance!" 'I pledge allegiance...' {Flag Bearers and Color Guards stand at attention; they do not speak}

"Girl Scouts, your Promise: [and Law]" "On my honor..." ["I will do my best..."] {Color Guard is still at attention}

"Color Guard, post the colors." {Flags are placed in flag stands, American flag last. When all are placed, Color Guard gives brief salute.}

"Color Guard, dismissed." {Walk back to starting place or step into horseshoe}

[OR...if flags are not to be posted] "Color Guard, retire the colors (*Color Guard returns to starting place, carrying flags, American flag first.*)

"Girl Scouts, [dismissed to patrols, be seated, etc.]"

BASIC FLAG CEREMONY – CLOSING (RETREAT) – INDOORS

Girl Scout in Charge:

"Girl Scouts, attention."

"Color Guard, attention."

"Color Guard, retire the colors." (*Color Guard comes forward, salutes briefly, and removes the flags, American Flag **first**, from the flag stands, and faces the group.*)

"We will close our meeting with ('Taps,' 'Daylight Taps,' or other closing song or poem.) "Day is done..."

"Color Guard, retreat." (*Color Guard leaves horseshoe, returning flags to designated area/storage.*)

"Girl Scouts, dismissed."

A GIRL SCOUT DAISY FLAG CEREMONY

The key to the success of a flag ceremony with Daisies is to keep it simple!

Formation: Stand in a Daisy Circle. The "Flag Holder" (girl) stands next to the troop leader(s), holding a small flag.

Adult Leader: "Our Flag Holder today is <name.>" *The Daisy holding the American Flag takes a step forward.*

Girl Flag Ceremony Leader: "Girl Scout Daisies, please say the Pledge of Allegiance."

(Girls could also sing patriotic song or say the Girl Scout Promise. Different Daisies could start the song and the Promise.)

Leader: "Our Daisy Girl Scout meeting is open. Now it's time for...(whatever is next on the agenda)" *(Collect flag from Flag Holder.)*

"I Pledge Allegiance..." INTRODUCTIONS TO THE PLEDGE.

Often the Pledge of Allegiance is introduced by saying, "Girl Scouts (or Ladies and Gentlemen) the Flag of our country: pledge allegiance." But to make the ceremony more meaningful consider using one of these introductions or, better yet, ask girls to create one of their own:

- We are thankful to have had such leaders as Georgia Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. Let us honor their memory as we pledge allegiance to our flag...
- *As we salute the flag today, let's remember George Washington, the father of our country, and the heritage he left to America...*
- To show our pride and appreciation of those who serve our country today, let us now salute our country's flag and pledge allegiance to the country it stands for...
- *For those who died that this nation and its people might live in freedom, let us now salute our flag.*

- We have good government only when we, the people of the United States, take an active part in making it good. Let us salute our flag, the emblem of our great country.
- *The greatest public document of the American people is the Constitution of the United States. Our flag represents our Constitution in action. Let us now salute our flag.*
- We, the people ... that's what our flag stands for. Let us now salute **our** flag!

"AN EXPLANATION OF THE PLEDGE" CEREMONY

We often recite the Pledge of Allegiance without really listening to or understanding the meaning of the words we are saying. You can have each girl recite a portion, then the explanation. You can also have the girls put the meaning into their own words:

I - Me, an individual, a committee of one

Pledge - Dedicate all of my worldly possessions to give without self-pity

Allegiance - My love and devotion

To the Flag - Our standard - Old Glory - a symbol of freedom.

Wherever she waves there is respect because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts "Freedom is everybody's job!"

Of the United - United - that means we have all come together

States of America - States - individual communities that have united into fifty great states - fifty individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united in a common purpose - love for country.

And to the Republic - Republic, a state in which power is given to representatives chosen by the people to govern; and the government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For Which it Stands - This is what our Flag stands for - Our United States

One Nation Under God - The Creator sees us as one people, equal under the law and equal under His/Her care

Indivisible - Incapable of being divided

With Liberty - Which is freedom - the right to live one's own life without threats or fear of retaliation.

And Justice - The principle or qualities of dealing fairly with others.

For All - For all - which means, girls and boys, ladies and gentlemen, it's as much your country as it is mine.

- adapted from a recording by Red Skelton

A FORMAL FLAG CEREMONY TO OPEN A MEETING OR ASSEMBLY

You will need: a (girl) speaker and a Color Guard. The Color Guard enters (with flags) from the back of the room.

Girl Scout Speaker(s):

1. As we open this/our meeting/event, let us stand to honor our flag....
2. Color Guard, present the Colors... *[Color Guard advances, turns to face the audience, and stands at attention through the reading.]* There it comes...flying in full glory:
3. Over two centuries of freedom are in those woven threads; over two centuries of hope are in its bright colors; and over two centuries of opportunities are in its design. Our flag has lived:
 - It has been to battle, when battle had to be...and it has led the way when our own citizens were forced to march for equality and justice...
 - It has solemnly attended the funerals of those who died in its name.
 - It has kept silent watch in our courts and has lent its dignity to our parades and ceremonies.
 - It has graced the opening and closing of many a Girl Scout meeting, looking down with pride as they stood with their hands over their heart, pledging allegiance to the principles that created our country and made it strong.
4. Here it is, the flag we affectionately call "Old Glory."
 - We can see its red stripes, a color that means America's courage.
 - We can see its white stripes and stars, a color that represents America's purity.
 - We can see its blue field, a color that signifies America's justice..
5. May this flag forever fly high in our hearts.

Let us now show our pride in this symbol of our country by pledging allegiance to the flag...

Color Guard, post the colors *[if being posted]*

Color Guard, dismissed.

Please be seated...

(Adapted from an original essay by Sylvia Lopes and used courtesy of Atlanta Federal Savings & Loan, 1968.)

FLASHLIGHT FLAG CEREMONY

Equipment/People Needed:

- Narrator (or more than one if your troop is large)
- Four (or more) "Flashlight Bearers"

- American Flag Bearer and two Color Guards

Color Guard advances with American Flag and posts Colors. Lights are turned out so that the room is in total darkness. Flashlight bearers turn on their flashlights and direct light toward flag.

NARRATOR: What you see here tonight represents the past, present, and future. The stripes of Old Glory stand for the original thirteen colonies. The stars represent the present 50 states. The light and warmth of the four lights you see shining remind us of the four great freedoms - Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Assembly, Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion. Eliminate any one of these freedoms and our world would become darker and colder.

Narrator calls out the four freedoms again, slowly. As each is called a flashlight is turned off until the room is again in total darkness:

1. Freedom of the Press
2. Freedom of Assembly
3. Freedom of Speech
4. Freedom of Religion

NARRATOR: In this world of potential cold and darkness, stands the United States of America. Here the Four Freedoms do exist and are an example of warmth and light for all. Will you please stand and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag, the symbol of our country? *(Turn flashlights back on and direct light toward flag)*

All join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Flag is posted or retired.

The Color Guard is dismissed.

RECIPE FOR A FLAG (SKIT)

Ingredients:

- 6 Girl Scouts
- 1 cup of blue paper bits or poker chips
- 1 cup of red paper bits or poker chips
- 1 cup of white paper bits or poker chips
- Large pot
- Large spoon or stirrer
- Stars or glitter (NOTE: *many meeting spaces do not allow glitter!*)
- American flag, properly folded.

Set up: Girl Scouts form semi-circle around pot, *facing* the audience. American flag is folded and hidden in pot. Each girl is holding the ingredients that she adds as she speaks:

- We're going to mix a recipe, one that's really grand - and make for you a special treat...the greatest in the land.
- First, we'll put in a heaping cup of red for courage true, *(Adds red paper bits to pot)*
- And then we'll add for loyalty, a dash of heavenly blue. *(Adds blue paper bits to pot)*
- For honor, we now sift in a layer of snowy white, *(Adds white paper bits to pot)*
- And add a pinch of stars, to make it come out right, *(Adds stars or glitter to pot)*
- *(Takes up stirrer and pretends to mix, taking care not to disturb the Flag)*
We'll stir and stir and then you will see, that what we have made is...
- All: (together) Old Glory! *(all reach in pot and pull out the Flag)*

Attach flag to staff and present or post the colors for Pledge, Promise, song, etc.
Dismiss "Color Guard" from stage or platform.

THE FLAG SPEAKS (A Girl Scout Flag Ceremony Play)

You'll need:

- American Flag in a stand; and three Girl Scouts, two in uniform, who must be able to lead singing "The Star Spangled Banner."
- A microphone backstage for the "Talking Flag"

Set Up: Place American flag on stage; a Girl Scout acting as the voice of the flag is located off stage with a microphone.

The play begins: *Two Girl Scouts stroll on stage, passing by flag; as the Flag speaks, Girl Scout slowly turns to look at Flag)*

FLAG: Hello, Girl Scouts.

BOTH GIRLS: *(Act surprised and look around)* Who said that?

FLAG: I did, the Flag of your country.

1st GIRL: A talking Flag? Really?

FLAG: Of course I can talk. I've always been able to, but you couldn't hear me.

2nd GIRL: Oh! What have you been trying to tell us?

FLAG: For one thing, how proud I am of my fifty states. Do you know which states added my last two stars?

1st GIRL: Alaska and Hawaii!

FLAG: Right! History was made in your grandparent's time, 'way back in 1959!.

2nd GIRL: Before that, what state was the forty-eighth star?

FLAG: That was Arizona, in 1912

1st GIRL: The year Daisy Low brought Girl Scouting to America! Tell me more.

FLAG: What do you want me to tell you?

2nd GIRL: Tell me about your history.

FLAG: Of course! On January 1, 1776, the Continental Army was placed under George Washington's control. On that New Year's Day the Continental Army was laying siege to Boston, which had been taken over by the British Army. Washington ordered the Grand Union flag hoisted above his base at Prospect Hill. It had 13 alternate red and white stripes and the British Union Jack in the upper left corner.

On June 14, 1777, to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation."

Between 1777 and 1960, Congress passed several acts that changed the shape, design and arrangement of the flag and allowed for additional stars and stripes to be added to reflect the admission of each new state: From 1794 to 1818 I had fifteen stars and fifteen stripes and was called the Star Spangled Banner, when Francis Scott Key wrote our National Anthem.

1st GIRL: I know that! Why, everyone here knows it. [*Turns to audience*] Come on, everybody – stand up and join us in singing "The Star-Spangled Banner." [*The two Girl Scouts lead the singing: Oh, say can you see...*]

FLAG: That was wonderful! Well, the years rolled along and in 1818 the stripes were reduced to thirteen and from then on a star was added for each new state that joined the Union, until there are fifty stars today. I really AM a star-spangled banner.

2nd GIRL: What a wonderful story! I'm glad we stopped to listen to you. Please, everyone - rise while we say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our country. "I pledge allegiance..."

"I AM YOUR FLAG"

Freely adapted from www.boysscouttrail.com

GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE:

- "Color Guard, attention."
- "Girl Scouts, attention."
- "[Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the presentation of the Colors.]"
- "Color Guard, present the Colors."

SPEAKERS:

I am your Flag.

I am America.

I was born on June 14th, 1777.

I am more than just cloth shaped into design.

I am the emblem of these United States of American.

I have led your sons and daughters into battle.
I have flown through the perilous fight, the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting
in air.
I walk in silence with each of your Honored Dead to their final resting place.

I still wave over the land of the free, and the home of the brave.
I am the silent sentinel of freedom.
I am the refuge of the world's oppressed people.

My Red Stripes....symbolize hardiness, and valor.
My White Stripes....signify purity and innocence
My Blue Field....signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice.
My Stars....clustered together, unify 50 states as one country.

"Old Glory" is my nickname, and proudly I wave on high.
Keep alight the fires of patriotism, strive earnestly for the spirit of democracy.
Honor me, respect me, and work together to make your Pledge of Allegiance to me
a reality: *one* nation, with liberty and justice for ALL.
I am your Flag.
I am America.

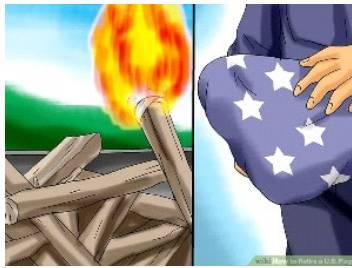
GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE:

- "Please stand and join me in pledging allegiance to our Flag..."
- "Color Guard, retire [or post] the Colors"
- "Color Guard, dismissed."
- "Girl Scouts, dismissed" [or, "Please be seated."]

NOTE: Although there are many traditions related to the colors of the flag, historically the colors red, white, and blue **did not** have meanings for The Stars and Stripes when it was adopted in 1777. However, the colors in the Great Seal of the United States **did** have specific meanings. Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Continental Congress (1774-1789), reporting to Congress on the Seal, stated:

"The colors of the pales (the vertical stripes) are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue, the color of the Chief (the broad band above the stripes) signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice."

SOURCE: <http://www.usflag.org/colors.html>



WHEN A FLAG MUST BE PERMANENTLY RETIRED...

"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." The Flag Code, Section 4 (k)

It is also permissible to bury a flag. You may modify this ceremony for a flag burial, placing the field and the stripes in a box to be buried, or directly into the ground.

AHEAD OF TIME: A fire should be safely built in a grill or fire pit; it must be burning strongly when the ceremony begins. Have your water buckets and a shovel or rake near-by. (Or, if the flag is being buried, have a hole dug in an appropriate place – one that will not be walked over, for example. A tree, shrub or flowers may be planted over the spot where the flag or the flag's ashes, are buried.)

If the ceremony is being held in a public area, be sure you have all the necessary permissions! Girl Scouts should be in official uniforms.

THE CEREMONY (Sample 1)

Girl Scouts and guests stand quietly in a horseshoe formation, facing the fire. (Have chairs available for those unable to stand.)

GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE:

"Color Guard, advance."

If the flag is being flown on an outdoor pole or carried on a flag staff: "Color Guard, present the colors...Girl Scouts, Ladies and Gentlemen, the flag of our country: pledge allegiance."

If the flag is folded: The Color Guard simply faces the audience.

OPENING OPTION 1:

FIRST SPEAKER:

"I am your flag. For more than two hundred years I have been a symbol of the United States of America. I stood for liberty and justice for generation after generation of Americans. Men and women have followed me into battle and across bridges with unwavering courage. You have looked on me as a symbol of national unity. So long as you love liberty more than life itself, so long as truth, justice and

charity for all remain rooted deeply in human hearts, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.

"Remember as you look at your Flag, which is the symbol of our nation, that it is red, white, and blue to remind us all to be courageous and just and to uphold liberty – not just for some, but for all. The stars are symbols of the united efforts and hope in the hearts of many people striving for a greater America.

"But tonight, my colors reflect my years - for I am faded, tattered and worn. Rather than reflect poorly upon those characteristics and colors for which I have flown, I must be retired so that fresh colors might be raised. Tonight, I bid you *adieu*. [or, farewell.]"

OPENING OPTION 2:

GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE:

"The fabric of this flag is woven with our heritage of protecting freedom. Stitched into every seam is our pride in honoring the brave. Embroidered into every star is the courage to explore the unknown. The U.S. Flag code states that when a flag is in such a condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, [preferably by burning]. Today [tonight] we are gathered to solemnly retire this flag, which has served us honorably, and well."

RETIRING THE FLAG:

GIRL SCOUT IN CHARGE: "Color Guard, retire the colors"

*Lower the flag and remove it from the flag pole, **or** remove flag from its staff, **or** unfold the flag, if carried folded. While the color guards hold the flat flag stretched taut, the color bearer first cuts out the blue field, then each stripe, and hands them one at a time to a Girl Scout, to be laid on the fire. As they are cut, a speaker or speakers says:*

GIRL SPEAKER (**The Field**): "Each state is represented by a star on a field of blue, which signifies a new constellation being formed in the heavens. As we place the field in the fire, let it burn brightly and remind us how truly our flag represents our country." *[Field is carried to the fire and laid in the flames.] [If the flag is unusually large, cut the field in half or quarters before laying on the fire.]*

SUCCEEDING SPEAKERS (**As each Stripe is cut away and laid on the fire**):

STRIP #1: "The 13 stripes stand for the original 13 colonies, which are: Massachusetts... Virginia... Pennsylvania... New York... Connecticut... Rhode Island... New Hampshire... Delaware... Maryland... North Carolina... Georgia... and New Jersey."

STRIPE 2: "By tradition, the red stands for courage... the white stands for purity...and the blue stands for justice."

STRIPE 3: "At the time of the American Revolution, Patrick Henry said, 'Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!'"

STRIPE 4: "Our Declaration of Independence tells us that as citizens of the United States of America, we hold these truths to be self-evident: that we are all created equal and that we are all born with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. We believe that to secure these rights, Governments are created by all the people, and derive their just powers by the consent of those same people."

STRIPE 5: "From the *Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America*: 'We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America'."

STRIPE 6: "From the First Amendment to the Constitution, our Bill of Rights: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.'"

STRIPE 7: "From the 13th Amendment to our Constitution: 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction'."

STRIPE 8: "On the Battlefield of Gettysburg, in memory of the men who fought and died there, Abraham Lincoln said, 'Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.'"

STRIPE 9: "From the 15th Amendment to our Constitution: 'The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.'"

STRIPE 10: "Passed by Congress **June 4, 1919**, and ratified on **August 18, 1920**, the 19th amendment guarantees all American women the right to vote. We are proud to read this 19th Amendment to our Constitution: 'The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.'"

STRIPE 11: "At his Inaugural Address, President John F. Kennedy said, 'Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.'"

STRIPE 12: Standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I still have a dream. It is a dream rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

STRIPE 13: "Our 44th President, Barack Obama, said, '... a freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without

love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense.'"

When all the stripes have been laid on the fire...

CLOSING:

SCOUT IN CHARGE: "Please join us in singing..." ["The National Anthem"; "My Country 'tis of Thee"; "America the Beautiful"; etc.]

SCOUT IN CHARGE: "Color Guard, dismissed."

"Girl Scouts, ladies and gentlemen, dismissed"

Out of respect, nothing should ever be added to the ceremonial fire after the Flag has been burned. When the ashes are cool they are gathered to be buried. A hole is dug, the dirt placed carefully beside it and the ashes are placed into the hole. Fill the hole back up with dirt; optionally, a marker can be added or a tree, shrub or flower planted on the spot.

If you are **burying** a flag, you may use this same ceremony, placing the parts of the flag into the hole (or into a box to be buried) rather than on the fire. The hole may be filled in either before or after everyone has been dismissed.

In some camps where a flag-burning has been held, the two metal grommets on the flag's edge are retrieved from the ashes and presented to campers who have shown outstanding good citizenship.

CEREMONY SAMPLE #2 (Campfire)

FLAG-RETIRING CEREMONY

For this ceremony, you will need a worn American Flag in need of permanent retirement; a campfire in a safe setting; sharp scissors; a Flag Bearer and four Color Guards and a Girl Scout in Charge. OPTION: Fire color-changing crystals (Magical Flames, Rainbow Flames, Mystical Fire Flame Colorant, etc.)

Campers sit in a horse shoe formation around the campfire, leaving an open area for the Color Guard. The fire is burning strongly.

Girl Scout in Charge (GSIC)

- Girl Scouts attention
- Color Guard attention
- Color Guard advance [*The Color Bearer leads, carrying the folded flag, and followed by four Color Guards in groups of two girls each*]

- Color Guard Present the colors *[The Flag Bearer turns to the Color Guards, who take and unfold the flag; then each Guard takes a corner and holds the flag open - not flat - and stretched tight. The Color Bearer faces the flag.]*
- Please join me in saying the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag, and to our country, the United States of America: "I pledge allegiance...(etc.) OPTION: Girl Scout Promise

Narrator:

President Woodrow Wilson said, "Though silent, our flag speaks to us of the past, and of the women and men who went before us." We gather [tonight] by the campfire to honor the flag that represents the country we promise to serve.

We have a duty to perform for this Old Glory. The Flag Code tells us that *"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."* This is a solemn and respectful ceremony.

As we burn this worn and tired flag, we honor and respect it just as much as the one which flies over our camp each day. This flag is a symbol of America.

Song: "America Round" (TUNE: "Rose, Rose")

America, America,
Shall we tell you how we feel?
You have given us your riches,
We love you so.

[Or any patriotic song of the girls' choosing – "America the Beautiful," "My Country 'tis of Thee," etc.]

Narrator: To this flag, we've come to say a last farewell. It has served us well.

Song: "You're a Grand Old Flag" or "O Beautiful Banner"

NOTE: If necessary, the original Color Guards may be replaced by four more girls during the song – it is tiring to stand hold the flag this way!

At the end of the song, the flag is held flat and stretched as taut as possible. The Girl Scout In Charge stands by the flag, holding the scissors.

Narrator:

[As the GSIC begins to cut out the blue field...She will hand it to the Color Bearer]

The stars in our flag represent the 50 states collectively; no one star presents any particular state. So as we cut the blue field of stars representing the union of our 50 states away from the thirteen red and white stripes representing the original thirteen states – of which Georgia is one – we separate the old from the new.

[As the blue field is laid carefully on the flames by the Color Bearer...] As the flames take the field of blue with the 50 stars intact, we maintain the unity of our nation.

[The Color Guards continue to hold the flag taut and flat. As the stripes are cut away by the GSIC and laid one by one on the flames first by the Color Bearers then by the Color Guards in turn, the Narrator continues...] As the flames take the thirteen red and white stripes, we honor the beginning of our nation.*

General Washington, when the Star-Spangled Banner was first flown by the Continental Army, is said to have described its symbolism as follows: "We take the stars from heaven, the red from our Mother Country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty."

During the war of 1812, U.S. soldiers at Baltimore's Fort McHenry raised a huge American flag to celebrate a crucial victory over British forces. The Royal Navy launched an attack on the Baltimore Harbor; while most of the land, ships, and surroundings were hit heavily during the fight, poet Francis Scott Key witnessed an American Flag standing tall in the morning, and the sight of those "broad stripes and bright stars" inspired Key to write the poem that eventually became the United States national anthem:

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

[When the last stripe is laid on the fire, the Girl Scout In Charge, Flag Bearer and Color Guards stand next to the Narrator in the opening of the horseshoe.]

Narrator:

In a 1917 Flag Day message, President Woodrow Wilson said, "This flag, which we honor and under which we serve...has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. [Our flag] floats in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices, whether in peace or war. And yet, though silent, it speaks to us – speaks of the past, of the women and men who went before us, and of the records they wrote upon it."

Girl Scout In Charge:

With those thought in mind, will the Color Guard please reform.
Girl Scouts, be prepared to leave the campfire circle in silence.

Color Guard, dismissed.
Girl Scouts, dismissed.