

Flag Etiquette by Phil Cordeiro

1. A flag that is tattered, torn, missing stitching, or otherwise in a state of disrepair is unserviceable.
2. Displaying an unserviceable flag is an act that disrespects not only the flag, but everything and everyone she stands for. If you see an unserviceable flag being flown, do your part to ensure she is retired in a manner that respects her and all those whom she represents.
 - a. On this topic, according to the flag code – which is Title 4 of the U.S. Code – the preferred method for flag retirement is by burning.
 - b. To begin, the flag should be folded by a team of two into a ceremonial triangle – the same process that you witnessed this evening. Next, the flag should be placed on a medium size bonfire – taking care to ensure the flag never touches the ground. While the flag is burning, all present should place their right hand over their heart, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and remain respectfully silent until the flag has completely burned.
3. The flag should be displayed only from sunrise to sunset on buildings or flagstaffs.
4. The flag may also be flown at night, only if properly lighted.
 - a. On this topic, I'd like to share that I've seen countless American flags being flown after sunset without illumination – or with insufficient illumination. Again, I cannot stress enough that the American flag represents everything and everyone our nation stands for. She must be respected. So, if you cannot dedicate enough time, resources, or energy to either raising and lowering the flag at the proper times – or to ensure that she is *PROPERLY* illuminated during hours of darkness – you should not fly the flag.
5. The flag should be raised and lowered by hand, and never raised furled.
6. The flag should always be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
7. On Memorial Day, the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only. At noon, she should then be hoisted to full staff.
 - a. As an aside, many people confuse the terms half-staff and half-mast. For clarity, the term half-mast should only be used when a flag is being flown on a vessel. When being flown on a building or flagstaff, the appropriate term to use is half-staff.
8. Whenever the flag passes by in a parade, during the Pledge of Allegiance, during playing of the National Anthem, or during a raising or lowering ceremony, observers should stand, remove any hats or headwear, and place their right hand over their heart.

9. The flag should never be allowed to touch the ground or floor, nor brush against any objects, nor be used as drapery of any sort.
10. The flag should never be displayed with the union down, with the exception that doing so is a signal of distress in instances of extreme danger.
12. When displayed with other flags on flagstaffs, the American flag's staff should be taller, centered, and in front of the other flagstaffs.
13. When displayed with other flags against a wall, on a building, or in an arrangement of multiple flagstaffs of the same height (which is not really desirable), the American flag should be on *its own right* (or, appearing on the left to a person observing the flag).
14. When flown with other flags on adjacent staffs, the American Flag should be hoisted first and lowered last.
15. If a state, local or society flag is flown on the same halyard (or hoisting line) with the American Flag, the American Flag should always be at the top.
16. When displayed with other flags, the size of the American Flag should be larger than the other flags or relatively equal to the size of the largest flag. Other flags should not overshadow the American Flag in any way.
17. If the flags of other nations are displayed with the American Flag, they should be of equal size and at equal heights on separate staffs at a time of peace. The American Flag should be displayed to the flag's own right (or, to the left as observed by an onlooker) but not higher than other national flags.
18. The proper way to hang the American flag vertically is always with the union – or blue field with white stars – in the top left from an onlooker's perspective. The reason behind this is it places the importance on the union and the fifty states.

Lastly, there are a couple of important exceptions to the rules where another flag may be flown above the American flag:

1. First, in any nation the national flag must be placed in the place of prominence. The flag code only applies to flags flown on American soil.
2. Second, a church pennant may be flown above the American Flag if a church service is done by naval chaplains at sea for personnel of the Navy. After the service is over, the American Flag must again be hoisted into the prominent position.