

# Flag Ceremonies

Kelly Cramer

[KELMCKCRA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KELMCKCRA@GMAIL.COM)

763.221.5983

# Ceremonies

---

Ceremonies have been important in Girl Scouting since the beginning. They are used to celebrate all sorts of occasions.

## Contents

Flag Ceremony .....	3
Purpose:.....	3
Resources: .....	3
Salute to the Flag .....	3
Flag Ceremony Guidelines .....	3
Terms used in Flag Ceremonies .....	4
Flag Ceremony .....	4
Presenting the Flags.....	5
Retiring the Flags .....	5
Handling the American Flag .....	5
Recipe for An American Flag (Fun Style) .....	6
Make a Flag Ceremony (Variation) .....	7
Explanation of the Pledge Ceremony.....	8

## Flag Ceremony

### Purpose:

Inherent in the Girl Scout Promise is our belief in service to our country. To that end, Flag Ceremonies are used to display our respect for that very important symbol of our nation. Often times, Flag Ceremonies are used to open a meeting or are used as part of a larger ceremony. However they are used, proper respect for our flag should always been shown. Whether you use a "fun-type" ceremony or a reverent one, the main criteria is that the ceremony should show respect.

### Resources:

[http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/ceremonies/flag.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/ceremonies/flag.asp)

<http://gsleaders.org/files/Flags.htm>

<http://www.fortunecity.com/millennium/puppet/989/cere/cereflag.html>

Flag ceremonies are very often part of larger ceremonies. They are also used to open or to close a troop/group meeting. Learning about the proper way to handle the American flag and to conduct flag ceremonies fosters a patriotic spirit in young people.

At a flag ceremony, you say the Pledge of Allegiance in the presence of a flag. You may also sing a patriotic song and repeat the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

### Salute to the Flag

To salute the flag, stand at attention and place your right hand over your heart. Salute the flag when it is being raised or lowered, when it passes you in a parade, and when you recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Salute when you sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," with or without the flag present.

### Flag Ceremony Guidelines

**Simplicity** is the keynote of any flag ceremony; emphasis should be on respect for the flag rather than on the commands or techniques. Some questions to be addressed when planning a flag ceremony:

1. Who will carry the flag?
2. Who will be the color guards?
3. Who will give the directions for the ceremony?
4. What song will we sing? Who will sound the pitch and start the song?
5. Do we want a poem or quotation? Who will say or read it?
6. After the Pledge of Allegiance, shall we say the Promise and Law?
7. In what order shall we do all these things?
8. when should we practice all this?
9. Where will the flag(s) be placed at the end of the ceremony?

## Terms used in Flag Ceremonies

- The **color bearer** (or flag bearer) is the person who carries the flag. There is one color bearer for each flag in the ceremony.
- The **color guard** is a team that guards the flags. Any even number of guards may be used, but usually four or six are sufficient.
- The **Girl Scout-in-charge** is a designated Girl Scout who announces or calls each part of the ceremony.
- The **standards** are the stands that support the flag. The color bearers place their flags in the standards.

## Protocol

There is absolute silence from the time the horseshoe is formed until it is dismissed. The color guard remains silent from the time they start to walk in until they walk out. They do not speak or sing with the group, but stay at attention.

The ceremony may be brief, but always takes place after the flag has been raised. Since the ceremony is **for** the flag, it should be in position **during** it! Often, the flag ceremony is part of another ceremony. If so, the color guard is dismissed before the other ceremony begins.

During a formal flag ceremony, white gloves should be worn by the color guards. The Girl Scout-in-charge may also wear them. Gloves are not necessary in an outdoor setting.

## Flag Ceremony

The troop/group forms a horseshoe. The color guard is in position. All stand at attention.

The Girl Scout-in-charge says: "Color guard, advance." This signals the color guard to advance with the flags to the place where they are posted. Everyone stands at attention.

The color guard walks forward, carrying the flags to the formation. They stop in front of the poles or flag stands. Or they can stop on command "Color guard halt".

The Girl Scout-in-charge says: "Color guard, post the colors." This signals the color bearers to place the flags in their stands. They remain at attention next to the flags.

The Girl Scout-in-charge says: "Color guard, salute." The color guard salutes the American flag.

The Girl Scout-in-charge says: "Girl Scouts please say the Pledge of Allegiance." This may be followed by the Girl Scout Promise, songs, poems, or verses.

If the flag ceremony is part of a larger ceremony, such as an investiture, the Girl Scout-in-charge dismisses the color guard and then the main ceremony takes place.

Following the ceremony, the Girl Scout-in-charge commands the color guard to retire the colors by taking the flags to their place of storage. The following commands can be used:

## Presenting the Flags

Girl Scouts, attention  
Color guard, attention  
Color guard, advance  
Color guard, halt  
Color guard, post the colors  
Color guard, salute  
Girl Scouts please say the pledge of allegiance  
Girl Scouts please say the Girl Scout Promise  
Color guard, open rank  
Color guard, dismissed  
Girl Scouts, dismissed

## Retiring the Flags

Girl Scouts, attention  
Color guard, attention  
Color guard, advance  
Color guard, halt  
Color guard, retire the colors  
Girl Scouts sing Taps  
Color guard, open rank  
Color guard, dismissed  
Girl Scouts, dismissed

## Handling the American Flag

The display of our American Flag is governed by law to ensure that it will be treated with the respect due the flag of a great nation. Public Law 829, enacted by the 77th Congress on June 14, 1923, sets forth rules for the display and care of the Stars and Stripes, and prescribes penalties for violations.

Some of the rules that are most useful for Girl Scouts are:

- The American Flag should be placed in the center, and higher, when displayed with a group of state, local, or organizational flags flown from staffs. It may also be positioned to the right of other flags (if you were to hold the flag while facing your audience, your right side would be the flag's own right.)
- When flown from a staff on a speaker's platform, the flag should be placed on the **speaker's** right. If placed elsewhere than on the platform, it should be to the right of the **audience** as they face the platform.
- The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered slowly with dignity.
- The flag should never be allowed to touch anything beneath it, nor should it ever be carried flat or horizontally - always aloft and free.
- Never use the flag as a cover or place anything on top of it.
- No disrespect of any kind should be shown to the flag of the United States. It should be kept clean.
- The flag, when carried in a procession with other flags, should be either on the marching right or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.
- When you display the flag on a wall or in a window where people see it from the street, it should be displayed flat with the blue part at the top and on the flag's own right (which is the observer's left).
- When a flag gets old and is too worn to use, do not throw it in the trash. It should be destroyed, preferably by burning.

- When displayed after dark, the flag should be illuminated.
- The U.S. Flag flies (is being held or on the flagpole) longer than other flags.
  - Indoors, it is posted last, presented first.
  - Outdoors, it is raised first, lowered last.
- The spoken or sung portion of the ceremony takes place while the flag is flying.
  - Indoors, after the flag has been "posted" in the stand.
  - Outdoors, while the flag is flying from the pole
  - If the Pledge of Allegiance is to be said, it should be done before other pledges and/or promises (i.e., the Girl Scout Promise)
- The National Flag should be raised and lowered by hand.
  - Do not raise the Flag while it is furled (folded) Unfurl, then hoist quickly and smoothly to the top of the pole. Lower it slowly, and with dignity
- Flying the Flag at half mast
  - Raise the Flag quickly to the top of the pole, then lower it slowly to the half mast position.
  - When retrieving the flag, before lowering the flag, raise it quickly to the top of the pole and then proceed to lower slowly with dignity.
- Saluting (placing hand over the heart) the Flag
  - The moment the Flag passes in front of you
  - From the moment the first grommet is attached on the flagpole, until the Flag has reached the top.
  - From the moment the Flag starts to be lowered from the flagpole, until both grommets are in the hands of the Flag Bearer.
  - The Color Guard may salute only after immediately raising/posting or retrieving the Flag.
- The Flag should only be displayed from sunrise to sunset, unless it is illuminated.

## Recipe for An American Flag (Fun Style)

### Materials:

- 1 Large pot (at least 12 Quart, or a big black plastic cauldron like you find at Wal-mart around Halloween)
- 1 cup red "flag" (red construction paper strips)
- 1 cup white stars (white stars cut out of construction paper)
- 1 cup blue "flag" (blue construction paper square)
- 1 cup white "flag" (white construction paper strips)
- 1 Large Stirring Spoon

Tape some cardboard vertically in the pot dividing the pot in two halves. One half is for the accordion folded American Flag standing vertically. On the other half the ingredients will be added during the ceremony.

Recite the following poem while "creating" the flag:

**All:** We're going to fix for you a treat that's really grand and make for you a recipe - the greatest in the land.

**Girl 1:** First we'll add a heaping cup of red for courage true (adds red)

**Girl 2:** And then we'll add, for loyalty, a dash of heavenly blue. (adds blue)

**Girl 3:** For purity, we'll sift in a cup of snowy white. (adds white)

**Girl 4:** We'll sprinkle in a pinch of stars to make it come out right. (adds stars)

**All:** We'll stir & stir and you will see, that what we make is OLD GLORY.

Have two other girls pull flag out of pot & unfold. End by having everyone say the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Make a Flag Ceremony (Variation)

Center of Stage is Large Basket with folded flag inside hidden

Narrator- "Will you please rise for the presentation of the colors."

*Staging notes- Girls come single file. First the girls arrive, carrying components of the flag, holding them high and reverently. Then the Girl Scout Flag is walked in. Girls come on stage and stand across the stage behind the basket.*

Narrator- "Red for Valor - For the courage of all women who, with a dream in their hearts, crossed the oceans to begin life anew in a free land. For the bravery of women who, with hope and faith, crossed the prairie and mountains of our vast land. For the steadfastness of those women who, through all adversities, shouldered the Country's burdens to emerge as stronger individuals."

*Staging Notes- Red streamers are placed in the basket*

Narrator- "White for Purity - For the integrity of all women whose fortitude wove the strands of diverse cultures into an integral national heritage. For the piety of all women whose faith formed the foundation upon which our country was built and continues to grow."

*Staging notes- White streamers are placed in basket*

Narrator- "Blue for Justice - For the foresight of all those women who created an atmosphere in which each of their children could develop to their fullest potential. For the perseverance of all those women who contributed their talents to further the development of our Country."

*Staging notes- Large Blue paper or Blue piece of cloth is placed in the basket*

Narrator- "Stars for Dreams - For the dreams of the future. That the generations of tomorrow may fulfill the promise of the past 200 years, so that the visions of our forebears will be revitalized and the future will hold forth hope and promise for all generations to come."

*Staging Note- Stars are placed in basket -- pick up flag pole and stir*

Narrator- "Stirring the stories of my stars and stripes, I symbolize the soul of America, typifying her ideas and aspirations, her institutions and traditions."

*Staging note- Remove the folded flag*

Narrator- "This flag, which we honor and under which we serve is the symbol of our unity, our power, and purpose as a nation."

*Staging Note- 2 or more girls unfold the flag and mount on the flag pole -- then stand at attention*

Narrator- "Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance"

"I pledge Allegiance..."

All Girl Scouts will make the Girl Scout Sign and say the Girl Scout Promise.

"On my honor, I will try..."

Narrator: "Color Guard, Post your colors"

*(Wait for the flags to be posted)*

Narrator: "Color Guard, Retreat"

## 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** - meaning so blessed by God

**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, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, it's as much your country as it is mine.