

Zabrina Tipton — Tipton Studio, LLC, Communications Specialist

United States Flag Guide





The American flag can fly on all days, but the United States Flag Code especially recommends displaying it on the following five days:

May (Last Monday of the Month): *Memorial Day*, specifically honors those who have died while in military service.

June 14: *Flag Day*, commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress. The Flag Resolution stated, "That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." This resolution established the first official national flag of the United States, symbolizing the unity of the 13 original colonies.

July 4: *Independence Day*, marks the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and a day to celebrate the nation's *freedom, liberty, and independence*.

September (First Monday of the Month): *Labor Day*, a celebration of American workers economic and social achievements.

November 11: *Veterans Day*, commemorates the service of all U.S. veterans.

The United States Flag Code (Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1) provides official guidelines for displaying and handling the U.S. flag. Following these guidelines honors the U.S. flag and what it represents—*Freedom, Unity, and National Pride*.

General Display Guidelines

- **Position of Honor:** The U.S. flag should always be placed in a prominent position and should never be subordinate to another flag.
- **Right Side Placement:** When displayed with other flags, the U.S. flag should be on the observer's left (the flag's right).
- **No Damage or Modification:** The flag should never be torn, soiled, or defaced with writing or logos.
- **No Use as Clothing or Decorations:** The flag should never be worn as apparel or used as bedding, drapery, or advertising. However, flag patches on uniforms (military, law enforcement, patriotic organizations) are acceptable.
- **Lighting at Night:** If flown after sunset, the flag must be properly illuminated. If not, it should be lowered at dusk.

Raising, Lowering & Half-Staff Rules

- **Raising & Lowering:** The flag should be *raised briskly* and *lowered slowly and ceremoniously*.
- **Half-Staff Display:**
 - **Memorial Honor:** The flag is flown at *half-staff as a sign of mourning* (e.g., on *Memorial Day until noon*, for *national tragedies*, and *per the President's and/or State Governor's order*).
 - **Raising Protocol:** When lowering to half-staff: *first raise it to full staff briefly*, then *lower it to half-staff*. Before lowering for the day: *first raise it to full staff again before bringing it down*.



Indoor & Outdoor Display

- **Against a Wall (Flat Display):** *The union (blue field of stars) should always be at the top left for the observer.*
- **On a Flagpole:** The *U.S. flag should be higher than other flags* when flown with state, local, or organizational flags.
- **Crossed Flags:** When crossed with another flag, the *U.S. flag should be on the observer's left and its staff should be in front.*
- **Over a Street:** When displayed over a street, *the union should face north on an east-west street or face east on a north-south street.*

Parades, Processions & Vehicles

- **Marching in a Parade:** The flag should always be to the right of other flags or in front when in line.
- **On a Vehicle:** The flag should be securely fixed to the chassis or mounted on the right fender—never draped over a vehicle.
- **Carried Flat:** The flag should never be carried horizontally or flat except for certain occasions (e.g., military funerals).

Flag Disposal

- **Retirement by Burning:** When a flag is worn, damaged, or no longer fit for display, it should be retired respectfully by burning in a dignified ceremony. Local American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts often conduct flag retirement ceremonies.
- **Alternative Disposal:** If burning is not possible, the flag should be carefully folded and buried.



Reminders

- **Do not** *let the flag touch the ground*—If it does, clean and properly store it.
- **Do not** *fly a damaged or tattered flag*—It should be retired properly.
- **Do not** *use the flag for advertising, decorations, or as clothing*—The U.S. flag should be treated with respect.
- **Do not** *fly another flag above the U.S. flag*—The U.S. flag should always be at the highest point.

About the Author

Zabrina Tipton is a public affairs and crisis communications consultant and the President of Tipton Studio, LLC. With more than 25 years of experience across private, public, and federal sectors, she specializes in clear, responsible communication during disaster response, recovery efforts, and high-visibility public initiatives.

Zabrina previously served in a public-facing communications role with the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience, where she supported stakeholder outreach and disaster recovery communications and was trained for federal deployment. Her work focuses on strengthening public trust, coordinating with government and community partners, and supporting organizations during surge and crisis moments.

As the spouse of a U.S. veteran, Zabrina maintains a longstanding commitment to supporting military families and honoring national service. Her dedication to civic responsibility and national respect is reflected in her United States Flag Protocol Guide, a complimentary educational resource designed to help individuals and organizations properly display and care for the American flag. The guide outlines established flag etiquette, including correct positioning, handling, and observance of half-staff traditions on designated days of remembrance.



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Public Affairs & Crisis Communications

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