

United States Flag Retirement Ceremony

ARMED FORCES

PREPARATION of the flag to be retired

Cut away the field of 50 stars and then separate each stripe.

CEREMONY – You can have as few or as many participants as you want.

When using two participants, Leader receives the field of stars and the white stripes – 2nd participant receives the red stripes:

- Leader reads introductory comments
- 2nd participant reads First Stripe and alternates with Leader for remaining stripes
- Leader closes by introducing the Pledge of Allegiance

Leader: The flag of the United States is more than just some brightly colored cloth... it is a symbol of our nation.

Seven red stripes and six white stripes -- together they represent the original 13 colonies that gained us liberty. The red stripes remind us of the lifeblood of brave men and women who were ready to die for their country. The white stripes remind us of purity and cleanliness of purpose, thought, word, and deed.

The blue is for truth and justice, like the eternal blue of the star-filled heavens. The stars represent the fifty sovereign states of our union.

The American Creed states, "It is my duty to my country to love it, to respect its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."

The United States flag should be treated with respect when it is flying, and treated with respect when it is retired. Therefore, we retire flags with dignity and respect when they become worn, torn, faded, or badly soiled.

A flag ceases to be a flag when it is cut into pieces. We separate the 13 stripes that represent the original 13 colonies from the blue field of 50 stars, representing the 50 states that together make up this great nation. (*Drop field of stars onto the fire.*)

Drop a single stripe into the fire as each statement is read.

1st Stripe -- The thirteen stripes stand for the thirteen original colonies.

2nd Stripe -- The white stands for purity.

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3rd Stripe -- The red stands for courage.

Today, we honor the 5 armed service branches of the United States that work collaboratively to defend freedom and democracy around the world.

- *The United States Army -- the dominant land power*
- *The United States Navy – maintaining freedom of the seas*
- *The United States Marine Corps – trained to fight by sea and land*
- *The United States Air Force -- our nation's source of air and space power*
- *The United States Coast Guard – guarding our coastline and inland waterways*

4th Stripe -- Give me liberty or give me death.

5th Stripe -- One if by land, two if by sea.

6th Stripe -- We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.

7th Stripe -- We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men (and women) are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

8th Stripe -- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

9th Stripe -- Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or press.

10th Stripe -- Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men (and women) are created equal.

11th Stripe -- One Nation under God.

12th Stripe -- Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.

13th Stripe -- One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

Leader: Join us as we close our ceremony with the PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE.

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Fire Preparation

It is important that the fire be sizable -- preferably having burnt down to a bed of red hot coals to avoid bits of the flag being carried off by a roaring fire -- yet be of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.

WARNING: Nylon flags ignite fast!