



## AMERICAN FLAGS

### **Folding Our Flag, Meaning of Flag-Folding Program, and Symbols for the Folds of the Flag**

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The traditional method of folding the flag is as follows:

(A) Straighten out the flag to full length and fold lengthwise once.



A)



(B) Fold it lengthwise a second time to meet the open edge, making sure that the union of stars on the blue field remains outward in full view. (A large flag may have to be folded lengthwise a third time.)

B)



(C) A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

C)



(D) The outer point is then turned inward, parallel with the open edge, to form a second triangle.

D)



(E) The diagonal or triangular folding is continued toward the blue union until the end is reached, with only the blue showing and the form being that of a cocked (three-corner) hat.



E)



## Meaning of Flag-Folding Program

The flag-folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our great country was originally founded.

The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing states our veterans served in uniform. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted only when draped as a pall on the casket of a veteran who has served our country honorably in uniform.

In the U.S. Armed Forces, at the ceremony of retreat, the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's honored dead. The next morning it is brought out and, at the ceremony of reveille, run aloft as a symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the body.

## Symbols for the Folds of the Flag

The **first** fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The **second** fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

The **third** fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The **fourth** fold represents our weaker nature; as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace, as well as in times of war, for His divine guidance.

The **fifth** fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right, but it is still our country, right or wrong."

The **sixth** fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we 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.

The **seventh** fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.



The **eighth** fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.

The **ninth** fold is a tribute to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

The **10th** fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first born.

The **11th** fold, in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The **12th** fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God We Trust."

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it has the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under Gen. George Washington and the sailors and Marines who served under Capt. John Paul Jones and were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the U.S. Armed Forces, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

The source and the date of origin of this Flag Folding Procedure is unknown, however some sources attribute it to the Gold Star Mothers of America while others to an Air Force chaplain stationed at the United States Air Force Academy. Others consider it to be an urban legend. It is provided as a patriotic service to all.

### **VA Clarifies Policy on Flag-Folding Recitations "13-Fold" Ceremony, Other Scripts Approved**

To ensure burial services at the 125 national cemeteries operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs reflect the wishes of veterans and their families, VA officials have clarified the department's policy about recitations made while the U.S. flag is folded at the grave site of a veteran.

"Honoring the burial wishes of veterans is one of the highest commitments for the men and women of VA," said William F. Tuerk, VA's under secretary for Memorial Affairs. "A family may request the recitation of words to accompany the meaningful presentation of the American flag as we honor the dedication and sacrifice of their loved ones."

Traditional grave site military funeral honors include the silent folding and presentation of a U.S. flag, three rifle volleys and the playing of "Taps."

**The clarification includes the following:**

Volunteer honor guards are authorized to read the 13-fold flag recitation or any comparable script;

Survivors of the deceased need to provide material and request it be read by the volunteer honor guards;  
and

Volunteer honor guards will accept requests for recitations that reflect any or no religious traditions, on an equal basis.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery.

Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker.