

Appendix LL

OUTDOOR FLAG CEREMONIES

A proper color guard requires two people per flag to raise and lower the colors. If more than the U.S. flag is being used, the U.S. flag is raised first in the morning and lowered last in the evening. Use the commands shown in italics to cue the bugler, if one is used.

STATIONARY FLAGPOLE

Raising the Flag in the Morning

Command	Action
“Color guard, attention!”	The color guard comes to attention.
“Camp, attention!”	The audience stands at attention.
“Color guard, advance!”	The color guard advances to the flagpoles.
“Color guard, present colors!”	The color guard attaches the flag to the halyard.
“Hand salute!”	All salute, except the Scout raising the colors; once the flag is raised and the hand used for doing this is free, this Scout joins the salute.*
“Color guard, post colors!” (Optional: “Bugler, sound off!”)	The flag is raised briskly to the top of the pole. After the flag stops at the top, the Pledge of Allegiance, if used, is recited while the salute is held. (<i>Optional: Bugler plays “To the Colors.”</i>)
“Two!”	All drop salute and remain at attention. The color guard ties the halyard to secure the flag. The process is repeated with any other flags being raised together; no salute is given, and the bugler does not play. When the halyard is secure:
“Color guard, dismissed!”	Color guard returns to the starting point. A patriotic song or reading may be done at this point.
“Camp at ease!”	The audience relaxes from attention. Any announcements, awards, or recognition may be done at this point.
“Camp, dismissed!”	The ceremony is ended and the audience disperses.

***Note:** The salute is held only while the flag is moving on the pole. Once it reaches the top of the pole or is touched by a member of the color guard, the command “Two!” is given. Scouts should salute the pole itself, not follow the flag while it is moving up or down the pole.

Lowering the Flag Before Sundown

Any announcements, awards, or recognition may be done after the audience has assembled but before the flag is lowered.

Command

Action

(Optional: “Bugler, sound retreat!”) *(Optional: Bugler plays “Retreat.”)*

“Color guard, attention!”

The color guard comes to attention.

“Camp, attention!”

The audience stands at attention.

“Color guard, advance!”

The color guard advances to the flagpoles. Flags other than the U.S. flag are lowered first and folded bed sheet style.

“Color guard, prepare to lower the colors!”

The color guard unties the lanyard from the pole.

“Hand salute!”

All salute, except the Scout lowering the colors; the assistant salutes until the flag is within reach.

“Color guard, lower the colors!”
(Optional: “Bugler, sound off!”)

(Optional: Bugler plays “To the Colors.”) The U.S. flag is lowered slowly, with dignity. When the flag touches the assistant’s hand:

“Two!”

All stop saluting, remaining at attention while the U.S. flag is properly folded triangle-style.

“Color guard, dismissed!”

The color guard returns to their starting point.

“Camp at ease!”

Audience relaxes from attention.

“Camp dismissed!”

The ceremony is over; the audience disperses.

HANDHELD FLAGPOLE

Raising the Flag in the Morning

Command

Action

“Color guard, attention!”

The color guard comes to attention.

“Camp, attention!”

The audience stands at attention.

“Color guard, advance!”

The color guard moves toward the flag stands (in front of the audience) and stops on arrival.

“Color guard,
present colors!”

The U.S. flag is raised high and held; any other flags are dipped forward.

“Hand salute!”

All except the flag bearers salute. The Pledge of Allegiance may be recited.

“Two!”

All drop salute, remain at attention.

“Color guard, post colors!”

The flags are posted in their stands; flag bearers take one step back.

“Color guard, dismissed!”

Color guard returns to the starting point behind audience.

“Camp at ease!”

The audience relaxes from attention. Any announcements, awards, or recognition may be done at this point.

“Camp dismissed!”

The ceremony is ended and the audience disperses.

Lowering the Flag Before Sundown

Any announcements, awards, or recognition may be done after the audience has assembled but before the flag is lowered.

Command

Action

“Color guard, attention!”

The color guard comes to attention.

“Camp, attention!”

The audience stands at attention.

“Color guard, advance!”

The color guard moves toward the flag, stands (in front of audience), and stops on arrival.

“Color guard, present
the colors!”

The flags are removed from their stands; the color guard turns toward the audience and waits.

“Hand salute!”

All except the flag bearers salute.

“Color guard, retire
the colors!”

The U.S. flag precedes all others and they exit (back of audience). When they are clear of the audience:

“Two!”

All drop salutes.

“Camp at ease!”

Audience relaxes from attention.

“Camp dismissed!”

The ceremony is over; and the audience disperses.

Flying the Flag at Half-Staff

When flying the flag at half-staff, the flag should be briskly run up to the top of the staff before being lowered slowly to the half-staff position.

Similarly, when retiring the colors, the flag should be briskly run up to the top of the staff before being lowered all the way down as normal.

The term *half-staff* means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff. The term *half-mast* is used when the flag is being flown on a ship.

An easy way to remember when to fly the United States flag at half-staff is to consider when the whole nation is in mourning. These periods of mourning are proclaimed either by the president of the United States, for national remembrance, or the governor of a state or territory, for local remembrance, in the event of a death of a member or former member of the federal, state, or territorial government or judiciary. The heads of departments and agencies of the federal government may also order that the flag be flown at half-staff on buildings, grounds, and naval vessels under their jurisdiction.

On Memorial Day the flag should be flown at half-staff from sunrise until noon only, then raised briskly to the top of the staff until sunset, in honor of the nation's battle heroes.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the flag should fly at half-staff for 30 days at all federal buildings, grounds, and naval vessels throughout the United States and its territories and possessions after the death of the president or a former president. It is to fly 10 days at half-staff after the death of the vice president, the chief justice or a retired chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, or the speaker of the House of Representatives. For an associate justice of the Supreme Court, a member of the Cabinet, a former vice president, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the majority leader of the Senate, the minority leader of the Senate, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, or the minority leader of the House of Representatives the flag is to be displayed at half-staff from the day of death until interment.

The flag is to be flown at half-staff at all federal buildings, grounds, and naval vessels in the Washington, D.C., area on the day and day after the death of a United States senator, representative, territorial delegate, or the resident commissioner from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It should also be flown at half-staff on all federal facilities in the state, congressional district, territory, or commonwealth of these officials.

Upon the death of the governor of a state, territory, or possession, the flag should be flown at half-staff on all federal facilities in that governor's state, territory, or possession from the day of death until interment.

The president may order the flag to be flown at half-staff to mark the death of other officials, former officials, or foreign dignitaries. In addition to these occasions, the president may order half-staff display of the flag after other tragic events.

See <http://halfstaff.org/> for half-staff flag notifications.