Traditional Method of Folding the United States Flag

The Pledge of Allegiance

 Meaning of the Flag Folding Ceremony
Traditional Method of Folding the United States Flag

As an Army and Navy custom, the flag is lowered daily at the last note of retreat. Special care should be taken that no part of the flag touches the ground. The Flag is then carefully folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, emblematic of the hats worn by colonial soldiers during the war for Independence. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of night. This custom of special folding is reserved for the United States Flag alone.

The traditional method of folding the flag is as follows:
(A) Straighten out the flag to full length and fold lengthwise once.

(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.)

(C) A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.
(D) The outer point is then turned inward, parallel with the open edge, to form a second triangle.

(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.

The Pledge of Allegiance

Section 4 of the Flag Code states:

"I 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."

AMVETS Chaplain's Library 2022
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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 Armed Forces of the United States, 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.

- The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.
- The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.
- The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the Veteran departing our ranks and who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.
- The fourth fold represents our weaker nature; for 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 stand, 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 tenth 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 eleventh 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 twelfth 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.
The thirteenth fold, when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, “In God We Trust.”