

Why the American Flag is folded 13 times

Have you ever wondered why the flag of the United States of America is folded 13 times when it is lowered or when it is folded and handed to the widow at the burial of a veteran?

Here is the meaning of each of those folds and what it means to you:

- 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 veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives 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 time 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 her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries or 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 mother, for whom it flies on Mother’s Day.
- The “**ninth fold**” is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through

their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

- The “**tenth fold**” is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.
- The “**eleventh fold**”, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, 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 and emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the son, and Holy Spirit.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our nation’s motto: “In God We Trust.”

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington, and the sailors and marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones, who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges, and freedoms we enjoy today.

The next time you see a flag ceremony honoring someone that has served our country, either in the Armed Forces or in our civilian services such as the Police force or Fire Department, deep in mind all the important reasons behind each and every movement. They have paid the ultimate sacrifice for all of us by honoring our Flag and our Country.

God Bless Us All

What do the colors of the Flag mean?

The flag of the United States of America today has 13 stripes - 7 red and 6 white - and 50 white stars on a blue field - five rows of 6 and four rows of 5. The stripes remind us of the 13 original colonies that gained us our liberty. The stars represent the states that are bound together into one country.

“The colors of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America: white signifies purity and innocence; Red, hardiness and valour; and Blue, the color of the Chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice.”



Honor Guard

The Honor Guard conducts full military honors, to include Pallbearers and a Chaplain, when needed. A three (3) volley salute using M-1 rifles, playing of Taps with a live bugler, and folding and presenting the flag to the next of kin. At the end of the honors, 21 rounds of brass and the following card is presented to the veteran's next of kin. The service is performed free of charge and is self-funded by donations and monies from members of the VFW. In addition, members of the Honor Guard have paid their own expenses, such as gas, food, and maintaining their uniforms.

The practice of firing three rifle volleys over the grave originated in the old custom of halting the fighting to remove the dead from the battlefield. Once each army had cleared their dead, it would fire three volleys to indicate that the dead had been cared for and that they were ready to fight again. The fact that the firing party consists of seven riflemen, firing these volleys, does not constitute a 21-gun-salute. It is the three volleys that are significant, not the number of rifles. Three volleys fired over the casket have become a tradition to mean the dead have been cared for. It has evolved into a military salute for the deceased serving their country. Firing the three volleys over the casket is one of the highest honors to give a deceased military veteran. Our nation's highest honor is a flag draped over the casket, folded and presented. Tradition is to place three spent shell casings inside the folded flag to prove now and forevermore that the deceased and his flag have had proper military honors. Nothing else is to be placed inside the flag.

The national salute of 21 guns is fired in honor of a national flag, the sovereign or chief of state of a foreign nation, a member of a reigning royal family, and the President, ex-President and President-elect of the United States. It is also fired at noon of the day of the funeral of a President, ex-President, or President-elect, on Washington's Birthday, Presidents' Day, and the Fourth of July. On Memorial Day, a salute of 21 minute guns is fired while the flag is flown at half-mast.