

# Outdoor Flag Ceremony

## Proper Handling of the Flag

The American flag should never be allowed to touch the floor, ground, nor brush against anything. The flag should never be carried horizontally or flat, but always aloft and free. The flag should be raised briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

***A short, simple rehearsal with emphasis on speaking clearly, slowly, and loudly will make all the difference in the girls' confidence and consequently in the ceremony.***

## Formation

Observers should gather around the flagpole in a horseshoe after passing through the **Pillars of Silence**. Everyone is quiet during the entire time except when asked to recite or sing.

## The Color Guard

The Color Guard consists of the Color Bearer, who holds the flag, and two, four, or more Guards. After everyone has assembled, the Announcer says: **"Color guard, advance."** The Color Guard advances until it stands at the foot of the flagpole. The Color Bearer leads with the triangularly folded flag on her hands and forearms. (The long side of the triangle is toward her body) The Guards follow in pairs behind her. The Guard and Bearer wear red sashes.

## The Ceremony

The most important part of the ceremony is the raising and lowering of the flag. Songs, the pledge of allegiance, or poems are recited or sung after the flag has been raised or before it is lowered. The Color Guard stands at attention during the ceremony. ***The Color Guard does not participate in the singing, speaking, or saluting.***

## Raising the Flag AM

When the flag is to be raised, the Announcer says: **"Color Guard, post the colors."** When the Color Guard reaches the flagpole, the Color Bearer turns and passes the flag to the first two Color Guards to hold while she takes the ropes of the flagpole and fastens the clips to the grommets of the flag. After both grommets have been fastened securely, and the flag has been at least partially unfolded by the Color Guard, the Bearer quickly hoists the flag up to the top of the flagpole. The audience salutes while the flag is being raised. Then the ropes are secured by the Bearer.

The Announcer says **"We will now say the pledge of allegiance"** All join her EXCEPT the Bearer and Color Guard who are still facing the flag. The Announcer may also ask the audience to say the GS Promise and Law or sing, or may read a poem. The Announcer asks the Camp Director if there are any announcements. Then the Announcer says **"Color Guard, dismissed"**. The Guards, lined up shoulder to shoulder behind the Color Bearer, turn to face each other in pairs, then take a big step backwards creating an aisle for the Color Bearer to walk through. The Bearer turns about face, and walks through the Guard and out of the horseshoe in the same way they entered. Once they clear the horseshoe, the Announcer says **"Girls, dismissed"**.

## Lowering the Flag PM

When the flag is to be lowered, the Color Guard advances as before and stands at attention at the base of the flagpole. The Announcer may ask the group to sing a song such as "Day is Done", or repeat the pledge of allegiance, and then asks the Camp Director if there are any announcements. The Color Guard remains at attention. The Announcer says **"Color guard, retire the colors."** The Bearer lowers the flag slowly, without stopping, until she can hold the bottom corner of the flag. All except the Color Guard salute with hand on heart at this time. The Color Guards step forward to catch the rest of the flag and to prevent it from touching the ground. The Color Guards hold the flag while the Bearer unhooks the clips. The Bearer fastens the rope to the flagpole as the Guards fold the flag.

## Folding the Flag

Open fully, the flag is held by the Color Guards, with the blue field nearest the flagpole. The flag is folded in half lengthwise (twice, if necessary). The blue field should be on the outside of the fold. The two Color Guards farthest from the flagpole begin folding the flag into a triangle until the flag is completely folded. The first two Color Guards then present the folded flag to the Bearer.

## Dismissing the Color Guard

The Announcer says: **"Color Guard, dismissed."** The Color Guards, in pairs, line up shoulder to shoulder behind the Color Bearer. Each Guard then turns to face her partner and takes a big step backwards creating an aisle for the Color Bearer to walk through. The Bearer turns about face, and walks through the guard. The Color Guards fall in behind her in pairs. Once the Guard has cleared the horseshoe the Announcer should say: **"Girls, dismissed."**