

Interest Topic: Flag Ceremonies

Cub Scout Roundtable			
Time Allotted	Activity	Assigned to	Content
30–40 minutes	General session for all participants	Cub Scout roundtable team and participants	Demonstrate how to conduct an opening flag ceremony. Then have groups of participants practice conducting one themselves. Remind them that the Scout Oath and Law are printed on the back cover of the Cub Scout handbooks, for easy reference during a flag ceremony. Demonstrate how to conduct a closing flag ceremony. Demonstrate how to fold the American flag. Lead a discussion on different ways to use the flag in den and pack meetings. In which activities is flag use appropriate? How can units work with their school and others in the community to conduct flag ceremonies?
10 minutes	Q&A	Cub Scout roundtable team and participants	Opportunity to answer any additional questions
5 minutes	Closing	Cub Scout roundtable commissioner and team	Conduct a closing flag ceremony.

Topic: Flag Ceremonies

Takeaway: Civic duty is an important part of Scouting. The American flag is a symbol of our country. The flag represents us as a people and as a nation. Working with Scouts and showing respect to a flag, whether it's saying the pledge, presenting a flag at a ceremony or parade, or learning to properly retire an old, tattered flag, is how we help Scouts develop pride in their country.

GENERAL SESSION

The American flag is a symbol of this country, a symbol of all the people who live here. In the Scouting program we embrace the flag and teach how to properly use it. From den and pack meetings to special events like parades, we as leaders are responsible for showing our Cub Scouts how to respect and use the flag.

Questions for the group:

- Do you conduct a flag opening at all meetings, both den and pack?
 - When you have the Scouts conduct a flag ceremony at each of their den meetings, they will be comfortable conducting the pack meeting flag ceremony.
- Do you have the Scouts set up the flag?
- Do you regularly say the Pledge of Allegiance?

- When you do outdoor events do you bring the American flag with you?
- In what other settings can a flag be used or a flag ceremony conducted?
 - At school assemblies and functions
 - At high school sporting events
 - At community parades and functions
 - At village or city council meetings
 - In cemeteries as gravestone markers
- How can units work with others in the community to conduct flag ceremonies?

Discuss flag etiquette and demonstrate how to conduct a flag ceremony. Have roundtable participants practice conducting a flag ceremony, giving each participant an opportunity to play different roles in the ceremony.

Demonstrate how to fold the flag and how to properly carry a folded flag. Have the participants practice each.

Explain the Pledge of Allegiance (see Resources).

Discuss the use of a den flag. Bring samples of den flags to show the participants.

Discuss the history of the American flag and discuss the history and symbolism of your state flag.

RESOURCES

- American flag set, www.scoutstuff.org/american-flag-set.html
- *Your Flag*, No. 33188: www.scoutstuff.org/your-flag-book.html

What the Pledge of Allegiance Means

When you pledge allegiance to the flag, you promise loyalty and devotion to your nation.

I pledge allegiance ...

You promise to be true

... to the flag ...

to the emblem of our country,

... of the United States of America ...

a nation made up of 50 states and several territories, each with certain rights of its own;

... and to the republic ...

a country where the people elect representatives from among themselves to make laws for them.

... for which it stands ...

The flag represents the United States of America,

... one nation under God, ...

a country whose people are free to believe in God.

... indivisible, ...

The nation cannot be split into parts,

... with liberty and justice ...

and freedom and fairness

...for all.

for every person in the country—you and every other American.

The Colors of the Flag

Setting: An American flag, three candles (red, white, and blue), a narrator, and three Cub Scouts. This can be done at an outdoor summer meeting. If you are meeting indoors, be sure to check fire codes for the location in advance, or use electric candles.

Narrator: Have you noticed the strong bond between our flag and our oath? Let me show you.

Cub Scout #1 (lights the blue candle): Blue is the color of faith. Believing in yourself, your country, and your religion. This is like the first part of the Scout Oath—doing our best—and our duty to God and our country.

Cub Scout #2 (lights the red candle): The color red in our flag means sacrifice and courage, the qualities of the founders of our country. Red symbolizes the second part of the Oath: “to help other people at all times,” which often requires acts of courage to help anyone in trouble and self-sacrifice as we put others first.

Cub Scout #3 (lights the white candle): The last color of the flag is white. It is the symbol of purity and perfection. It represents keeping ourselves strong and having strong morals.

Narrator: Let us rise and say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Flag Etiquette

Flag ceremonies should be respectful and tailored to the Scouts participating. All Scout flag ceremonies should be solemn events, but they shouldn't all be the same. For younger Cub Scouts, plan a flag ceremony that's short and simple. For older Cub Scouts, add a few more lines. For Scouts or Venturers, suggest they plan something more elaborate and deeper in meaning, perhaps with additional comments by an adult or a more senior youth.

As a sign of respect, don't ever let the flag touch anything beneath it—such as the ground, the floor, or water. However, contrary to legend, the U.S. Flag Code does not state that a flag that touches the ground should be burned or retired.

Never add anything to an American flag. The American flag is great enough as it is. That's why the flag “should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature” (U.S. Code, Title 36, Chapter 10, paragraph 176g).

The flag isn't to be worn as a costume. No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firefighters, police officers, and members of patriotic organizations like the BSA.

The flag occupies a position of honor.

- In a procession, the American flag is carried to the marching right of other flags, or in front of other flags.
- When displayed, the American flag should be to the flag's own right (also described as “the speaker's right” or “the audience's left”).
- When grouped with other flags (e.g., state, Scout, council), the American flag should be at the center, in front of or higher than the other flags.
- When with another flag on crossed staffs, it should be on the flag's own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag(s).
- When the flags of two or more nations are flown, the American flag should be flown from a separate staff of the same height. International use forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in times of peace.

When it's time to retire a flag, do so in a dignified way.

The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Be sure to take into account such things as local fire codes, and the fabric from which the flag is made. Some fabrics such as nylon should not be burned.

The flag may be burned as a whole or separated into pieces. Separation is appropriate when the flag is large, or when you have only a few flags and a large number of Scouts who wish to take a substantive part in the ceremony.

The flag should be lowered daily. Unless the flag pole is lighted, it should be lowered at dusk. Again, special care should be taken that no part of the flag touches the ground.

Fold the American flag properly. In this country, we have a special way we fold our flag. Only the American flag is folded into a triangle.

A folded flag is carried against the chest. A properly folded flag should show only a triangular blue field of stars. The flag, when folded, may then be held against the chest with the arms crossed and folded, with the triangle point up, or other ways that demonstrate respect and honor for the flag.