

Ceremonies-Flag Raising and Retiring

There are many kinds of ceremonies in Girl Scouting. Ceremonies reinforce values, pass on traditions, recognize accomplishments, strengthen friendships and give life to the beliefs established by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. They are a means for girls to express their feelings, friendship, patriotism and service. Like much of Girl Scouting, there are a few hard and fast rules for planning and carrying out ceremonies; what really counts is that the girls do the planning, that everyone participates and that the occasion has special meaning for the participants.

A flag ceremony honors the American flag as the symbol of our country and all the hopes, dreams and people it consists of. If your group includes girls from other countries, girls can honor their country's flag too and conduct an international flag ceremony. A flag ceremony can be an opening to a meeting, a special event, or opening and closing a day such as morning and evening flag ceremonies at camp. Flag ceremonies have a patriotic theme and are respectful in tone. Flag ceremonies can include reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and the Girl Scout Promise of Law. It might even include a patriotic song such as America the Beautiful or a poem.

The Girl Scout in Charge (often called the "caller") uses these suggested commands for a flag ceremony:

- **"Girl Scouts, attention"**
 - Used to announce that the flag ceremony is to begin.
- **"Color guard, advance"**
 - This signals the color guard to advance with the flags, or advance to pick up the flags.
- **"Color guard, post the colors"**
 - This directs the color guard to place the flag in flag standards, or to attach the grommets to a flag pole rope.
- **"Color guard, honor your flag"**
 - The color guard salutes the American flag.
- **"Please join us in saying the Pledge of Allegiance"**
 - (Followed by an appropriate song, quotation, Girls Scout Promise or poem if so desired.) OR if retiring the flag, eliminate post the colors, color guard should honor the flag, assembly may Sing Taps and caller inserts "Color guard retire the colors". This asks the color guard to remove the flag from standards, or to lower the flag, detach from the rope, and fold prior to being dismissed.

- **“Color guard break rank”**
 - Color guard steps aside to allow the color bearer to exit first.
- **“Color guard dismissed”**
 - Color guard leaves the circle, horseshoe formation or stage.
- **“Girl Scouts dismissed”**

Flag ceremonies can be very simple or more elaborate. What’s important is that the ceremony maintains a respectful tone. Flag ceremonies can include the public or be held for just the attendees at an event.

Resources

The best ceremonies are planned by girls to express what’s important to them. You will find more detailed ideas and examples in the Ceremonies and Celebrations packet also on the Sierra Nevada’s website at <http://www.gssn.org/content/gssn/en/for-volunteers/online-support-for-volunteers.html>

Questions

Contact us at girlscoutshelp@gssn.org or 775-322-0642.