

# The Flag and Betsy Ross

## Background

Betsy Ross was born on January 1, 1752. She is credited with making what became the first flag of the United States. The flag she sewed together by hand in 1776 was adopted by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777. Betsy Ross's original flag had 13 alternating red and white stripes and 13 white stars on a blue field. After a few changes in design when new states were added (at one point, there were 15 stars and 15 stripes), a law was passed in 1818 specifying that there would be 13 stripes to represent the 13 original colonies. A new star would be added to the blue field for each new state.

## Making It Work

Give your students as much background about Betsy Ross as you think will interest them. Read the above paragraph to your students. Pages 4–6, and page 11 provide additional information. Use your classroom flag to demonstrate what you are describing when you point out the colors and the stars and stripes. Have reference books available, if appropriate.

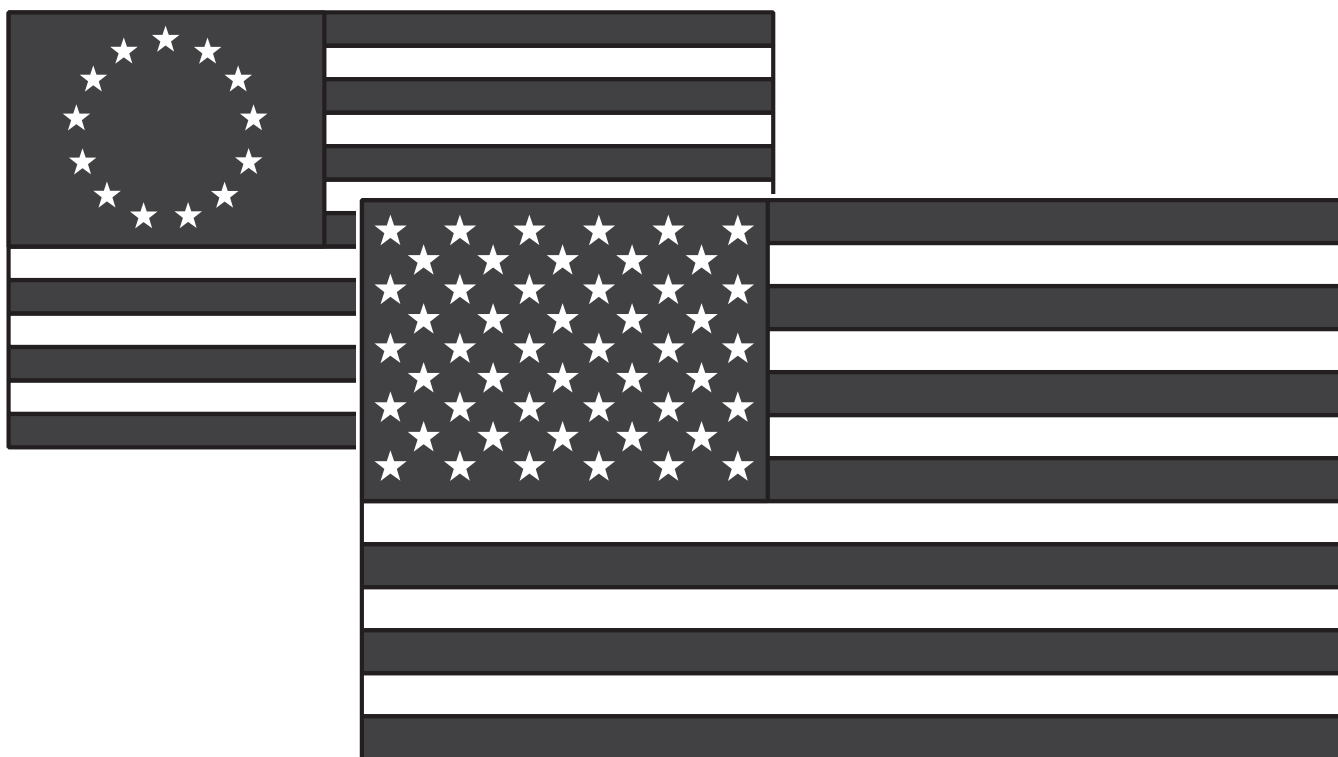


## Activity

You will need a classroom flag and a wall map of the United States. This activity is designed to be an oral exercise to establish a general base of information. See what the students already know and tell them the answers they don't know. Go back and repeat some of the questions and answers for reinforcement.

- Where did Betsy Ross live? Find it on a map. (*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*)
- How did she sew the flag? (*by hand*)
- Why are the red stripes on the outside edges? (*so it can be seen against the sky*)
- What are some other names for the flag? (*Old Glory; the Star-Spangled Banner; the Red, White, and Blue*)
- How many stars did Betsy Ross's flag have? (*13*)
- How many stars does the flag have now? Why? (*50 stars, 50 states*)
- How many stripes did Betsy Ross's flag have? Why? (*13 stripes, 13 colonies*)
- How many stripes does the flag have now? Why? (*13 stripes, adding more would have made it an odd design or shape*)
- Which were the last two states to join the United States? When did they join? Find them on the map. (*Alaska, 49th, in 1959; Hawaii, 50th, in 1959*)
- What were the names of the 13 original colonies (states)? Find them on the map. (*Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia*)

# United States Flag



One of our most beloved national symbols is the American flag. It has changed many times over the years. The first American flag had 13 stars and 13 stripes to symbolize the original 13 colonies.

The colors chosen for the flag were important, too. The stripes alternated red and white, and the five-pointed stars lay on a blue background. Red symbolized valor or bravery, white stood for purity and goodness, and blue represented justice and fairness.

The plan was to add a stripe and a star each time a new state joined the union. It didn't take long for people to realize that if this plan were followed, the flag would quickly become much too large. Congress voted in 1818 to retain the 13 stripes in recognition of the original states and to add a star for every new state thereafter. Our flag now has 50 stars. Red, white, and blue are colors associated with America.

## **Find Out More on the Web**

<http://www.legion.org/flagtoc.htm>—This site shows how to properly fold the flag and describes the symbolism involved in the flag-folding ceremony.

<http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagstar.html>—Visit the Betsy Ross Home Page and learn more about the flag. Find out how to cut a five-pointed star with just one snip of your scissors.

# Displaying the Flag

Government offices and schools fly the flag every day. Many people display the flag on important national holidays: Presidents' Day, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, and Flag Day (June 14).

The Federal Flag Code is a set of rules for displaying the flag. Here are some of those rules:

- ☆ The flag should not be flown outside in bad weather.
- ☆ The flag must never touch the ground.
- ☆ A flag should be flown near every school during school hours.
- ☆ No other flag may ever be placed above the U.S. flag.
- ☆ The flag may never be used in advertising of any kind.
- ☆ A flag in poor condition should be destroyed by burning.
- ☆ When the national anthem is played and a flag is displayed, all people should face the flag and salute.
- ☆ The flag is flown at half-staff to show mourning for the death of a high ranking government official or past president.

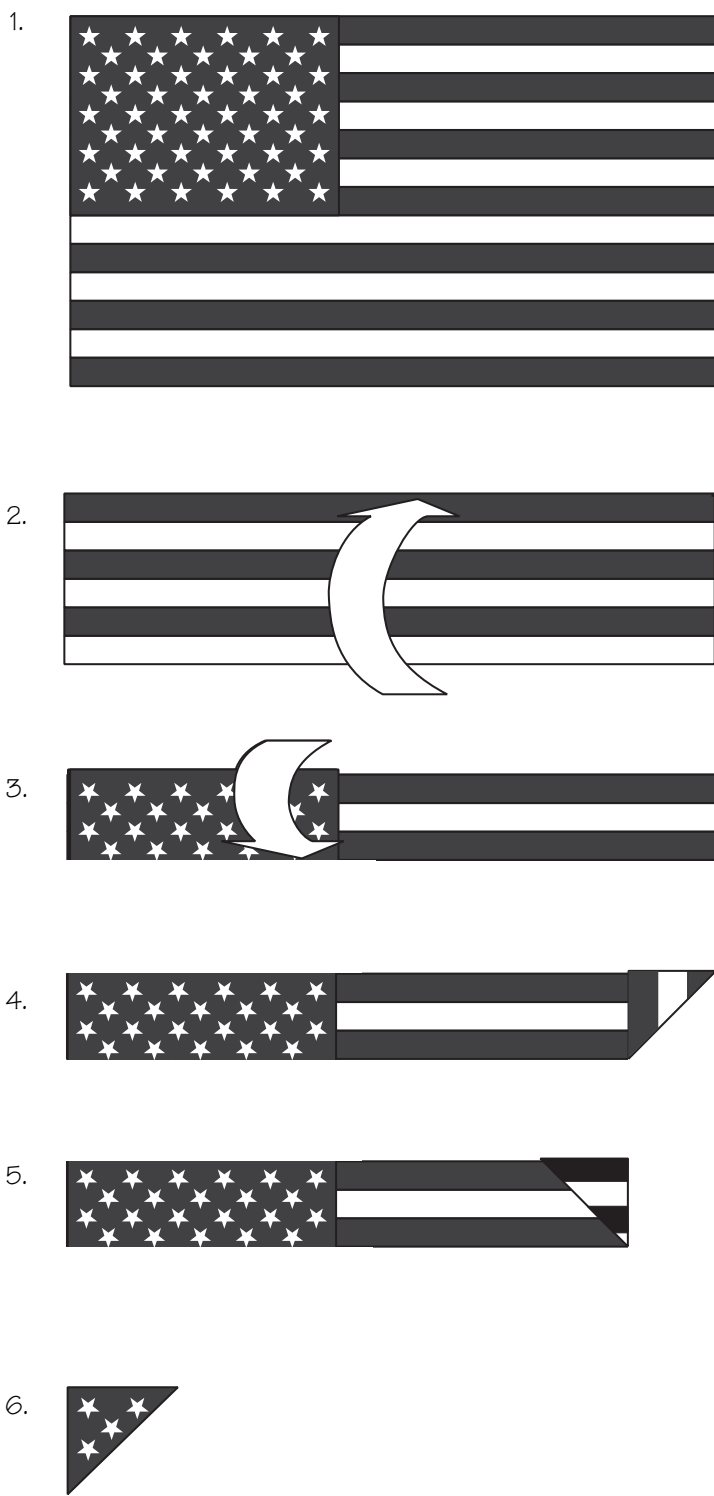
Read the sentence and fill in the blanks.

1. The flag should not be flown o \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ in bad weather.
2. June 14 is our national \_ l \_ \_ \_ Day.
3. The flag must never touch the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ d.
4. The Federal \_ \_ \_ \_ g Code is a set of rules for displaying the flag.
5. A flag should fly during school hours at every \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ l.
6. The flag is flown at half-staff to show \_ o \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .
7. An old flag should be destroyed by \_ \_ \_ r \_ \_ \_ \_ .
8. The flag has one stripe for each \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ y.
9. Put the printed letters together in order to spell another name for the flag.

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# Folding the Flag

Here is how to correctly fold an American flag.



**Practice:** Turn a piece of paper into an American flag by coloring on it. Then, practice folding it like you would a real flag.