

Chapter 8 – United States History and Citizenship

PO.8 – United States History and Citizenship

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EO.1 – Define Citizenship and the Responsibilities of Good Citizens¹

Citizenship is a term for the relationship between people and the country they pledge their allegiance, or loyalty, to. This relationship has two parts though: in return for this allegiance, the country offers protection to its citizens. In the United States, there are several different ways to become a citizen. All people born in the United States or its territories are considered United States citizens regardless of if their parents are citizens. Likewise, anyone born to or adopted by a parent who is a United States citizen is also a citizen even if they are born in another country. Non-citizens or immigrants to the United States can apply for United States citizenship by legally residing in the United States, passing a citizenship test, and pledging allegiance to this country.

As United States citizens, we believe in living peacefully with one another by respecting the rights of others and accepting others' cultures, customs, and traditions regardless of their place of birth. Because we have pledged our allegiance, we also believe in protecting our country and our way of life against all enemies, foreign or domestic. We believe in taking care of one another: the strong should help the weak, and the rich should share their wealth with the poor.

American citizens are granted certain rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Because we've been given these blessings, it is our duty to safeguard them for future generations by being active citizens. As an active citizen, we have certain **rights**, things we are guaranteed by our government, and we have certain **responsibilities** that we must perform because we have been given those rights.

Your **rights** as a United States citizen are:

- Freedom to express yourself
- Freedom to practice any religion you choose or none at all
- The right to a fair trial by a jury
- The right to vote
- The right to apply for work
- The right to run for office
- The freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness.

Your **responsibilities** as a United States citizen are:

- To support and defend the Constitution
- Stay informed of any issues affecting your community
- Participate in your community by voting and volunteering
- Obey all federal, state, and local laws
- Respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others
- Help others in your community
- Pay taxes (when you're older)
- Serve on a jury (when you're older)
- Defend the country if need be and if you feel called to do so.

EO.2 – Provide a Short History of the United States Flag

The official flag of the United States was established on June 14, 1777 by the Continental Congress. Before this, though, it is not clear who designed the first flag. It is supposed to have been designed by Congressman Francis Hopkinson, and many historians believe that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, created the first one.

The first Flag Act read: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation." A new Act passed in January of 1794 stipulated the flag would have fifteen stars and fifteen strips after May 1795 to account for new states added to the country. It was this flag that inspired the writing of our National Anthem by Francis Scott Key in 1812.

It wasn't until April 4, 1818 that a new Act was passed that called for thirteen stripes for the original thirteen colonies and a star for each state in the country with new stars being added on the 4th of July after any new states had been admitted to the union.

EO.3 – Demonstrate Proper Flag Etiquette

The United States flag is the most important symbol in our country. We pledge our allegiance and respect to the flag. To ensure our flag is properly respected, The Flag Code was created which states how the flag is and is not to be treated. Throughout each of the guidebooks, you'll learn different aspects of the Flag Code. In this book, you will learn how to display the flag indoors and outdoors and how to raise and lower the flag.

Displaying the Flag Outdoors

- The flag of the United States must always be at the top of a flagpole when displayed with a state, community, society, or unit flag.
- If the flag is flown with other flags but on separate poles of the same height, the flag of the United States should be placed in a position of honor furthest to the

right. No flags should be longer than the United States flag nor should any flag be placed above it.

- When the flag is displayed from a pole or staff on a window, balcony, or building, the stars should be at the peak or tip of the pole unless the flag is at half-staff.
- When the flag is displayed over a street, it should hang vertically with the stars to the north or east. If the flag is hanging over a sidewalk, the stars need to be furthest from the building.
- The flag of one nation may not be displayed above a flag of another nation. If the United States flag is to be displayed with flags from other nations, they must all be the same size, displayed on separate poles, and raised and lowered at the same time.

Displaying the Flag Indoors

- The flag should always be displayed in a place of honor to its own right. This means it should be furthest to the right, placed to the right of any speaker or staging areas, with any other flags to the left.
- The flag should be centered at the highest point of the group when displayed with other flags.
- When the flag is displayed with another flag and the staffs are crossed, the United States flag should be to the right with its staff in front.
- When a flag is displayed against a wall, vertically or horizontally, the stars should be at the top and to the observer's left.

Raising and Lowering the Flag

- The flag is to be raised briskly but lowered slowly and ceremoniously. It is displayed only between sunrise and sunset except under special circumstances.
- When displayed at night, it is to be illuminated.
- The flag is to be saluted as it is raised and lowered, and the salute is held until the flag is unsnapped from the halyard or until the last note of music has been played if music accompanies the act, whichever lasts the longest.

***For more information on the United States Flag, you can access the United States Flag code pdf on the Young Marines website.**

