

# Respecting Old Glory: Finding the Right Place to Retire Your U.S. Flag



Preserving the pride and symbolism of the U.S. flag doesn't end when it becomes worn or tattered; it's time to learn the proper way to recycle and retire Old Glory. If you've been asking 'where and how can I dispose of my American flag?', we have the answers.

Rules on how to properly fly and dispose of the flag were established in June 1923, when the National Flag Conference met in Washington. Its members created the United States [Flag Code](#), which states that "the flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing." In the code it states that the American flag should never touch the ground or be displayed when it is in a damaged or worn-out condition. So you can bet your star-spangled bottom there are ways to retire your old and tattered flag!

Treating the flag with respect during its use is the first step toward properly disposing of it. While our natural

instinct is to throw things in the trash, the American flag represents the ideals, values, and sacrifices this nation was and continues to be built upon. Simply discarding it in a waste bin would be an inadequate tribute to this great American symbol. Fear not, good patriot, there are more ways to retire your flag with honor and respect than you may realize! In this blog post, we will explore the proper methods and locations for disposing of the American flag, ensuring that it is done with the utmost honor and respect.

## Flag Retirement Ceremonies

Yes, there are proper ways to send Ol' Glory off in style! Many organizations, such as veteran associations, scout troops, and American Legion posts conduct flag retirement ceremonies that provide a formal and dignified way to dispose of the American flag. If you would like to hold your own ceremony, any of these local organizations would love to guide you in the proper procedure(s), to ensure that the flag is honorably retired through respectful rituals. [https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/video/2006/DOD\\_107847076/DOD\\_107847076-1280x720-2765k.mp4](https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/video/2006/DOD_107847076/DOD_107847076-1280x720-2765k.mp4)

## Burying the Flag at Home

Contrary to the belief that flags should never be buried, there is a respectful way to perform a flag burial. You can bury a flag in the ground in a well-constructed container to keep it protected. In the US Flag Code (<http://igmlnet.uohyd.ac.in:8000/InfoUSA/facts/symbols/flagcode.htm>), it states the cloth should not come in contact with the ground or dirt. Fold it properly, ensuring that the blue field with stars is visible on the outside, and place it in the container. Take a moment of silence, or respectfully say a few words as you bury the container, treating the burial as a solemn occasion.

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2014/09/08/retiring-worn-out-american-flags/>

## **Burn the Flag to Retire it**

The United States Flag Code, Title 4, Section 8k states-*“The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem of display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.”*

<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title4-section8&num=0&edition=prelim#:~:text=%C2%A78.,to%20any%20person%20or%20thing.>

The ceremony should be conducted with dignity and respect and the flag burned completely to ashes. There can be no trace left behind. However, flags are not as commonly made the way they were when this recommended method was issued, so there are pros and cons:

PRO's: Method preferred by U.S. Flag Code Title 4, Section 8k,, especially for cotton or wool flags. Usually the most ceremonial and solemn method.

CON's: Unlike the cotton and wool flags made in the early 20th century, today's flags are mainly made out of petroleum-based materials like nylon and polyester. Burning synthetic materials produce hazardous gasses and vapors that are highly combustible, and hazardous to your health and the environment.

## **Contacting Local Authorities for Drop Off**

Some local government offices, including fire departments and military installations, often accept worn-out American flags for proper disposal. Fire departments are particularly

suitable for flag disposal because they often use flag retirement ceremonies as a training exercise. Contact your local fire department or military base to inquire if they have any specific protocols or ceremonies for disposing of flags. Many government and state/county government offices also have official flag disposal boxes outside of their buildings. You can drop off any old or unwanted U.S. flags for respectful disposal.



If you live in the South Metro Denver area, a convenient drop-off location is in Parker at the Town Hall located at 20120 Mainstreet, Parker, CO 80138 [MAP](#) 303.841.0353

Flags ready for disposal may be dropped off year-round at the Douglas County Veterans Affairs Office located at 301 Wilcox Street in Castle Rock [MAP](#). 303.663.6200 or visit [www.douglas.co.us/community/veterans/](http://www.douglas.co.us/community/veterans/).

Even some Walmart and Home Depot locations will gladly take them to recycle or burn, but call ahead to find out. [Walmart flag disposal locations nearby](#).

# VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) for Drop Off

[Veterans of Foreign Wars \(VFW\) posts](#). This amazingly patriotic organization is known for its commitment to preserving and honoring the American flag. Many VFW posts accept worn-out flags and conduct regular flag retirement ceremonies. Reach out to your local VFW post to inquire about their flag disposal procedures and ceremonies. They will guide you through the process if you want to have your own ceremony and will help you to ensure that the flag receives the respect it deserves.

## Does That Star Spangled Banner Yet Wave

Above all else, when the time comes to replace your American flag, it's essential to remember the symbolic value it holds and treat its retirement with utmost respect and dignity. The American flag represents the collective spirit, freedom, and sacrifice of the American nation, and it deserves a proper and honorable disposal. Whether you choose to bury the flag in a respectful manner or participate in a flag retirement ceremony organized by a local organization, the key is to ensure that the American flag is treated with the reverence it deserves. By following these guidelines, we can uphold the integrity of this cherished symbol and pay tribute to all it represents.



## Other Flag Resources and Items of Interest

1. Respecting the Flag: [4 USC 8: Respect for flag.](#)
2. How to Use and Display the American Flag: [Public Law 94-344 94th Congress Joint Resolution](#)
3. [US Flag Retirement and Disposal Ceremony](#)
4. Folding the American Flag: [https://www.bestcustomflags.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/flag\\_infographic\\_sept.\\_2015\\_1024.jpg](https://www.bestcustomflags.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/flag_infographic_sept._2015_1024.jpg)  
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