



**AUTOMOBILE and MOTORCYCLE**  
**FLAG DISPLAY GUIDELINES**  
**for NON-MILITARY VEHICLES**

**THE MILITARY SALUTE PROJECT**  
**MSP-03**

<http://militarysalute.proboards45.com>

# Automobile and Motorcycle Flag Display Guidelines for Non-Military Vehicles

## Military Salute Project MSP-03



### Authorities and Citations

The *Military Salute Project* provides protocol research and guidance to Federal and state government departments, Military commands, Veterans organizations, patriotic groups and individuals. Much of the assistance we provide is requested from Military and civilian color guard and honor guard units, parade organizers and participants, and coordinators of patriotic events. Many of the questions we receive concern the proper display, positioning and precedence of flags. We began collecting and posting the information on our website in 2004. In 2007, we began preparing manuals that can be viewed online and/or downloaded.

Original versions of the United States Flag Code provided detailed information about U.S. Flag protocol, including penalties when provisions of the statute were violated. Many states used the U.S. Flag Code to write their own laws concerning the use of state flags. In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States Supreme Court upheld several state and federal court decisions striking down some of the provisions based on the First Amendment and Freedom of Speech. As a result, the U.S. Flag Code in its current form is more or less a set of "advisory guidelines" with few provisions for the violation thereof. Consequently, the Flag Code leaves more questions unanswered than it answers.

The *Military Salute Project* uses the following order of precedence when we provide guidance ...

- Our first authority is the United States Flag Code as currently presented in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, as amended or clarified by related Public Laws and/or Executive Orders.
- If a question is not specifically answered there, we proceed to pertinent directives issued by the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and/or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. We contact the Protocol Office of one or more of the departments for clarification when necessary.
- If the question is still unanswered, we proceed to the current orders, manuals and directives issued by the branches of the Armed Forces of the United States (including the U.S. Coast Guard). Because one Branch may have different procedures for similar situations than another Branch, we determine the most appropriate guideline to cite based upon the affiliation of the group or individual who submitted the question.
- Depending upon the source of the question, we sometimes modify our answers to conform to national policies of groups chartered by the United States Congress and/or national groups officially recognized by one or more branches of the Military.

In summary, the answers we provide are merely guidelines as far as civilians are concerned. While our answers are based on existing laws and directives, and in many cases 230+ years of American Military tradition, there are very few enforcement provisions for groups or individuals outside of the United States Military.

## Automobile and Motorcycle Flag Display Guidelines for Non-Military Vehicles

No other flag should be flown higher than the Flag of the United States of America. No other flag should be noticeably larger than the Flag of the United States of America. The U.S. Flag is mounted *on its own right as the vehicle is moving forward*, **EXCEPT** when it is mounted as follows ...

- A single U.S. Flag mounted on the roof of an automobile or a truck, or on the rear fender or “bumper” of a motorcycle, **CAN** be mounted in the center of the vehicle **OR** it can be mounted on the right side (passenger side) of the vehicle.
- The U.S. Flag can be displayed in the center of a row of an odd number of flags (i.e. three flags, five flags, seven flags, etc.) mounted across the roof of an automobile or truck or in a fender-mount or bumper-mount on the rear of a motorcycle. In this case, the U.S. Flag should be higher than all other flags. “Higher” means that the uppermost red stripe of the flag should be above the top of all other flags. This can generally be accomplished by using a U.S. Flag one size larger than all of the other flags or by extending the length of the pole holding a U.S. Flag that is the same size as all of the other flags.
- The U.S. Flag displayed in the center of a row of *multiple* U.S. Flags mounted in a line across the roof of an automobile or truck, or in a fender-mount or bumper-mount on the rear of a motorcycle, **CAN** be higher than all of the other U.S. Flags (in the case of an odd number of *multiple* U.S. Flags, i.e. three flags, five flags, seven flags, etc.) ... **OR** ... all of the U.S. Flags can be the same height and size.
- If a row of *multiple* U.S. Flags has an even number of flags (i.e. two flags, four flags, six flags, etc.), **ALL** of the flags in the row should be the same height and size.
- If U.S. Flags are flown from poles extending out of the “post holes” in the rear of, and on both sides of, the bed of a pickup truck, both U.S. Flags should be the same size and height.

The following pictures illustrate a variety of situations. Each example conforms to protocol guidelines ...



One window-mounted U.S. Flag  
positioned on its own right  
(the passenger side of the vehicle)  
as the vehicle moves forward



One fender-mounted U.S. Flag  
positioned on its own right  
(the passenger side of the vehicle)  
as the vehicle moves forward



One roof-mounted U.S. Flag  
positioned in the center  
of the vehicle



One U.S. Flag  
positioned in the center  
of the rear of the motorcycle;  
flag is positioned straight-up



One U.S. Flag  
positioned in the center  
of the rear of the motorcycle;  
flag is angled to the rear



Two roof-mounted U.S. Flags  
of the same size and height  
positioned on both sides of the vehicle



Two U.S. Flags  
of the same height and size  
positioned in the center  
of the rear of the motorcycle;  
flags are leaning outwards at the same angle



U.S. Flag positioned on its own right  
as the vehicle moves forward;  
size of the U.S. Flag is  
equal to, or greater than, the other flag



U.S. Flag positioned on its own right  
as the vehicle moves forward;  
size of the U.S. Flag is  
equal to, or greater than, the other flag



U.S. Flag positioned on its own right  
as the motorcycle moves forward;  
size of the U.S. Flag is  
equal to, or greater than, the other flag



U.S. Flag positioned on its own right  
as the motorcycle moves forward;  
size of the U.S. Flag is  
equal to, or greater than, the other flag;  
both flags are positioned straight-up



U.S. Flag positioned on its own right  
as the motorcycle moves forward;  
size of the U.S. Flag is  
equal to, or greater than, the other flag;  
both flags are leaning outwards at the same angle



U.S. Flag positioned in the center of the rear of the motorcycle;  
U.S. Flag is larger and higher than the other flags



U.S. Flag positioned in the center of a row of flags on the rear of the motorcycle;  
U.S. Flag is mounted higher than the other flags

If multiple flags are displayed on the roof of an automobile or a truck, the U.S. Flag can be positioned by itself and centered **AHEAD** (towards the front bumper) of a "second row" that includes all of the remaining flags. The U.S. Flag should be the same size or larger than all of the other flags.

- ... **OR** ... the U.S. Flag can be positioned in the center of the row using a U.S. Flag that is larger than all of the other flags (or raising the U.S. Flag higher by extending the pole);
- ... **OR** ... the U.S. Flag can be positioned on its own right as the vehicle is moving forward using a U.S. Flag that is the same size or larger than all of the other flags.

Flags flown on the same pole as the U.S. Flag (i.e. the POW/MIA flag or the Armed Forces Memorial Tribute flag) should always be positioned beneath the U.S. Flag and, preferably, should be one size smaller. When the POW/MIA flag or the Armed Forces Memorial Tribute flag are flown by themselves on separate poles, they should be positioned according to the ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FLAGS precedence listed on Page 7.

Flags flown on civilian motor vehicles should **NOT** be half-staffed. The flag can be furled and secured with a black mourning ribbon streamer ... **OR** ... a black mourning ribbon streamer can be attached to the top of the pole as illustrated below. This is usually done for the day of the funeral only.



U.S. Flag with a black mourning ribbon streamer attached to the top of the pole;  
the streamer is **NOT** attached to the flag itself



## Order of Precedence for Flags

*Please refer to the illustrations beginning on Page 8 for additional information.*

### 1 - NATIONAL FLAGS

When flown with the flags of any other nation (i.e. Canada, Mexico, etc.), the U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right as the vehicle moves forward. Flags of other nations should be positioned to the immediate left of the U.S. Flag in alphabetical order, using the English language. **All** of the national flags, including the U.S. Flag, should be the same size and be positioned at the same height.

Members of patriotic groups, such as the Patriot Guard Riders, should reposition the national flags on their vehicles immediately after entering Canada or Mexico so that the host country's flag is on its own right as the vehicle moves forward. The remaining national flags, including the U.S. Flag, should be positioned to the immediate left of the host country's flag in alphabetical order, using the English language. Conversely, visitors from Canada or Mexico should position the U.S. Flag on its own right immediately after entering the United States. The remaining national flags, including the visitor's national flag, should be positioned to the immediate left of the U.S. flag in alphabetical order, using the English language.

### 2 - STATE FLAGS

State flags are positioned in the order they entered the Union ...

1 - Delaware	26 - Michigan
2 - Pennsylvania	27 - Florida
3 - New Jersey	28 - Texas
4 - Georgia	29 - Iowa
5 - Connecticut	30 - Wisconsin
6 - Massachusetts	31 - California
7 - Maryland	32 - Minnesota
8 - South Carolina	33 - Oregon
9 - New Hampshire	34 - Kansas
10 - Virginia	35 - West Virginia
11 - New York	36 - Nevada
12 - North Carolina	37 - Nebraska
13 - Rhode Island	38 - Colorado
14 - Vermont	39 - North Dakota
15 - Kentucky	40 - South Dakota
16 - Tennessee	41 - Montana
17 - Ohio	42 - Washington
18 - Louisiana	43 - Idaho
19 - Indiana	44 - Wyoming
20 - Mississippi	45 - Utah
21 - Illinois	46 - Oklahoma
22 - Alabama	47 - New Mexico
23 - Maine	48 - Arizona
24 - Missouri	49 - Alaska
25 - Arkansas	50 - Hawaii

Flags of American Territories should be positioned next in alphabetical order. County flags should be positioned next and in alphabetical order within a state. City flags should be positioned next, with the capitol city placed first and other cities within the state positioned alphabetically. Municipal flags (town, township, unincorporated) should be positioned next, in alphabetical order within each group.

### 3 - SERVICE FLAGS

Service flags are positioned in the following order ...

- U.S. Army
- U.S. Marine Corps
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Merchant Marine
- U.S. Army National Guard
- U.S. Army Reserve
- U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- U.S. Naval Reserve
- U.S. Air National Guard
- U.S. Air Force Reserve
- U.S. Coast Guard Reserve

### 4 - REGIMENTAL COLORS

Regimental flags of the United States Military are displayed from highest ranking to lowest ranking and alphabetically or numerically within equal ranks.

### 5 - ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FLAGS

Flags representing Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) chartered by the U.S. Congress are positioned in the following order ...

- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- AMVETS
- Blinded Veterans Association
- Catholic War Veterans
- Congressional Medal of Honor Society
- Disabled American Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans
- Legion of Valor
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Military Order of the World Wars
- National Association for Black Veterans
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans of the Vietnam War
- Vietnam Veterans of America

Flags representing other organizations chartered by the U.S. Congress, civic groups, and patriotic organizations are positioned in alphabetical order and alphabetically or numerically within equal groups. Examples included in this group ... Armed Forces Memorial Tribute flag, Blue Star Mothers of America flag, Boy Scouts of America flag, Bugles Across America flag, Knights of Columbus flag, Patriot Guard Riders flag, POW/MIA flag, etc.

### 6 - INDIVIDUAL, SYMBOLIC AND PERSONAL FLAGS



## Order of Precedence for Flags

Illustrated examples of the correct placement of flags that are displayed in a row

**PLEASE NOTE ... the following illustrations should be viewed as if you are standing BEHIND a vehicle (automobile, truck or motorcycle) and looking at the rear of the vehicle. Imagine the flags are mounted from your right to your left across the trunk of an automobile, the cab of a pickup truck, or in a holder fastened to the rear-wheel fender of a motorcycle.**



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right in a row of national flags; the flags of Canada and Mexico are positioned immediately to the left of the U.S. Flag in alphabetical order; all flags are equal in size and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right; the flag of Canada is next in precedence and is followed by the flag of the State of Minnesota; all flags are equal in size and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right; the flag of the State of Wisconsin is next because Wisconsin's date of admittance into the Union precedes that of the State of Minnesota; all flags are equal in size and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right;  
 the flag of the State of South Dakota  
 is next in precedence and is  
 followed by the flag of the United States Army;  
 all flags are equal in size  
 and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right;  
 the flag of the United States Navy  
 is next in precedence and is  
 followed by the POW/MIA flag;  
 all flags are equal in size  
 and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned in the center  
 and is higher than all other flags;  
 the Minnesota flag is next in  
 precedence, so it is positioned at  
 the far right with the flag of  
 the United States Air Force  
 to the left, and then the  
 Disabled American Veterans flag,  
 and then the POW/MIA flag;  
 all flags other than the U.S. Flag  
 are equal in size;  
 the U.S. Flag can be the same size  
 or larger than all of the other flags,  
 but it must be mounted higher  
 than all of the other flags



U.S. Flag is positioned on its own right;  
 the flag of the United States Marine Corps  
 is next in precedence, followed by the  
 Veterans of Foreign Wars flag  
 and then the POW/MIA flag;  
 all flags are equal in size  
 and at the same height



U.S. Flag is positioned  
 on its own right;  
 followed by the Branch flags  
 in order of precedence ...  
 U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps,  
 U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force,  
 and the U.S. Coast Guard;  
 all flags are equal in size  
 and at the same height



## Disclaimer and Notice

The mention of any groups or organizations in this manual is not meant to imply that any of the groups or organizations in any way endorses the *Military Salute Project*, the *Military Salute Reference Forum*, the patriotic videos we distribute, or the groups or events we support. The *Military Salute Project* does not solicit, nor do we accept, any financial contributions.

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