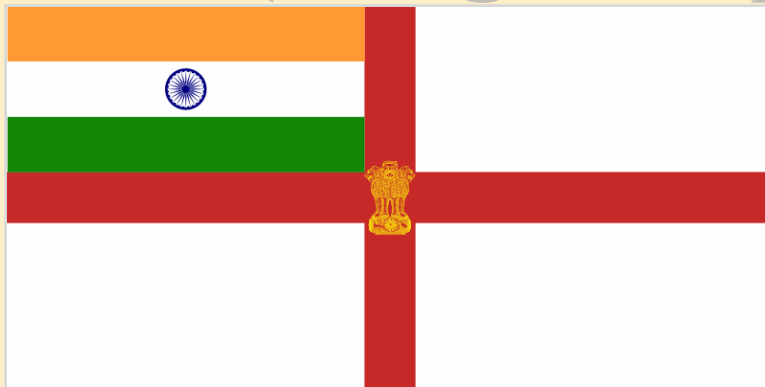
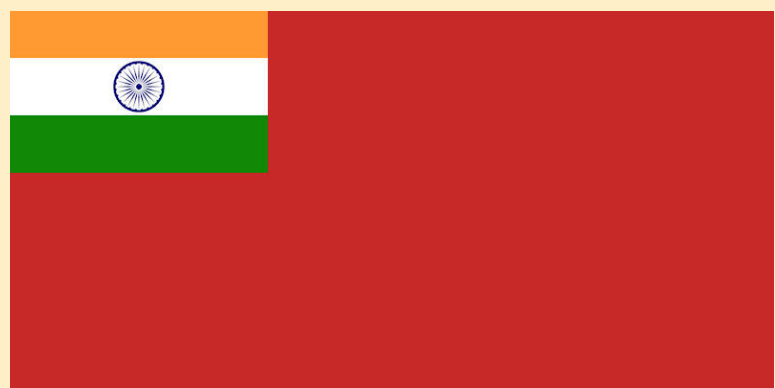




# Flying Flags on Ships (Flag Etiquette)



By  
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MSTR MRNR



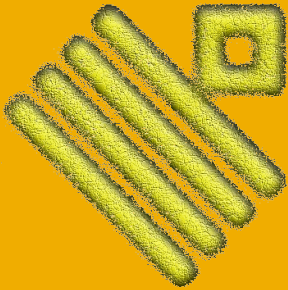


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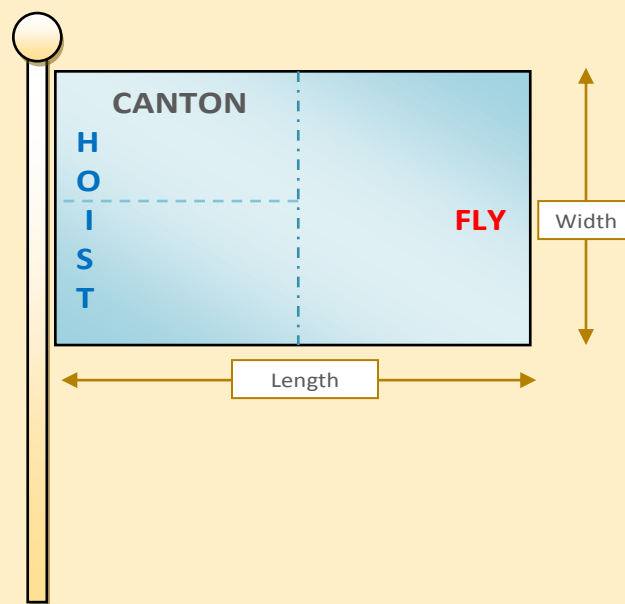
## INTRODUCTION

The Flag Etiquette was evolved many years ago for displaying flags on large vessels. Captains of International Ocean going ships are usually able to follow that code, but on instances the configuration of masts, spreaders, etc., on modern boats is so different from tradition, many skippers and owners have been confused and likely to wear their ships flags improperly and inconsistently.

The points of honour have been established by long tradition but with new designs and configurations of boats, occasionally rigging and the like have modified the location of these points. Case is example, the aircraft carriers where masts are displaced from centre line or the Ro-Ro/Lash ships where the stern is occupied with cargo access openings. In lieu of traditional flag posts, antennas, fishing towers, outriggers, portside halyards, double hoisting or other practices are used for the flag code. Though many may think these are incorrect, these varied flag display techniques, if your boat's configuration requires you to do so, are appropriate, provided the code is followed correctly.



## FLAG TERMINOLOGY



**Canton:** any Quadrant of a flag but usually refers to the upper left (Hoist) quarter.

**Hoist:** the half or edge of a flag nearest to the flagpole. Also referred to as vertical Width.

**Fly:** the half or edge of a flag furthest away from the flagpole. Also used to refer to the Horizontal Length.

**Width:** The span parallel to flag post.

**Length:** the span





perpendicular to the flagpole.

**Courtesy Flag:** The national Flag or civil ensign of the country you are visiting.

**Dimension:** For most countries it varies depending on shape and specifications. Usually though, the Fly is twice as long as the Hoist (1:2 ratio).

**National Ensign:** The Flag of the country your ship is registered with; signifies the Ship's nationality

## FLYING FLAGS ABOARD YOUR SHIP

Notice that flags are worn or flown, what's the difference? Vessels wear flags; people fly flags on their vessels.

Flags are basically signals and each is intended to convey something specific; whether it be nationality, maneuvering situation, courtesy, or any number of other things. Each flag has a specific location where it is worn, and a specific time when it can be flown.

There is a logical pattern followed, even though it may seem that there are many locations for the various categories of flags one might fly. There is both an "order of preference" and a sequence of "points of honor." Simply stated, the **Order of Preference** follows from the highest allegiance you bear, i.e., Nationality (India), down to your personal preferences (company or personal flag) to communication signals. The **Points of Honor** relate to the order of importance of the various locations from which you might fly a flag. Obviously, the flag highest in your order of preference should be flown from the point at which it is awarded the greatest honor.

## ORDER - POINTS OF HONOR

There is an "order" of prominence. The points of honor in descending order, are understood as follows:

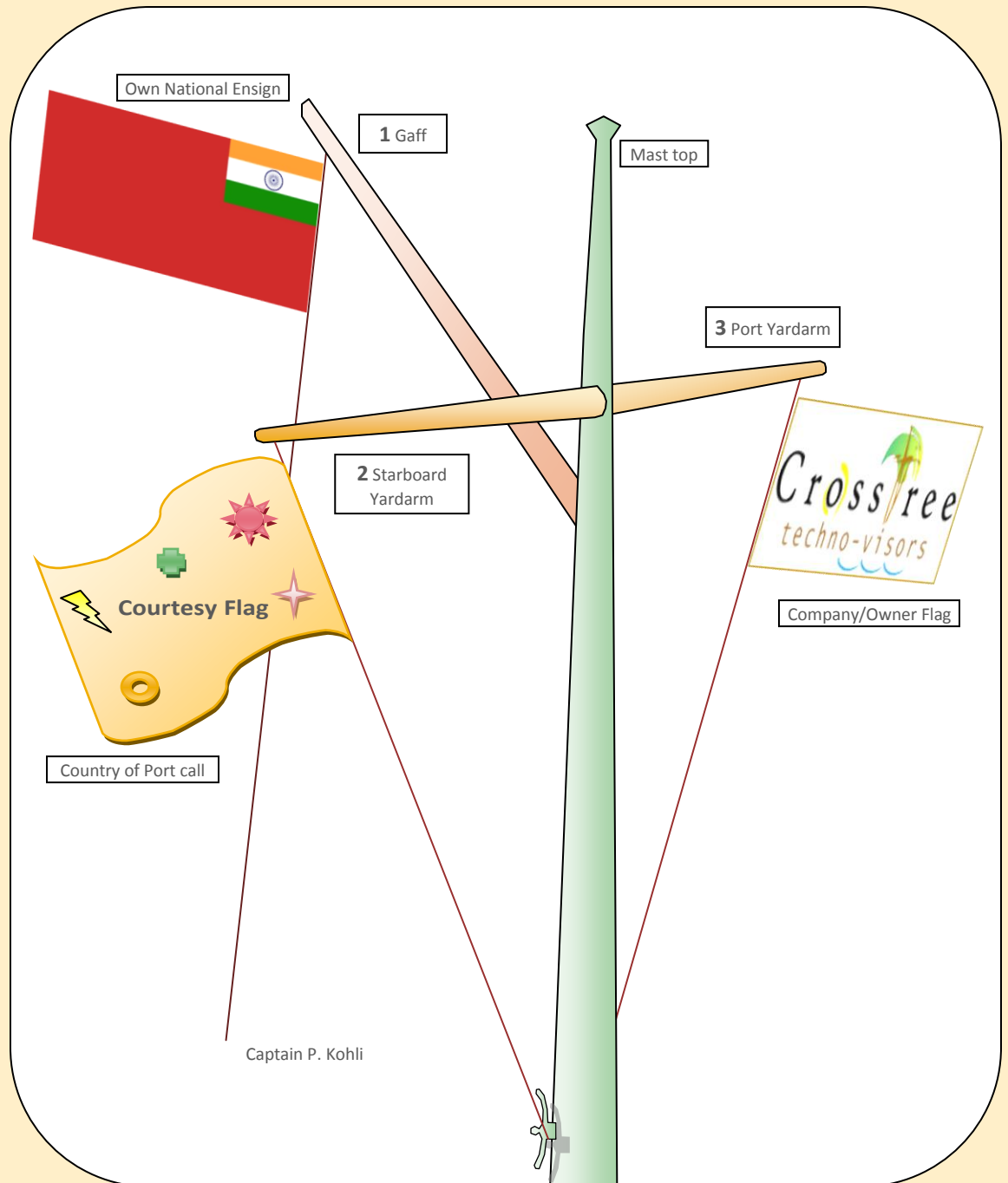
- gaff
- flagstaff at the stern
- bow staff
- starboard spreader (Cross Tree or Yardarm)
- truck of the mast (masthead)
- port spreader (Cross Tree or Yardarm)



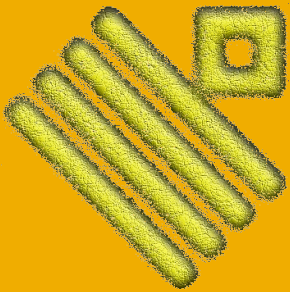


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Keep in mind that despite the fact that at a particular moment, a particular flag may have the highest precedence among others you are flying, it does not necessarily go at the highest point of honor: it should be flown only at the highest point of honor to which that particular flag is entitled.



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The highest place of honor is always reserved for your national ensign. Every other flag should be worn at a lower point of honor, even when you are not flying the national ensign.

For example, if you are flying only your company flag, it should never be worn at the point of honor from which you would display the national ensign. So, when you are not flying the national ensign, the point from which you would normally fly it must remain bare even when you are flying other, important flags or pennants.

## WHERE TO FLY YOUR NATIONAL FLAG

The Gaff is the highest point of honor on a flagpole that has one. Alternately, the Stern Flagstaff is also reserved for the National Flag.

Generally, the national ensign should be displayed at the peak of the gaff—if your ship has a gaff. If it does not, fly it from the flagstaff at your ship's stern. If your ship has an overhanging boom or a permanent obstruction on the stern, your flagstaff may be offset to starboard (preferably) from your ship's centerline.

Although another flag may appear higher (at the truck of the mast), no flag is ever flown above the national ensign on the same halyard. The national flag should be displayed:

1. At the gaff of a mast or pole having a gaff.
2. At the Stern Flagpost as an alternate to the Gaff.
3. At the masthead of a mast with no gaff.
4. At its own far starboard among multiple poles of equal height.
5. At the masthead of the highest pole if one of the poles is taller than the others.

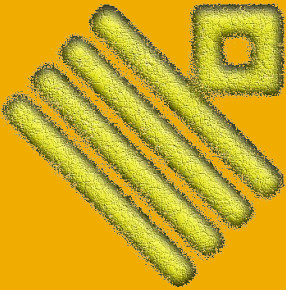
No other flag in lieu of the National Flag can be worn on either the gaff or the stern flagstaff.

Personal flag masts:

On a mast maintained at your home or business, fly your flags as follows:

1. on a mast with a gaff, fly your house flag (personal or corporate) at the trunk of the mast, with the national flag at the gaff.
2. on a mast without gaff, fly the national ensign at the trunk.
3. fly all other flags to which the display is entitled from yardarm halyards, if any, or below the national ensign if there's no yardarm. In either case, fly the flags from starboard to port or top to bottom in their order of dignity.

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## INDIAN FLAG

The national or merchant flag of India is the preferred flag for all Indian vessels. Your ship should wear it from 0800 until sunset or when underway—day or night, weather and rig permitting.

Please remember that the national ensign worn by a vessel must be the flag of the ship's Country of registry (not necessarily the nationality of the owner or operator). Also, many commercial and military vessels do not fly any flags when at sea, out of sight of land or other vessels.

Ashore, the Indian Flag may be displayed at night only when illuminated. It should not be flown at night aboard a vessel except when underway. Provincial or other flags are not to be flown in the place of the National Flag.



Scheme	HTML	CMYK	Pantone
Saffron	#FF9933	0-50-90-0	1495c
White	#FFFFFF	0-0-0-0	1c
Green	#138808	100-0-70-30	362c
Navy blue	#000080	100-98-26-48	2755c

Size No.	Flag Dimensions		Flag Generally Used On
	Ft & Inches	mm	
1	21' x 14'	6300 x 4200	A very high flag mast
2	12' x 8'	3600 x 2400	Red Fort, Delhi, Rashtrapati Bhawan, Gun carriage
3	9' x 6'	2700 x 1800	Parliament House, medium sized public buildings, ships
4	6' x 4'	1800 x 1200	Small sized buildings and as Courtesy Flags
5	5.5' x 3'	1350 x 900	Smaller sized building
6	3' x 2'	900 x 600	In rooms on cross bars & walls
7	18" x 12"	450 x 300	VVIP's aircraft and President's train
8	9" x 6"	225 x 150	VVIP's motor cars
9	6" x 4"	150 x 100	As table flags

## COURTESY FLAGS

When you visit foreign waters, your ship should display the civil flag of the country you are visiting whenever your National flag is displayed. Your courtesy flag is not to be larger than the national flag.

Never fly one country's flag beneath another's on the same mast. This is a sign of conquest and is something no sailor should ever do. If you display multiple foreign flags, arrange them from starboard to port in the alphabetical order of the countries' names in the English language.





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If your vessel is mastless, it should wear this “courtesy flag” at the bow, or on a starboard antenna strong enough to support it. If your vessel has one or more masts, display it single-hoisted at the starboard outboard signal halyard of the main mast. Move any flag normally flown there to the inboard starboard halyard or, if your ship has only one halyard per side, to the port side halyard. Try to learn the correct procedure for the country you are entering. For example, in some countries it is customary to fly the courtesy flag only after the quarantine flag (see next page) has been secured. Do not fly a foreign courtesy flag after you have returned to Indian waters. It is not to be used as a badge of accomplishment for having cruised to another country.

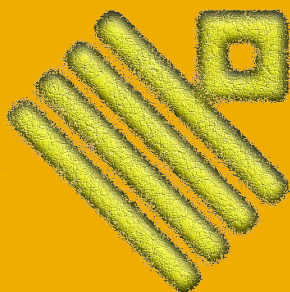
The Courtesy Flag takes precedence after your national flag.

When a foreign guest is aboard, you may display the flag of the guest’s country from the bow staff or outboard port spreader. Should more than one such guest flag be appropriate, wear them (on spreader halyards from port to starboard in the alphabetical order of their countries names in the English language.)

THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE MUST BE FOLLOWED . . .

1. The national ensign is hoisted first - stern staff or gaff.
2. Courtesy flag (if in foreign port) hoisted on starboard flag halyard.
3. The House Flag may be displayed at the bow staff or main mast.
4. Other signals are then hoisted.

The 'drop' is done in reverse order of the above.

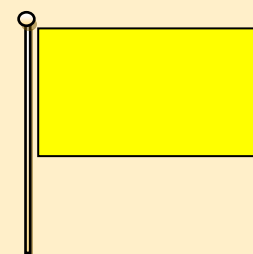


## OWNER’S / COMPANY PRIVATE FLAG

This is a personal flag, often called house flag. On a mastless vessel, fly your private signal from the bow staff. A single-masted vessel may wear it at the truck of the mast (replacing any other signal normally worn at that point) or from a spreader halyard.

## QUARANTINE FLAG

The international code flag Q (Quebec) (a yellow rectangle) when flown alone is prescribed as a quarantine flag worn by a vessel requesting pratique (see Glossary). Fly it from the starboard halyard or spreader when you enter a foreign port or when you return to a Indian port from a foreign cruise. Traditionally, quarantine flags are not used for trips where Free Pratique had been issued in advance. After health



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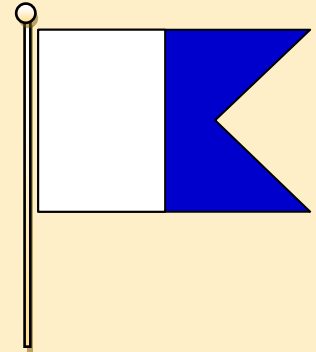




inspection has been completed (often tacitly effected by customs or immigration officials), the quarantine flag should be taken down and stowed. When in doubt, ask the inspecting official.

### RESTRICTED IN ABILITY TO MANEUVER DUE TO DIVING

Whenever a vessel is restricted in her ability to maneuver due to underwater operations, such as diving, internationally recognized Navigation Rules provide that she may display International Code flag A (Alpha), a swallow tailed flag with the half nearest the hoist white and the outer half blue. The vessel thereby gains a special privilege under the Rules and may not be impeded by ordinary vessels not entitled to a higher class of privilege. This flag is only for vessels and is not carried on buoys, as is the Diver Down flag. At night, three vertically arranged, all-round lights red over white over red invoke the same privilege as the flag.



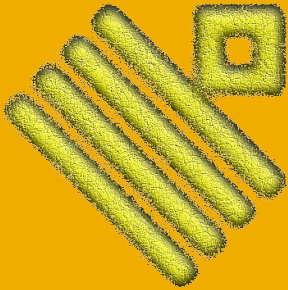
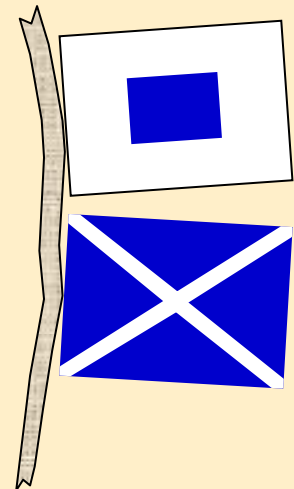
### SPEED TRIAL FLAGS

You may properly fly speed trial flags whenever your boat is undergoing speed trials, i.e., running a measured mile or participating in a predicted log contest. Use the two International Code flags S (Sierra) and M (Mike), in combination, hoisting them to a clearly visible position.

When you are “swinging ship” to adjust your compass, you are reasonably close to the intended meaning of these flags and may wish to display them at that time.

Flying these signals does not absolve you from complying with all of the Navigation Rules, or “Rules of the Road,” even if doing so disrupts your current activity.

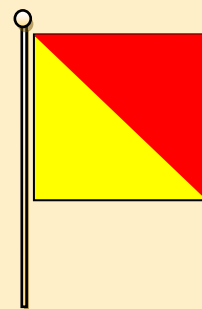
You may fly it only with the hope that approaching craft will voluntarily keep clear, but you must maintain a lookout and be ready to take any required action to avoid either (a) obstructing the passage of a vessel with a higher class of privilege, or (b) a collision.





## MAN OVERBOARD FLAG

When someone falls overboard, have an unoccupied crew member raise the International Code flag O (Oscar) in a conspicuous location until the person is retrieved or all efforts to do so have been abandoned. As an aid to recovery, the International Code flag O is often flown from buoys to mark the location of an accident.



## GAG FLAGS

Even though yachting is no longer as formal as it once was, gag flags such as those depicting martini glasses, bunnies, battle axes, and the like are **unseamanlike** and unbecoming to an informed sailor. Don't allow your boat to wear them!



## ALTERNATIVE DISPLAY LOCATIONS

Avoid flying more than one ensign from a single halyard or antenna. On the other hand, when the preferred positions for an organizational burgee or officer flag are not available, you may fly these from spreader halyards, with more than one on a hoist if necessary. In such instances however, you must observe the proper order of precedence. If you must multiple-hoist these flags, no more than one flag of the same type or stature may be flown from the same halyard. Each flag must be senior to the one below it, except that the officer-in-charge pennant may be placed above the officer flag when it is appropriate to do so. When neither the preferred location nor a spreader halyard is available, a radio antenna may be used.

Never fly any other flag on the same halyard as — or on a halyard to starboard of a courtesy flag.

## SIZE OF FLAGS

Flags are often too small. When you purchase your flags, use the following guidelines, rounding up to the next larger commercially available size where necessary.

The national flag flown at the flagstaff should be one inch on the fly for each foot of overall length of the vessel.





All other flags on power boats should be  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch on the fly for each foot of overall length. On sailboats, however, they should be  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch on the fly for each foot above the waterline of the tallest mast on the boat. (That is, if the top of the mast is 30 feet above the waterline, these other flags should be 15 inches on the fly.)

## ORDER OF MAKING COLORS

Typically neither the Indian flag, nor a courtesy flag, should be flown from sunset to 0800, except when underway. All other flags to which you are entitled may be displayed day and night. Colours are made at 0800 and at sunset, with the following exceptions: colours are raised after sunset and before 0800 when getting underway and lowered when securing alongside, or anchoring, after sunset and before 0800.

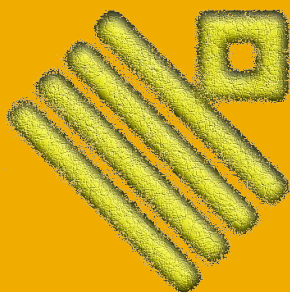
When raising (making) your colors, the national flag is raised first, followed as applicable by a foreign ensign, organizational flags or private signal, and then by any other signals not already flying, such as a guest flag. When lowering (also "making") your colors (no later than sunset), the flags should be lowered in the reverse order of that in which they should be raised, as described above.

## FLAGS AT HALF-MAST

The national flags are always at full hoist except when so announced by government authorities, who may direct that all national flags be flown at half-mast (sometimes called "half-staff"). The only other occasion the national ensign is half masted is when one vessel salutes another passing vessel. As a courtesy, foreign merchant vessels salute local Naval ships when in the territorial waters of another nation. The Naval ship returns the honor by lowering and raising their own ensign, after which your own national ensign is smartly returned to full hoist.

When you fly your national flag at half-mast commencing at colours, hoist it smartly and fully to its normal position at the peak of the gaff or flagstaff, and then ceremoniously lower it to its half-staff position.

When lowering the flag, first raise it ceremoniously to its full height and then lower it in the normal fashion. If the period of half-masting is to commence or end at a time other than when colours are made, lower or raise the flag ceremoniously from or to the full height position. All other flags on a vessel remain in their normal positions.





At the stern of a vessel, or on a flagpole ashore, the half-mast position is approximately three-fourths the height of the truck. If the flagpole has a yardarm, the half-mast position is where the top of the flag is level with the yardarm.

## DISPLAYING FLAGS ASHORE

There are numerous methods for flying flags ashore, a simple flag pole, multiple simple flag poles, a flag pole (with gaff), a flag pole (with yardarm), and the preferred method, a flagpole (with gaff and yardarm). The latter provides the greatest number of points for display a minimum of four, more often six or eight through use of multiple halyards at the yards.

## OUTDOOR FLAGPOLE ORIENTATION AND FLAG POSITIONS

A mast should be installed as if it is the mast of a ship putting out to sea, i.e., heading toward an intended viewer. That is, the gaff should point aft. If you stand at the base of the pole looking forward (toward the intended viewer), the extremities of the yardarm are termed port (on your left) and starboard (on your right), just as they would be on a vessel.

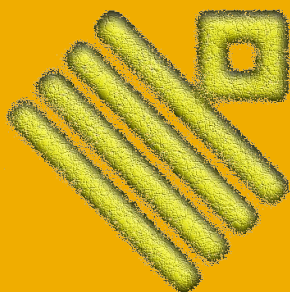
When the pole is associated with a particular building, the gaff (if any) should extend from the pole in the general direction of the building. Thus, if you stand in or next to the building looking at the pole, think of yourself as looking forward on a ship; the starboard side of the pole is on your right as you face the flagpole.

## INDOOR FLAG DISPLAYS

When displaying flags from staffs indoors, the flags should be at the head of the room or, if there is no head of the room, at the most logical arbitrary point in the room usually some distance from the room's main entrance. In a meeting room with several flagstaffs of equal height, the point of honor for the Indian Flag is at its own right the viewer's far left. Display foreign, state, or municipality flags at the left end of the dais or head table from the viewer's vantage point, but to the viewer's right of the national ensign. Organization flags should be on the opposite end of the dais, that is, on the viewer's right.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Always handle the Indian Flag with dignity. Don't let it touch the deck, the ground outdoors, or the floor indoors. Always hoist it smartly and lower it ceremoniously.





## DISPOSAL

When your national flag is no longer serviceable or is tattered or faded, burn it in private with dignity. If you are unable to burn it safely it is okay to bury it with honors.

## DRESSING SHIP

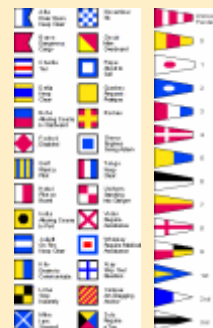
On special occasions such as Republic Day, Independence day, etc., yachts and boats that have a set of International Code Signaling Flags may dress their ship. The set consists of 40 flags representing letters, numbers, and other signals. A vessel is dressed only while not underway, although it may also be dressed for unique situations such as parades and the vessel's maiden and final voyages.



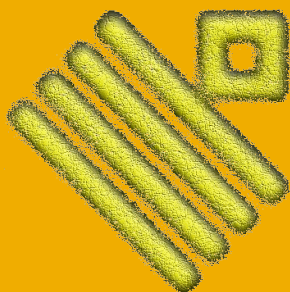
The flags of the Code set extend from the forward waterline over the bow to the masthead, then over the stern to the aft waterline. Since there are about twice as many letter flags as there are number pennants and other signals combined, the best practice is to follow a sequence of two flags and one pennant from stem to stern.

The sequence of the code flags can be any order but the following is the long accepted 'recommended order' to give a harmonious color pattern.

Starting from the waterline forward, to the masthead(s), and to the water line aft . . .



A B 2 U J 1 K E 3 G H 6 I V 5 F L 4 D M 7 P O Third Repeater R N First Repeater S T  
Zero C X 9 W Q 8 Z Y Second Repeater





## GLOSSARY

**block:** n. a sheave that rotates on a pin; a nautical pulley.

**burgee:** n. a tapered flag with a design denoting a power squadron, yacht club, or a private signal; swallow-tailed or triangular.

**canton:** n. the rectangular division of a flag at the upper corner nearest to the staff.

**chock-a-block:** adj. having the blocks drawn close together, as when the tackle is hauled to the utmost.

**documented vessel:** n. a vessel registered with the federal government

**ensign:** n. a national flag in maritime use; also commonly applied to flags of naval services and nationwide maritime organizations.

**flagstaff:** n. the staff at the stern of a vessel.

**fly:** n. (1) the length of an extended flag from its staff to its outer end away from the staff or support; (2) people fly flags on their vessels; vessels

wear flags

**gaff:** n. (1) a spar supporting the upper side of a four-sided, fore-and-aft-extending sail; (2) a spar, fixed at one end to a mast (on a vessel) or flag pole, for flying an ensign fixed to a halyard running through a block at the peak of the gaff.

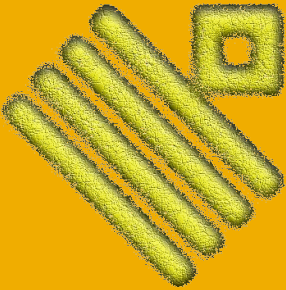
**halyard:** n. line for hoisting sails or flags.

**hoist:** n. (1) the perpendicular edge (or height) of a flag closest to the staff; (2) to raise a sail or flag.

**jack staff:** n. a staff mounted vertically on the foredeck.

**leech:** n. the after edge of a sail between the clew and the head.

**making colors:** v. (1) raising or installing flags in a prescribed sequence, normally at 0800; (2) lowering or securing flags (in reverse sequence from raising them), normally at sunset. (When making colors, the national flag is the first flag raised and the last flag lowered.)





**masthead:** n. top of the mast or flagpole.

**peak:** n. the aft, outer end of a gaff.

**pennant:** n. a relatively long, tapering flag or burgee of distinctive form and special significance, used in signaling or for identification.

**pigstick:** n. a staff fixed to a halyard and rigged to rise above any obstacles that may be mounted at the truck of a mast.

**pratique:** (pra tek') n. license or permission to use a port, given to a ship after quarantine or on showing a clean bill of health.

**regatta:** n. (1) a boat race, as of rowboats, yachts, or other vessels; (2) an organized series of such races.

**spreader:** n. a strut fitted to the side of a mast to hold one or more shrouds away from the mast.

**swallow tailed:** adj. (1) having a deeply-forked tail, like that of a swallow; (2) having an end or part suggesting a swallow's tail;

(3) (of a flag) having a triangular indentation in the fly so as to create two tails.

**tackle:** (ta'kel) n. an arrangement of line and blocks used to provide increased mechanical advantage.

**truck:** n. top of the mast.

**two-block:** n. (1) a tackle that has been pulled to bring the blocks together; (2) a halyard that has been hoisted all the way

