

> flag design

> objective(s):

Students will create a custom flag design for themselves, their family, a group or organization they belong to, a geographic location or area, etc.

> curricular focus:

Students will utilize simplistic design and color theory to create a design that clearly represents the selected topic

> specifications:

save as: Flag_LastnameF.psd

dimensions: 11" x 8.5"

resolution: 300

color mode: RGB

> instruction:

- what is a flag?
 - A flag represents a place, organization, person, etc. Flags were first used for military purposes on land and then as identifying signals at sea. They evolved to represent royal houses, then countries and other levels of government. *Vexillology* is the study of flags.
- introduction to the five principles of good flag design
 1. **simplicity is paramount** (see page 4)
 - the design should be simple enough for a child to draw it from memory
 2. **meaningful symbolism** (see page 5)
 - patterns, colors, icons should all directly and clearly represent the intended subject matter
 3. **limited color palette** (see page 6)
 - most flags are two to three contrasting, yet harmonious, colors
 4. **no lettering or seals** (see page 7)
 - these are difficult to read/see at distances or small sizes
 5. **distinctive design** (see page 8)
 - design stands out from uniquely from other flags
- slideshow of good and bad flag designs
 - video: simply awful city flags
https://www.ted.com/talks/roman_mars_why_city_flags_may_be_the_worst_designed_thing_you_ve_never_noticed
 - article: well designed flags that break the rules
<https://ideas.ted.com/7-fantastic-flags-that-break-every-design-rule/>
- introduction to flag anatomy and common flag patterns
 - see *Anatomy of a Flag* on page 10
 - see *Common Flag Patterns* on page 11 (these standards can obviously be customized)
- review vector drawing tools
 - review Pen tool, Curvature Pen tool and Shape tool
 - review how to duplicate and flip vectors to create symmetrical artwork
- review how to locate objects
 - Transform Coordinates
 - Align
 - Distribute
 - Grid
 - Guides
- introduction on how to save paths
 - go to Paths window, select path, then go to pull down menu (top right of Paths window) and select Save Path

> flag design

- introduction to the emotive qualities of color
 - red: anger, love, aggressive, power, hot
 - orange: energetic, cheerful, caution, warm
 - yellow: fear, happy, healing
 - green: life, nature, envy, fresh (light), sick, money
 - blue: sad, cold, peace, calm (light), dignity/authority (darker)
 - violet: royalty, mystery, spiritual
 - brown: natural, reliable, conservative (tan), comforting (reddish)
 - black: death, dark, formal, serious
 - white: purity, light, innocent
 - gray: basic, practical, impartial
 - for complete emotive quality guide please see *MHSCG Color Guide* on [mhscomputergraphics.com](http://www.mhscomputergraphics.com) go to (http://www.mhscomputergraphics.com/uploads/1/5/1/3/1513764/mhscg_color_guide.pdf)

> procedure:

- select subject and approve with instructor
 - if redesigning an existing flag you may not reuse pattern or symbols (charge or emblem) but may reuse color
- complete Flag Design Planner
 - compile a list of keywords that are significant to your selected subject
 - explore symbols and colors that best represent your keywords
 - this will likely require online research
 - save as: Flag Design Planner_LastnameF (.doc will be added automatically)
- begin thumbnails sketches
 - read the project requirements (page 3) before you start sketching
 - open and print Flag Design Thumbnails.pdf
 - review your Flag Design Planner
 - your sketches will incorporate the colors and icons
 - what symbol(s) are you adding and where?
 - explore various base patterns that take into consideration how many colors you are using
 - minimum three different design pattern approaches
 - review *Common Flag Patterns* on page 11 but you can alter/customize these to your needs
 - discuss/support your color and symbol choices with instructor
 - remember- every shape, symbol and color must have a meaning
- create flag artwork
 - open Flag Design Template.psd
 - use layers appropriately
 - all artwork will be in the Design layer or at least between the Background layer and Flag Outline layers
 - the Flag Outline and Background layers should remain unchanged
 - set Pen tool mode to Path
 - select Pen tool, go to Options Bar (at the top under the main drop-down menus) and set mode to Path
 - Shape tool can be set to Shape or Path mode (your preference)
 - **use vectors only!**
 - all elements (field sections/divisions, charges/emblems) must be created using path or shape**
 - vectors that are saved and viewable in the Paths window**
 - build clean
 - use Transform Coordinates (x and y), Grids and Guides and Align to make sure elements line up perfectly to each other and the document

continued on page 3

> flag design

- add description text
 - explain the symbolism used of the pattern, colors and icons you included
 - be as simple and to the point as possible
 - this should be treated as formal writing, not casual (like you would in conversation or texting)
 - refer to the sample on Flag Design Example (page 12)
 - you may need to change the font size to fit this text block
 - lower font size as little as needed to fit (you may use half sizes as well)
 - spelling and grammar counts so use any resources you want to help insure your text is professional
 - try creating your text in Microsoft Word to take advantage of its spelling and grammar check
 - you may seek any help you want (online or personal) to create your description

> requirements:

- file
 - file specifications are adhered to
 - all visible layers are named and all hidden/unused layers are deleted
 - properly saved, named and submitted .psd and .jpg files
- construction
 - **IMPORTANT!** all elements (field sections/divisions, charges/emblems) must be created using path or shape vectors that are saved and viewable in the Paths window
 - elements fit perfectly within the template created in the Flag Outline layer
 - no paths extend beyond the edge of the Flag Outline Layer
 - elements are located, aligned and evenly distributed appropriately
 - for example: a charge/emblem that looks like it is intended to be centered *must* be centered
 - for example: divided sections of a flag are exact same size and symmetry
 - no unnecessary paths (all overlapping paths of the same color are combined)
 - no empty/unpainted points, paths or areas
- pattern
 - field must have more than one color area
- charge/emblems
 - utilizes visually simple yet conceptually representational iconography
 - no text
- color
 - maximum three colors (unless given permission by instructor in advance)
 - adjacent colors strongly contrast each other
 - no gradients
- representationalism
 - all elements (pattern, charge/emblem, colors) have meaning and significance to the topic
- description text
 - explanation of symbolism of pattern, charge/emblem and colors are well written and succinct
 - font size is decreased as minimally as possible for all text to fit
 - sizes are even wholes or halves
 - no spelling or grammar errors

> flag design fundamentals

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE

THE FLAG SHOULD BE SO SIMPLE THAT A CHILD CAN DRAW IT FROM MEMORY ...

Flags flap. Flags drape. Flags must be seen from a distance and from their opposite side. Under these circumstances, only simple designs make effective flags. Furthermore, complicated flags cost more to make, which often can limit how widely they are used.

Most poor designs have the elements of a great flag in them—simplify them by focusing on a single symbol, a few colors, large shapes, and no lettering. Avoid the temptation to include a symbol for everybody.

Ideally the design will be reversible or at least recognizable from either side. Don't put a different design on the back.

GOOD



BANGLADESH

With two strong colors and a single symbol—the rising sun of independence (slightly offset to the hoist), this flag succeeds admirably.

BAD



TURKMENISTAN

This very complicated rug contains 5 traditional patterns! Better to leave it off and keep the moon and stars.

GOOD



CONGO

With bold, contrasting colors, large shapes, and parallel lines, this flag is also easily recognized when reversed.

BAD



WEST VIRGINIA (USA)

The seal itself is complex, the white background is boring, and the overall design differs from other state flags only in its blue border.

GOOD



ALASKA (USA)

The stars, a standard U.S. symbol, form the "Big Dipper" constellation and the North Star, representing the northernmost U.S. state.

BAD



BEY OF TUNISIA

Replete with stars, crescents, and the Sword of Ali, this 19th-century design's overwhelming complexity defeats its purpose.

> flag design fundamentals

2. USE MEANINGFUL SYMBOLISM

THE FLAG'S IMAGES, COLORS, OR PATTERNS SHOULD RELATE TO WHAT IT SYMBOLIZES . . .

Symbolism can be in the form of the "charge" or main graphic element, in the colors used, or sometimes even in the shapes or layout of the parts of the flag.

Usually a single primary symbol is best—avoid those that are less likely to be representative or unique. Colors often carry meanings: red for blood or sacrifice, white for purity, blue for water or sky.

Diagonal stripes are often used by former colonies as an alternative to the generally horizontal and vertical stripes of European countries.

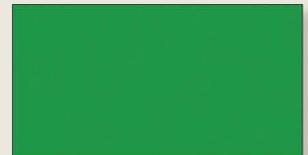
GOOD



ITALY

Based on the revolutionary flag of France, the vertical orientation of Italy's stripes represented a challenge to the typical horizontal stripes of the ruling kingdoms of Europe.

BAD



LIBYA

Although Libya's green field was chosen for its Islamic symbolism, a solid-color flag is too simple to represent a country, and is meaningless when depicted in grayscale.

GOOD



IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY (USA)

"Hiawatha's Belt", a symbol for five tribes since before 1600, appears on the traditional blue of wampum shell beads.

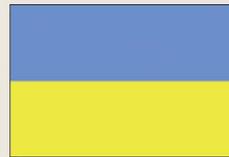
BAD



NAVAJO NATION (USA)

Over 20 graphic elements overwhelm the viewer and none are large enough to be seen easily.

GOOD



UKRAINE

The light blue and yellow represent the sky over wheat fields—both the color and the direction of the stripes carry the meaning.

BAD



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Believe it or not, this flag depicts the flags of all the member countries, and must be changed each time one joins, drops out, or changes its flag!

> flag design fundamentals

3. USE 2—3 BASIC COLORS

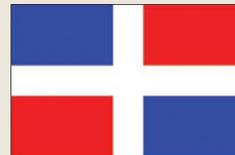
LIMIT THE NUMBER OF COLORS ON THE FLAG TO THREE, WHICH CONTRAST WELL AND COME FROM THE STANDARD COLOR SET . . .

The basic flag colors are red, blue, green, black, yellow, and white. They can range from dark to light. Occasionally other colors are also used, such as purple, gray, and orange, but they are seldom needed in a good design.

Separate dark colors with a light color, and light colors with a dark color, to help them create effective contrast. A good flag should also reproduce well in “grayscale”, that is, in black and white shades.

More than four colors are hard to distinguish and make the flag unnecessarily complicated and expensive. Flag fabric comes in a relatively limited number of colors—another reason to stick to the basics.

GOOD



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

These colors provide balance and contrast, leaving a white cross as “negative space” in the middle of the flag.

BAD



DOMINICA

By using ALL six basic flag colors, this flag creates unnecessary cost and complexity. Who can see the parrot’s red and black eye?

GOOD



AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS)

These colors contrast well, even though the red and black are not separated by a light color.

BAD



CHINESE ADMIRAL (1882)

Too many colors! At the least, the yellow and white should be separating the dark colors. While the dragon is in the position of honor, it is very hard to distinguish.

GOOD



NEW MEXICO (USA)

Red and yellow recall the state’s Spanish heritage, while the sun symbol comes from the Zia Indians. This design was voted the best U.S. state flag by NAVA members.

BAD



VIRGINIA (USA)

Imagine, 18 different colors in the official flag specifications! Not only are they difficult to distinguish, but having so many colors drives up the manufacturing cost.

> flag design fundamentals

4. NO LETTERING OR SEALS

NEVER USE WRITING OF ANY KIND OR AN ORGANIZATION'S SEAL . . .

Words defeat the purpose: why not just write "U.S.A." on a flag? A flag is a graphic symbol. Lettering is nearly impossible to read from a distance, hard to sew, and difficult to reduce to lapel-pin size. Words are not reversible—this forces double- or triple-thickness fabric.

Don't confuse a flag with a banner, such as what is carried in front of a marching band in a parade, or draped behind a speaker's platform—such banners don't flap, they are seen from only one side, and they're usually seen closer-up.

Seals were designed for placement on paper to be read at close range. Very few are effective on flags—too detailed. Better to use some element from the seal as a symbol. Some logos work; most don't.

GOOD



CÔTES D'ARMOR (FRANCE)

Rather than the logo style frequently used by French departments and regions, Côtés d'Armor uses a stylized seagull in the shape of its coastline.

BAD



LOIR-ET-CHER (FRANCE)

All those words, plus an indistinguishable gray shape . . . Better to have used the stylized dragon on a more interesting background color.

GOOD



SOUTH CAROLINA (USA)

The palmetto tree represents the "Palmetto State" far better than the state's seal could. The crescent moon is in the position of honor.

BAD



SOUTH DAKOTA (USA)

This flag uses a seal AND lettering! The name of the state actually appears twice.

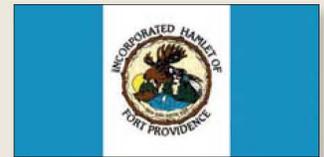
GOOD



PEGUIS NATION (CANADA)

The contrasting colors with a single central symbol represent this Indian nation far better than could any seal.

BAD



FT. PROVIDENCE, NWT (CANADA)

Despite the overall pattern recalling Canada, this flag (for an Indian community) stumbles with a virtually indistinguishable seal.

> flag design fundamentals

5. BE DISTINCTIVE OR BE RELATED

AVOID DUPLICATING OTHER FLAGS, BUT USE SIMILARITIES TO SHOW CONNECTIONS . . .

This is perhaps the most difficult principle, but it is very important. Sometimes the good designs are already “taken”. However, a flag’s symbols, colors, and shapes *can* recall other flags—a powerful way to show heritage, solidarity, or connectedness. This requires knowledge of other flags.

Often the best way to start the design process can be looking to one’s “roots” in flags—by country, tribe, or religion. Use some of the many resources available to help you with flag identification and history, such as “Flags of the World”: <http://www.fotw.net>, or your local library.

GOOD



ACADIA
(CANADA)

French-speaking Acadians in Canada place a yellow star for St. Mary, their national symbol and patron saint of mariners, on the flag of France.

BAD



MANITOBA
(CANADA)

While the British “Red Ensign” signifies connectedness within the Commonwealth, the distinguishing feature is the small seal. Better to have used the bison as the main flag symbol.

GOOD



GHANA

Using the same colors used by many countries in Africa, this flag shows a strong connection to its neighbors’ flags.

BAD



INDONESIA

Except for its proportions, this flag is exactly the same as Monaco’s (which had it first), but there is no connection between the two countries. Upside-down it is the same as Poland or as Cantabria, Spain!

GOOD



LIBERIA

Founded by freed slaves from the U.S., Liberia reflects that heritage with a similar yet distinctive flag.

BAD



VERMONT
(USA)

This flag is virtually indistinguishable from 20 other U.S. state flags, all with a seal on a blue field.

> flag design fundamentals

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A rectangle is the standard flag shape. Keep the width-to-length proportions between 1:1.5 and 1:2. Canadian flags are usually 1:2; U.S. flags are usually 1:1.5 or 1:1.67. Square flags are unusual in North America. Abandon such rectangles only when meaningful.

Flags wear. By retaining a rectangular shape and avoiding symbols at the fly end, a flag can be hemmed repeatedly and given a longer life.

The point of honor is the “canton” area—the upper-left corner. This corresponds to the part of the flag that is seen when it hangs limp from a flagpole. The center or left-of-center position is the most visible spot for a symbol when the flag is flying.

Consider the fabrication methods. Curved lines add to the cost of sewn flags. Holes or “negative space” hurt a flag’s fly-ability and wear-ability. “Swallow-tail” shapes fray more easily.

All rules have exceptions. Colorado’s “C” is a stunning graphic element. Maryland’s complicated heraldic quarters produce a memorable and distinctive flag. But depart from these five principles only with caution and purpose.



COLORADO (USA)



MARYLAND (USA)

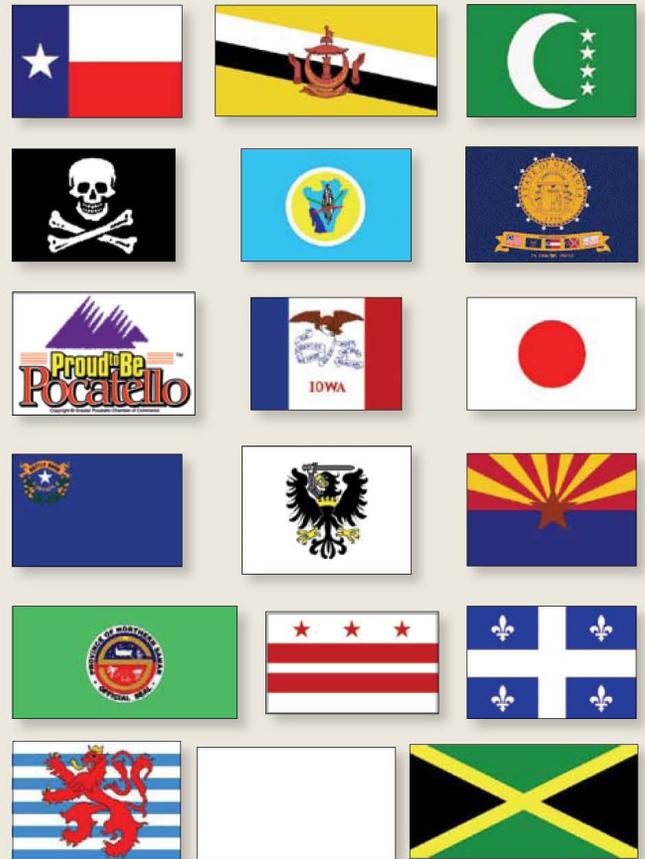
Don’t allow a committee to design a flag. Instead, empower individuals to design flags, and use a committee to select among them.

An old rule of heraldry has images of animals look toward the hoist.

And most of all, design a flag that looks attractive and balanced to the viewer and to the place, organization, or person it represents!

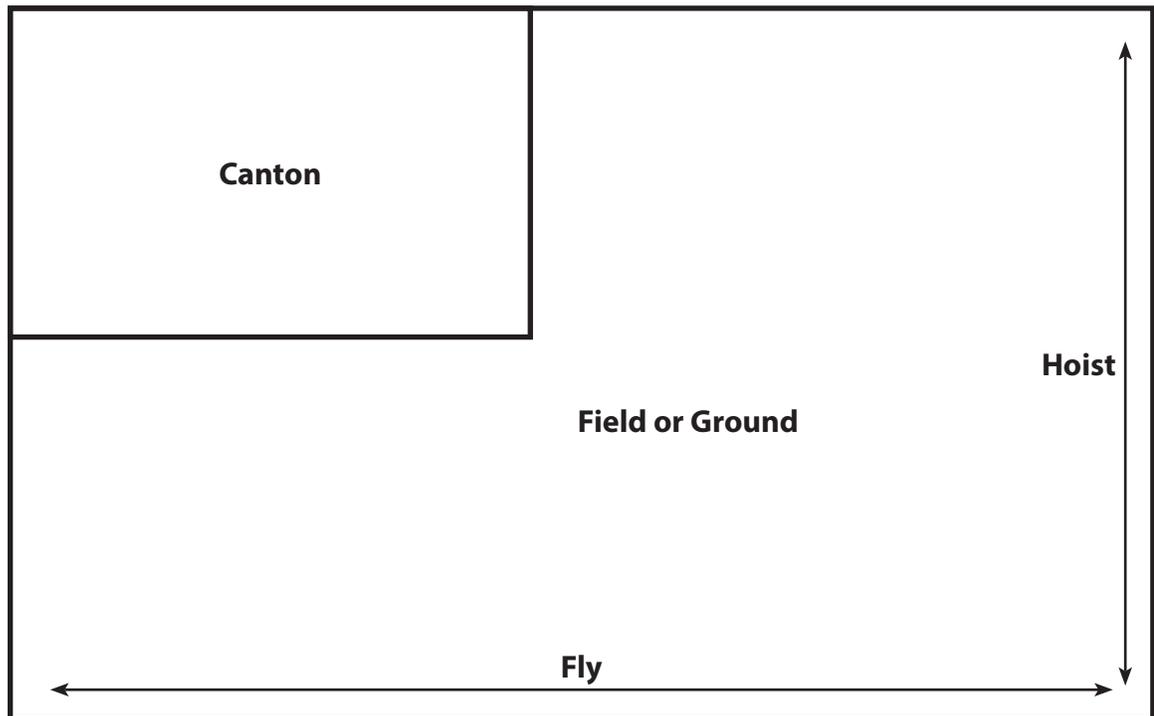
TEST YOURSELF

FIND THE GOOD FLAGS AND THE BAD FLAGS:



DRAW YOUR FLAG!

> anatomy of a flag



Canton- Any quarter of a flag, but commonly means the upper hoist (left) quarter (e.g. the field of stars in the flag of the United States).

Charge- A figure or symbol appearing in the field of a flag.

Emblem- A device often used as a charge on a flag. It may be heraldic in origin or modern (e.g. the maple leaf on the Canadian flag).

Field- The background of a flag; the color behind the charges.

Fimbriation- A narrow edging or border (often white or gold) to separate two other colors (e.g. the white and gold lines of the South African flag).

Fly- The half or edge of a flag farthest away from the flagpole. This term also sometimes refers to the horizontal length of a flag.

Hoist- The half or edge of a flag nearest to the flagpole. This term also sometimes refers to the vertical width of a flag.

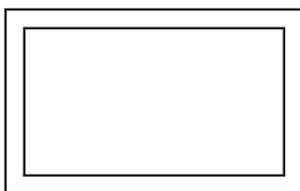
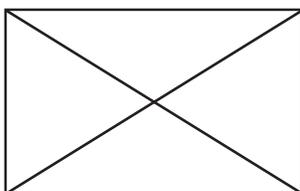
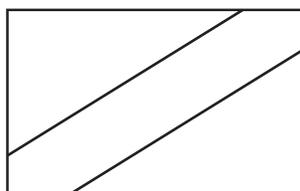
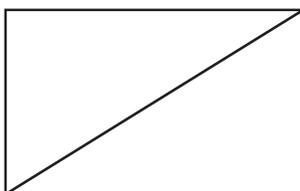
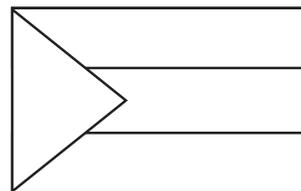
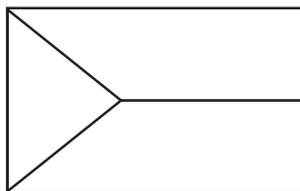
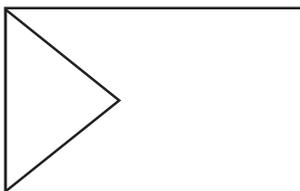
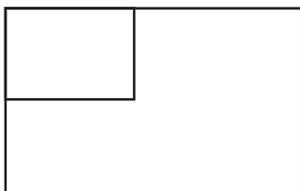
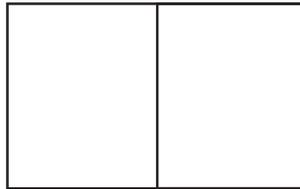
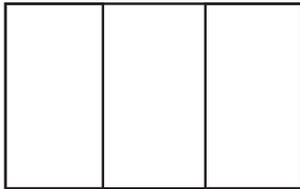
Length- The span of a flag along the side at right angles to the flagpole.

Width- The span of a flag down the side parallel to the flagpole.

[Ratio- the most common width to height ratios are 1:1.5 and 1:2]

> common flag patterns

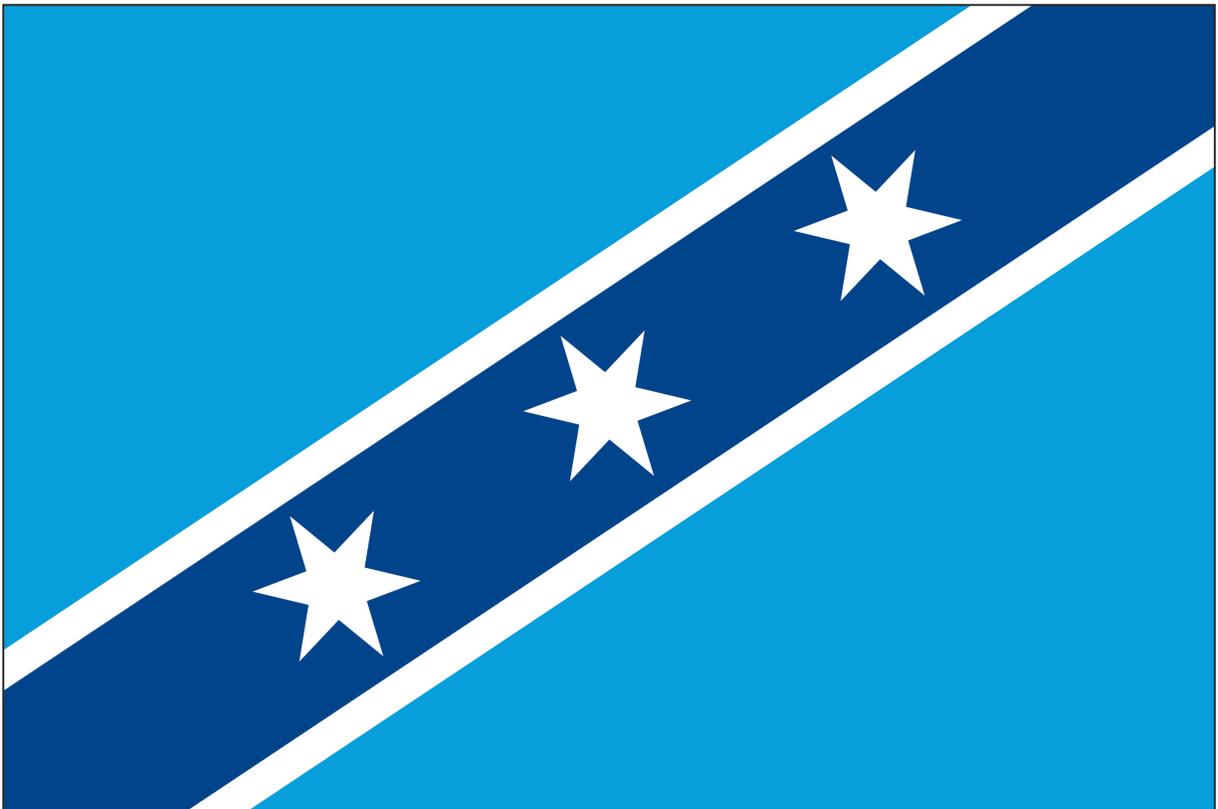
These are the most commonly used flag patterns. Utilize these, customize them or use something completely different. Patterns must have purpose and meaning. Number of sections, orientation, etc. should be intentional.



> flag design example

The official flag of **THE MATTINGLY FAMILY**

The white stars represent myself and my two sons, also known as the "Three Best Fri3nds." They have six points as an even multiple of three. They also represent Orion's belt in the constellation Orion for my love of astronomy. The white stripes represent how our faith surrounds our family. The sky blue field represents the peace and serenity gained from marriage.



> mattingly's favorites

State Flags

Maryland

This is a combination of the heraldry from the Calvert and Crossland families from when Maryland was first settled.



South Carolina

The design relates to the defense of Fort Johnson in the Revolutionary War. The crescent was used on troop uniforms and palm trees were used to fortify walls to defend against heavy cannon fire.



Tennessee

The three stars represent the three regions of Tennessee (east, middle and west). The blue circle designates the unity of the three regions. The blue bar is simply aesthetics.



Alaska

The Big Dipper is an asterism of a larger constellation Ursa Major, or "big bear," an animal indigenous to the state. Polaris, the North Star, symbolizes Alaska's future.



Arizona

The 13 rays represent the original colonies. The red and yellow represent the colors of Spain as well as sunsets. The copper star symbolizes the copper mining in the state.



International Flags

United States

I hope I do not have to explain the symbolism. 'MERICA!



United Kingdom

A combination of the flags of Scotland (blue field with the white saltire of St. Andrew), England (white field with the red cross of St. George) and Ireland (white field with the red saltire of St. Patrick).



Canada

This is a recent design, coming into being in 1964. The previous flag became controversial because it incorporated the Union Jack in the canton, so a new design was commissioned.



Norway

Designed way back in 1821, the Nordic cross was used by other countries (Denmark, Sweden, etc.) to denote Christianity. Red, white and blue had become the colors of freedom, thanks to France.



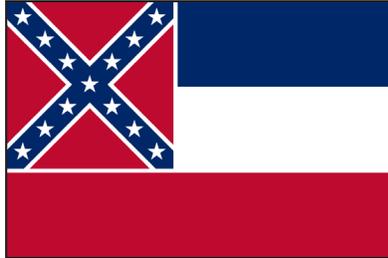
Australia

The Union Jack represents how Australia was an English colony. The Commonwealth Star (large 7-pointed on the left) represents the various colonies. On the right is the Southern Cross, a very recognizable constellation in the southern hemisphere.



> state flag issues

MISSISSIPPI redesigned its flag in 2020 due to backlash over the inclusion of the Confederate battle flag. It was the last state to remove the Confederate symbol from its design, but several state flags with Confederate influence remain.



ALABAMA

In 1915 the state legislature chose the red cross as a direct reference to the Confederate battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia.



ARKANSAS

In 1923, the state added a fourth star inside the white diamond to represent the Confederacy. The following year they moved it above the state name where it remains today.



FLORIDA

Originally there was no red cross, but simply the state seal. Like Alabama, it was later added as a direct reference to the Confederacy.



GEORGIA

The design was intentionally copied directly from the actual Confederate States of America flag (see below).



CONFEDERATE FLAG HISTORY

Many people confuse the familiar flag on the left as the "Confederate Flag." On the contrary, it never served as the flag of the Confederate States of America. It was actually the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia.

To the right are the three designs that did actually serve as official flags of the Confederacy.

They were known as "The Stars and Bars" (1861-1863), "The Stainless Banner" (1863-1865) and "The Blood-Stained Banner" (1865).

The Stars & Bars
(1861-1863)

The Stainless Banner
(1863-1865)

The Blood-Stained Banner
(1865)