

Why are flags important?

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Flags have been around for thousands of years as symbols, a form of communicating messages or a form of identification. They started out as wooden poles with carvings until fabric were added as decorative items. As time went by, the decorative fabric became recognized as the main object in the flag and the wooden pole became merely an accessory to hold the flag (fabric) high.

The colors and symbols of each flag convey the ideas/ambitions/values of the country or organization. The flag is a sacred item that holds great significance. A white flag signifies surrender, which can save ones life by waving it during war to prevent being shot at. A red flag symbolizes danger. A national flag draped over a coffin represents the nation's greatest respect for the deceased. It is usually national heroes who made significant differences to the nation's progress or selflessness sacrifice of oneself at war that will earn one the honor of having the national flag draped over his coffin. One has to be careful when raising and lowering the flag as it is great disrespect to the country if any part of the flag touches the ground. Some people have the mindset that if the flag touches the ground, it represents the demise of the country. Therefore, always be careful and respectful when handling flags.

On ships, flags flown will tell others which country the ship originates and to where it is heading. Code flags depict the letters of the alphabet and numbers. They help ships convey messages such as "I require assistance" or "Stop Instantly". These flags play a major role in ensuring maritime safety. Code flags signals can range from one-flag to seven-flag signals. Although most ships are fitted with radio now, there are times when radio silence is required or when radios may fail at time of distress and flags become the only means of communication.