



How to fly flags

Canadian Power & Sail Squadrons | 1st edition 2005



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Introduction

A code was developed many years ago for displaying flags on large vessels. Captains of recreational boats usually try to follow that code, but have often found it impossible to do so. Since the configuration of masts, spreaders, etc., on modern boats is so different, many captains and owners have been confused and have flown their boat's flags improperly and inconsistently.

This code is primarily for use on private vessels because small craft are so different from large ships; yet it is flexible enough to accommodate the wide variation in construction of most modern pleasure craft. The code applies to all boaters, but has specific application to members of groups such as the Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons and yacht clubs.

While points of honour have been established by long tradition, new configurations of boats, rigging, and the like have modified these points. Using antennas, fishing towers, outriggers, sailboat backstays, portside halyards, and double hoisting are all new to the flag code. Even though traditionalists may think they are incorrect, these flag display techniques are appropriate today. If your boat's configuration requires you to use any of these techniques to fly your colours, do so, but follow this code to do so correctly.

Because many boaters have opportunities to fly their flags on land, both indoors and out, this text covers some of those situations as well.

1.0 Displaying flags aboard your boat

Flags are signals. Each one conveys something specific about your boat or its personnel, whether it be nationality, maneuvering situation, club affiliation, office held, or any number of other things. Each flag has a specific location where it is worn, and a specific time during which it can or should be flown.

Although there are many locations to place the various categories of flags you might fly, they follow a logical pattern. This is true for both an “order of preference” and for a sequence of “points of honor.” Simply stated, the order of preference follows from the highest organization to which you bear allegiance, i.e., Canada, down to yourself. On the other hand, “points of honor” relates to the order of importance of the various positions 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.

1.1 Order of prominence

There is an “order” to prominence (with the very important caution specified in the next paragraph). The points of honor in descending order, are as follows:

- gaff (on a vessel or shore mast equipped with one)
- flagstaff at the stern
- bow staff
- starboard spreader (halyard)
- truck of the mast (masthead)
- port spreader (halyard)

As you locate the points of honor on your boat, keep in mind that the flag of highest precedence that you are flying at any time does not necessarily go at the highest point of honor: it should be flown only at the highest point of honor to which that flag is entitled.

The highest point of honor on your boat is always reserved for the 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 a club burgee, it should never be worn at the point of honor from which you would display the national ensign. Similarly, an officer flag should not be worn at the point of honor from which you would normally display your club burgee. 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, lesser flags or pennants.

In this guide, we will discuss the various types of flags and pennants that your boat might wear at any time, and the normal point of honor from which each should be flown.

Notice the use of the terms worn and flown in the preceding paragraphs. What's the difference? Vessels wear flags; people fly flags on their vessels. It's that simple.

1.2 Canadian flag

The national flag of Canada which displays in simplicity, the red maple leaf is the proper and preferred flag for all Canadian vessels. Your boat should wear it from 0800 until sunset or when underway—day or night, weather and rig permitting. While in port, if you leave your boat and will not return before sunset, lower the national flag before you go.



Please remember that the national ensign worn by a vessel must be the flag of her Country of registry not necessarily that 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.

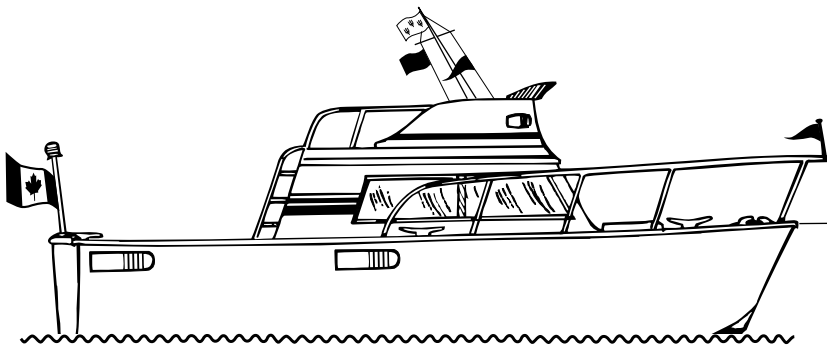
Provincial or other flags are not to be flown in the place of the National Flag.

1.3 Where to fly your Canadian flag

Generally, the national ensign should be displayed at the peak of the gaff ie: the outer end of the spar extending aft from the mast of your boat—if your boat has a gaff. If it does not, fly it from the flagstaff at your boat's stern. If your boat has an overhanging boom or an outboard motor, your flagstaff may be offset to starboard (preferably) from your boat's centerline.

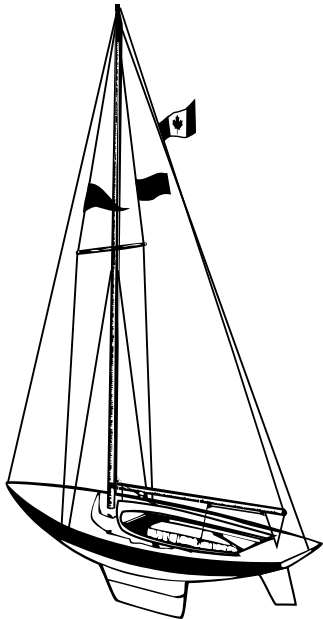
Sportfishing Boats

Sportfishing Boats often are configured so that a flagstaff might interfere with the use of fishing gear, and vice versa. In such case, the ensign may be flown from a halyard or a staff rigged amidships, on the after part of the superstructure.



Sailboats

If your sailboat can support a flag staff at the stern without obstructing motion of the boom, use it to fly the national flag. Gaff-rigged sailboats should wear the national flag at the peak of the aftermost gaff. On Marconi-rigged vessels, display the ensign high on the backstay, but no higher than two-thirds the distance up its length.



1.4 Organization Ensigns and Burgees

Some national organizations have an official flag, and most boating groups have adopted pennants or burgees to indicate the affiliation of the skipper aboard. These pennants and burgees also have points from which they should be flown.

1.5 The Canadian Power and Sail Squadron flag

The Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons (CPS) flag has five blue and four white stripes superimposed with a stylized maple leaf. If you are an active member of CPS and in command of the vessel, you may fly this flag.



1.5.1 Where and when to fly your CPS flag

The preferred location to fly the CPS flag is the starboard yardarm or spreader halyard. It may be worn there day and night.

1.5.2 Yacht Club and Squadron Pennants

Squadron and yacht club pennants and burgees are usually triangular with a unique design symbolic of the organization represented.

If your boat is a mastless or single-masted yacht with a bow staff, fly your pennant or burgee from the bow staff. Boats without a bow staff should wear a burgee at the truck of a single-masted yacht. On the other hand, if the truck is occupied with instruments or other conflicting gear, use a pigstick (a staff affixed to a halyard) so as to carry a flag above the truck. Alternatively, the burgee or pennant may be worn at a spreader halyard. If your boat has two or more masts, fly your burgee at the truck of the forward mast.

Do not display more than one burgee or pennant at a time. The pennant or burgee your vessel wears should be that of the group in which you are participating or whose harbour you are entering if you are a member of that group.

1.5.3 Association flags

Flags of associations, e.g., a cruising club or CPS, are generally rectangular and may be worn on a spreader halyard.

Many flags or signals are flown from the spreader halyards but usually only one should be worn on each halyard. If your boat is rigged with one starboard halyard and one port halyard, fly the signal of superior dignity on the starboard side and the signal of lesser dignity on the port side. If you have more than one halyard on each side of your boat, fly the superior signal from the outboard starboard halyard, with other signals to its left, in order of decreasing dignity. They may be balanced, insofar as possible, starboard and port.

1.6 Miscellaneous signals

A number of private signals are available to the boat owner and each conveys particular information when your boat wears it. In many cases, however, you'll find that more than one flag is assigned the same position for flying. Even if you're entitled to fly more than one, you must choose only one to fly from that position.

1.6.1 Owner's private signal

This is a personal flag, often called house flag. It is usually swallow-tailed, designed by the individual owner to depict a personal interest, hobby, family tradition, initials, or the like. A private signal should be a unique design and always in good taste.

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.

1.7 Officer flags

In most cases, officer flags are blue, red, white, or yellow signals that are rectangular or triangular. The officer flag is worn instead of the owners private signal on all motor and sailing vessels except single-masted sailboats, where it is flown at the masthead in place of the club burgee.



On motor boats without a mast, an officer flag may be flown from an antenna preferably on the starboard side. Fly this either singly or under an associated flag, that is, below the corresponding organizational ensign (not the Canadian flag or the yacht ensign).

The only other officer flag that may be worn simultaneously with the owner's or captain's officer flag is that of a visiting officer of higher rank than the officer commanding the vessel. The starboard-side positions for flying owner/officer flags belong to the owner/captain; the port side positions for flying flags belong to the visitor.

On sailboats, the club burgee is positioned at the truck of the main mast. An officer or personal flag is worn at the after masthead on yawls and ketches and at the forward masthead on two-masted schooners.

1.7.1 Officer visiting

When an officer of an organization visits your boat in an official capacity, that officer's flag may be flown from your bow staff (in place of the burgee or pennant) or from the port spreader halyard.

1.7.2 Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Pennant

The officer in charge of an official event may display a special OIC pennant directly above an officer flag, if any, or above the burgee or pennant. The officer-in-charge pennant is a triangular signal of blue material. Its hoist the part adjacent the halyard is one-half the hoist of the accompanying officer flag; its fly perpendicular to the hoist is six times the dimension of its own hoist.

The officer in charge of an event is usually not the commodore or commander of the organization. He or she is a rendezvous chairman, fleet captain, or other official charged with organizing the event, although the commander or commodore may be present and remains the ranking officer.

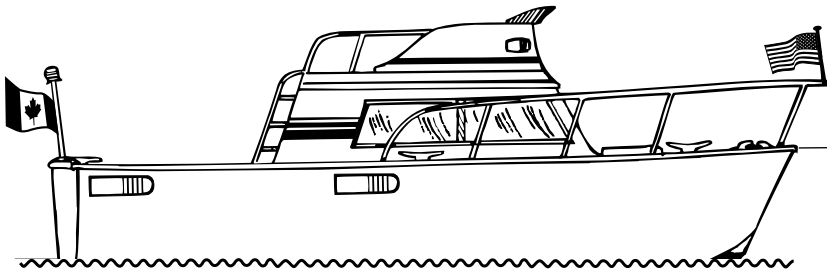
1.8 Courtesy flags

When you visit foreign waters, your boat should display the civil flag of the country you are visiting whenever your Canadian flag is displayed. (Shown is the U.S. ensign.) Your courtesy flag is not to be larger than the national flag.



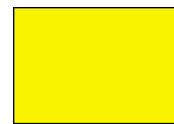
If your vessel is mastless, it should wear this “courtesy flag” at the bow, in lieu of a squadron or club burgee, or on a starboard antenna strong enough to support it. If your vessel has one or more masts, display it single-hoisted at the outboard signal halyard of the main star-board spreader. Move any flag normally flown there to the inboard starboard halyard or, if your boat has only one halyard per side, to the port spreader 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 Canadian waters. It is not to be used as a badge of accomplishment for having cruised to another country.

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.)



1.9 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 Canadian port from a foreign cruise. Traditionally, quarantine flags are not used for trips between the United States and Canada on the Great Lakes. After health



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.

1.10 Regatta flags

Flags used by regatta (see Glossary) participants and committees are considered working flags, worn only by vessels taking part in an event. On a committee boat, these flags are usually oversized and are displayed in the position of greatest visibility. A rectangular blue flag bearing the letters R (Romeo) and C (Charlie) in combination, will appear on all Race Committee boats, sometimes supplemented by International Code flags signaling “short course,” “abandonment,” etc. Participating boats often wear code flags indicating their class on their backstays.

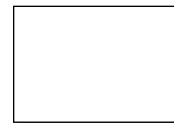


1.11 Owner Absent Flag

When the owner is not aboard, this fact may be indicated by an owner absent flag: a rectangular blue flag worn at the starboard main spreader. A blue light on the starboard spreader may be used to give the same signal after dark.



The blue flag and light signal derive from days before marinas (or boat radios) when most yachts anchored off their club. Their purpose was to preclude visitors rowing out, only to find no one aboard.



On larger vessels, you may also see an owner’s meal flag, rectangular white, worn on the starboard spreader to indicate that the owner is eating. If the vessel is large enough to have a crew, you may also see a red pennant on the port halyard to signal that the crew is eating.



1.12 Guest Flag

When the owner is absent, leaving guests aboard and in charge, the guest flag may be worn. This is a rectangular blue flag with a white diagonal stripe. Display it at the port main spreader.



1.13 Night or Wind Pennant

From sunset to sunrise when no other signals are flown, a long, narrow, blue pennant may be displayed at the main truck. It is sometimes useful for determining wind direction during hours of darkness, when other points of reference may be difficult or impossible to see.



1.14 Diver Down Flag

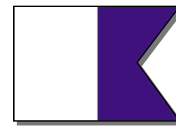
When your boat is engaged in diving operations, prominently display the internationally recognized “diver flag,” a red flag with a diagonal white stripe. Most state and provincial jurisdictions provide that, when this flag is displayed, divers must stay within a certain radius of the boat (typically 100 feet) and other boats may not intrude into that area. If divers venture beyond that radius, they should take a buoy displaying the diver flag with them. There is no signal for night diving.



Display the diver down flag only when divers are in the water. Do not fly it routinely as the hallmark of a dive boat.

1.14 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.



1.15 Skier flag

In some states, custom or law permits or requires you to use a rectangular red flag to signal that a skier, a ski, or a tow line from your boat is in the water in your immediate vicinity. This is usually a hand-carried flag; it is rarely exhibited long enough to warrant positioning it on a signal halyard.



1.16 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.

1.17 Tender flag

In many yacht club harbors, it is customary to wear the International Code flag T (Tango) to request a tender or club launch to provide transportation to shore.



1.18 Man overboard flag

When someone falls overboard, have an unoccupied crew member raise the International Code flag 0 (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 0 is often flown from buoys to mark the location of an accident.



1.19 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 boater. Don't allow your boat to wear them!

1.20 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.

1.21 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.)

The fly of a night pennant should be $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for each foot of height of the truck above the water line; its hoist should be 10 percent of the length of the fly.

Be aware that many foreign ensigns courtesy flags sold in stores are not manufactured to correct proportions. For instance, the flags of all former British Commonwealth countries, including Canada, Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the British Virgin Islands, are correctly proportioned 1:2, i.e., the fly is twice the length of the hoist. Do your best to obtain a correctly proportioned flag.

Note: As a matter of interest, the Canadian Flag is correctly proportioned 10:19 (nearly 1:2), not 3:5 as is commonly available.

1.21.1 Order of making colors

Neither your Canadian 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, a club or squadron burgee, organizational flags, an officer flag 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.

If you fly the yacht ensign (or other authorized ensign) in lieu of the Canadian flag, raise and lower it as if it were the Canadian flag.

1.22 Half-masting Flags

The only authorities who may direct that all national flags be flown at half-mast (sometimes called "half-staff") are the Federal and Provincial Governments, Local and Municipal Authorities, Yacht Clubs etc. The

length of time at which the flag is to be flown at half-staff is determined by the deceased person's position and the directive of the government. This normally lasts from 1 or 2 days to as many as 30 days.

The national ensign is properly flown at half- staff until 1220, the time of the final gun of the traditional 21-gun salute that is commenced at noon.

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

2.0 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.

2.1 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 flag-pole.

2.3 The Canadian Flag

The gaff of a yacht-club-type flagpole is the highest point of honor, as is the gaff of the gaff-rigged vessel it simulates. The Canadian Flag alone is flown there.



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 (except the worship pennant on naval ships). The national flag should be displayed:

1. at the gaff of a mast or pole having a gaff.
2. at the masthead of a mast with no gaff.
3. at its own far right the viewer's left among multiple poles of equal height.
4. at the masthead of the highest pole if one of the poles is taller than the others.

Ashore, the Canadian 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.

2.3.1 The yacht flags and pennants

The yacht club flags or pennants should never be flown in a shore display.

2.4 The Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons Flag

The CPS Flag may be flown at a yacht club or marina provided that at least 20 percent of that organizations membership are current members in good standing with CPS, and it is the responsibility of all CPS members to ensure that proper flag etiquette is followed.



1. on a yacht-club-type mast, at the starboard yardarm on a mast with the national flag at the gaff.
2. on a mast with a yardarm but no gaff, on the starboard yardarm with the national ensign at the masthead.
3. on a bare mast no yardarm or gaff below the national ensign

2.4.1 Club flags & burgees

It is often desirable to fly boating flags ashore, such as on yacht club or squadron property, or at the site of a club function.

Burgees of clubs, squadrons, flotillas, etc., are displayed:

1. at the masthead of a pole with the national ensign at the gaff.
2. from a yardarm halyard on a mast with a yardarm but no gaff.
3. below the ensign, on a bare mast or simple flagpole.

2.5 Senior Officers flag

At a yacht club installation, display the flag of the senior officer present at the starboard yardarm during the officer's presence on the grounds.

Flags of more than one officer are generally not displayed simultaneously.

2.6 Visitor flags

When a visiting dignitary is present, such as a premier, mayor, or foreign guest, the applicable provincial, city, or foreign national flag may be flown from the port yardarm while that person is present on the property.

2.7 Personal flag masts

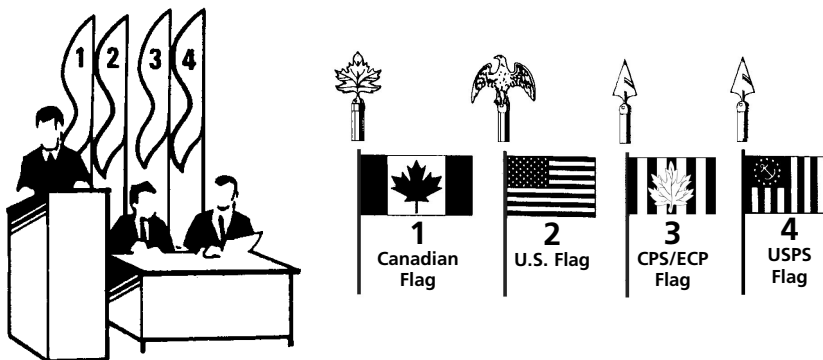
On a mast maintained at your home or business, fly your flags as follows:

1. on a mast with a gaff, fly your house flag (personal or corporate) at the truck of the mast, with the national flag at the gaff.
2. on a mast without gaff, fly the national ensign at the truck.
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.

Never fly one country's flag beneath another's. This is a sign of conquest and is something no boater 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.

2.7.1 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 Canadian 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.



2.8 Miscellaneous

Always handle the Canadian 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.

2.9 Disposal

When your national flag is no longer serviceable or is tattered or faded, burn it with dignity. If you are unable to burn it safely yourself, deliver it to an appropriate entity such as the DVA, Canadian Legion, or your local fire department for proper disposal.

2.10 Dressing Ship

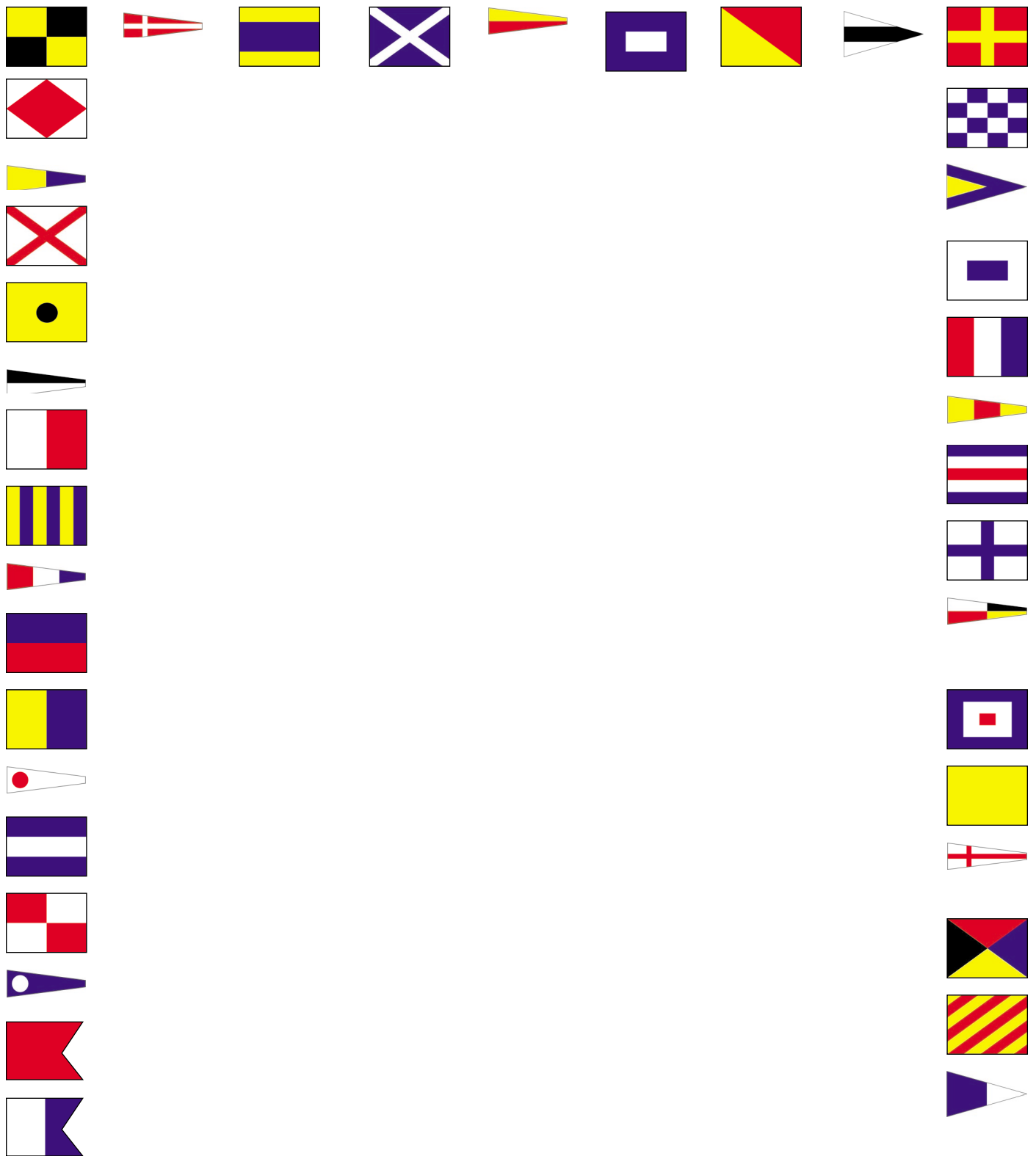
On special occasions such as Canada Day, a Sail Past etc., yachts and boats that have a set of International Code Signalling Flags may dress ship. The set consists of 40 flags representing letters, numbers, and other signals. A vessel is dressed only while not underway, although it may also be dressed 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 stem. One nice distribution of shapes and color, having no message other than a pleasant and decorative appearance is, starting from the bow (the lower left corner on this page, up, across, and down to the lower right corner) to the stern:

Intercode

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

Signal flags



CPS flags

National (White on Blue Field)



Chief Commander



Vice Commander



Rear Commander



Staff Commander

District (White on Red Field)



District Commander



District Lieut. Cdr.



District Lieutenant



Staff Lieutenant

Squadron (Blue on White Field)



Commander



Lieut. Commander



First Lieutenant

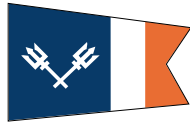


Lieutenant

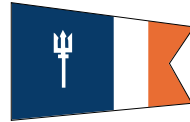
Past Officer Pennants



Past Chief Commander



Past Vice Cdr.



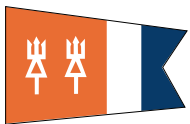
Past Rear Cdr.



Port Captain Flag



Past District Cdr.



Past District Lt. Cdr.



Past Squadron Cdr.



CPS/ECP Flag

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