Flags

Flags are pieces of material in distinctive shapes and patterns, often flown from a pole. They have many uses, most prominently in representing the unity of a country. Of course, countries don’t have a monopoly on the use of flags; many other entities sport them. Cities, states, companies, colleges, sports teams, military units, ships, and more use flags as symbols to help identify themselves or unify their followers.

Flags are often tricolor, like that of the United States, which is red, white, and blue. Some are bicolor, like that of most of the countries in Scandinavia. These countries followed the example of the oldest national flag currently in use, that of Denmark. Denmark’s flag features a large white cross on a red background. Sweden’s, for example, is a yellow cross on a blue background. Only one country has a flag that is monochrome, a single color: Libya’s is a uniform green.

National flags are almost always rectangular in shape. Two flags, those of Switzerland and Vatican City, are square. The only exception is the flag of Nepal, which is a double pennant, which looks like two stacked triangles. Some countries and territories, such as Cyprus, Christmas Island, and Kosovo, have flags whose images include the shape of the country itself.

Often in the United States, several flags are flown together in groups. Our national flag is always given precedence and is flown or carried above all others. The same holds true for the display of most other national flags.