

Design Your Own Family Flag

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Read the “Directions” sheet for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, children will create their own family flag using colors and pictures that have personal meanings. They will then explain why they chose those colors and pictures and their meanings.

WHY

By creating a family flag, children will be able to creatively communicate things that are important to them, and better understand why the American flag and other flags look the way that they do.

TIME

- 40 minutes

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **banner:** the flag of a nation, state, or army
- **flag:** a piece of cloth of a specific size, color, and design, used as a symbol, standard, signal, or emblem
- **symbol:** something that stands for or suggests something else because of its relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance; especially a visible sign of an invisible concept, like faith or courage.

YOU NEED

- Directions sheet (*attached*)
- Background sheet (*attached*)
- ThinkAbout sheet, 1 per child (*attached*)
- Blank paper
- Art materials (colored pencils, markers, collage paper, or crayons)

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best with children in kindergarten through fourth grade.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/starspangled/>

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GET READY

- Read *The Flag Maker* with your child. Take special note of the words used to describe the flag and see how many things your child remembers after finishing the story. Some words she or he might remember are: large (largest), wool, dark blue, white, cotton, red, itch, or tiny. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/starspangled/Reading_The_Flag_Maker.pdf).
- (optional) Browse <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/flagsoftheworld.html> to see other flags used in American and international history. Ask your child to point out one thing she or he likes and one thing she or he dislikes about several flags.

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Background Information

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/starspangled/>.

On June 14, 1777 Congress declared, “...the **flag** of the United States be thirteen stripes alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation.”

The design of the American **flag** we have today reflects the country’s history. The red and white stripes represent the original thirteen colonies and 50 white stars stand for the 50 states. The government has never given official meanings to the colors on the American **flag**.

There are official meanings for many of the **symbols** used on state and international **flags**. For example,

- On the New York state **flag**, the caps worn by the people represent freedom.
- On the Mexican **flag**, green stands for independence, white stands for purity of religion, and red stands for the union of Americans and Iberians.



Image of the Pickersgill household sewing the Star-Spangled Banner, from *The Flag Maker*



The Star-Spangled Banner was created in 1813.

*What colors are on the American flag?
What do those colors make you think of?*

Create your own famous flag full of special meanings!

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For adults and kids to follow together.

1. First, think about the activities you do with your family and the places, people, objects, and ideas that are important to you and your family.

Tip Some discussion questions you could use are:

- What is your favorite memory of being with your family?
- What is something your family does together often or every year?

2. Next, fill in the chart on the [ThinkAbout sheet](#). You will use what you write there to design your family **flag**. Try to think of more than one picture or color to use for each word, and write all of those ideas on the right-hand side of the chart.

Tip The same **symbols** (like color, shape, image, etc) have different meanings to different people. No matter what the creator or author of the **symbol** thinks, the people who are reading or looking at the symbol make their own meanings based on their own points of view. People looking at a **symbol** can also add their own meanings to **symbols** that have no official meaning from the **symbol's** creator. For example, people have associated the colors on the American **flag** with certain ideas and feelings even though the government has never stated an official meaning to the colors.

3. Look at your chart and think about the pictures and colors you listed on the right-hand side. For each idea on the left-hand side, pick only one picture or color to use as a **symbol**. Circle the four **symbols** you will use for your **flag**. Now think about each **symbol**. Think about how large you want to draw them, how you want to arrange them on the **flag**, and what art materials will work best for your **flag**.

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Tip Encourage your child to think about the ideas and images while completing the chart. Some discussion questions you could use are:

- What made you choose that symbol?
- Are all of the ideas equally important? How could you show if they are or aren't?
- Where have you seen that picture before? Does anyone else use it as a symbol?
- Does that color make you think of a specific thing? What things that we see everyday are that color?

4. On a blank piece of paper, design and color your **flag**.

5. When you are finished making your **flag**, present it to your friends, family or classmates and explain your **symbols**! You can present the **flag** either by speaking to others or by writing a paragraph about your **flag**. Make sure to share the **symbols** and explain why you chose them.

Tip This could be as simple as sharing the **flag** with the whole family over dinner, explaining what each of the **symbols** means, and then hanging the **flag** on the fridge. It can also be fun to do a “ceremony” where your child presents the **flag** in a more theatrical way, like in a small parade around the home.

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ThinkAbout Sheet

Write four words that describe yourself and your family.	Brainstorm pictures or colors to use as symbols for each word.

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Read the “Directions” sheet for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, students will create their own family flags using colors and pictures that have personal meanings. They will then explain why they chose those colors and pictures and their meanings.

RATIONALE

People use visual, spoken, and written forms of communication in order to learn and share information. By creating a family flag, students will be able to creatively communicate things that are important to them as well as better understand why the American flag and other flags look the way that they do.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- use colors and pictures as symbols to represent ideas.

TIME

- 40 minutes

AGE GROUP: K-4

TARGET VOCABULARY:

- **banner:** the flag of a nation, state, or army
- **flag:** a piece of cloth of a specific size, color, and design, used as a symbol, standard, signal, or emblem
- **symbol:** something that stands for or suggests something else because of its relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance; especially a visible sign of an invisible concept, like faith or courage.

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MATERIALS

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Background sheet (*attached*)
- ThinkAbout sheet, 1 per child (*attached*)
- Blank paper
- Art materials (colored pencils, markers, collage paper, or crayons)

PREPARATION

- Read *The Flag Maker* with your students. Take special note of the words used to describe the flag and see how many things your students remember after finishing the story. Some words they might remember are: large (largest), wool, dark blue, white, cotton, red, itch, or tiny. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/starspangled/Reading_The_Flag_Maker.pdf).
- (*optional*) Browse <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/flagsoftheworld.html> to see other flags used in American and international history. Ask your students to point out one thing they like and one thing they don't like about several flags.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Design four symbolic pictures or colors.
- Chart and written description use correct spellings.
- Verbal or written description is complete and grammatically correct.
- Verbal or written description demonstrates rationale for each symbolic picture or color.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

5E: Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

4E. The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed.

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IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

ISTE Education Technology Standards for Students (NETS.S)

- 1A. Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.
- 1B. Create original works as a means of personal or group expression.
- 2B. Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy