

**Scoutdocs** A project of [Scouter Liam Morland](#)

## Documents: Flag Break and Flag Lowering

# Flag Break and Flag Lowering

A ceremony to start and end the day

By Scouter Liam Morland, 2000, revised April 6, 2014

The Flag Break ceremony is usually conducted at the opening of a Scouting meeting, camp, or other event as well as every morning at camp. Flag Lowering is done at the closing of these events and every evening at camp. Packs and Colonies have their own ceremonies and do not generally break the flag.

At camp, I suggest holding the flag break ceremony before breakfast. This is a good way to get everyone up and going. At a large event such as a camporee, the camporee flag break should take place before the start of the morning's activities.

A flag on land should not fly at night unless it is fully illuminated. The flag should be lowered at sunset. In the summer, this can be after dinner as part of gathering for the evening's activities.

A recitation of the Scout Promise and/or Law can happen after flag break or lowering or both. When these are recited, one must be at alert, making the Scout Sign, and facing forward (i.e. not towards the flag, as for during the flag break or lowering).

A colour party usually consists of one person for breaking and two for lowering, who will be referred to as Colour Party A and Colour Party B. Colour Party A is the leader of the Colour Party.

These ceremonies are written assuming that hats are worn. If not, just ignore the parts of the ceremony that mention hats. Actions relating to hats do not apply to religious head-coverings which are worn in accordance with their tradition.

These ceremonies are normally lead by the Scoutmaster of the troop. They could also be lead by the Senior Patrol Leader or other troop member, or, at a jamboree, by a commissioner or other senior official.

Any time the troop is told to "Break off", they do a quarter turn to the right then leave the horseshoe.

## Flag Break

Scoutmaster

*Scoutmaster makes the signal for the horseshoe to form.*

Colour Party, advance.

*The Colour Party starts to come around the horseshoe, travelling clockwise.*

Troop, alert. Face the flag.

*Everyone turns towards the flag. Wait until the Colour Party has arrived has checked that the halyards are ready.*

Report halyards.

Colour Party

Halyards all clear!

Scoutmaster

Break the flag. *Waits for flag to unfurl.* Troop, salute.

*Everyone salutes the flag. The Colour Party takes one step back then salutes. There is a brief pause.*

Steady.

*Everyone ends their salute.*

Face front.

*The Colour Party returns to its place, walking clockwise around the horseshoe. The Promise and Law may be recited.*

At ease.

*The rest of the horseshoe business takes place.*

Troop, alert. Break off.

## Flag Lowering

Scoutmaster

*Scoutmaster makes the signal for the horseshoe to form. The closing horseshoe business takes place.*

Colour Party, advance.

*The Colour Party starts to come around the horseshoe, travelling clockwise.*

Troop, alert. Face the flag.

*Colour Party A unties the halyards. If indoors, Colour Party B drops onto their right knee by the flag pole, removes their hat, and sets it on their left knee.*

Report halyards.

Colour Party A

Halyards all clear!

Scoutmaster

Troop, hats off. Lower the flag.

*Everyone removes their hats. Colour Party A slowly lowers the flag. In indoors, Colour Party B gathers the flag in their hat. Wait until the flag is all the way down.*

Troop face in.

*Everyone faces in. Colour Party B stands. A Scouter's Five may be said and/or the Scout Promise and/or Law may be recited.*

Scout silence.

*Silence is held.*

Troop, hats on. *Hats are put on.*

Quarter turn to the left, file off.

*The troop turns then files out clockwise around the front of the horseshoe shaking the hand of each Scouter as they pass by. The Colour Party should fold the flag then file past the Scouters.*

## **Note**

At a large gathering, it would be unfeasible for everyone to shake the hands of those at the front of the horseshoe. In this case, the Scoutmaster will say, "Break off" instead of "Quarter turn to the left, file off." If the flag is being lowered in the evening at camp, the Scoutmaster will also tell the troop to "Break off", using "File off" only at the end of camp.

## **Flying Flags at Half-mast**

If a troop is in official mourning, it will fly its flag at half-mast. After the flag is broken, the Scoutmaster says, "Bring flag to half-mast". The flag is slowly lowered, normally to one-third of the way from the top of the mast. At flag lowering, the flag is brought up to the top of the mast and then down.