



# HONOR AMERICA DAYS

## The 21 Days from Flag Day through Independence Day

Here are 21 engaging activities to enjoy during this three-week period to help your family learn more about our history and make your holiday celebrations more meaningful.

1. On June 14, 1777, the leaders of our newly formed country adopted the first national flag. The flag's birthday is known as Flag Day and is observed every June 14. The 13 stripes on the flag represent the 13 original colonies and the stars in the corner, or the canton, represent the number of states. When the first flag was made, it had thirteen stars, as well. Every time a new state joined the union, a star was added to the canton. Today the flag has fifty stars for fifty states. The colors of the flag have meaning as well: red represents valor and hardiness, white: innocence and purity and blue: justice and perseverance.



*Does your family have an American flag to display at your home? How do you celebrate Flag Day?*

*Talk about the meaning of the words: Valor, Innocence, Hardiness, Justice and Perseverance.*

2. The first Flag Day was held in 1885 when Mr. Cigrand, a teacher in Wisconsin, held a birthday party for the flag. After reading about the Wisconsin school celebration, a teacher in New York City had a party with his kindergarten class and in 1889, all New York schools observed Flag Day. The first celebrations included patriotic songs, speeches, salutes and children waving flags. In 1916, as the US was about to enter World War I, President Wilson called for a national flag day. President Truman instituted an annual Flag Day in 1949.

*How "old" was the flag when its first birthday party was held?*

*Using sidewalk chalk, draw the American flag outdoors.*

3. There are rules and guidelines for flying the American flag. Some of these include:
  - The flag should never touch the ground.
  - The flag should only be on display from sunrise to sunset. When flown at night, a light should always illuminate it. The flag should not be flown in the rain.
  - The flag should be folded properly before being stored.
  - Old or worn flags must be disposed of properly.

*You can watch a video of the folding of the flag: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcOWc5E1bVo&t=8s>*

4. You have probably heard of Betsy Ross and how she sewed the very first American flag. Betsy did make flags but there is no proof that she made the first flag. The design of the first U.S. flag with 13 red and white stripes and 13 six-pointed stars on a field of blue is attributed to a man named Francis Hopkinson.

*Be creative and make a flag out of craft materials of your choosing.*

5. Flags were originally made for war: leaders would hold them on crowded battlefields so soldiers could see where their leader was. The flag came to stand for the leader, then for the leader's land and people. By the 1600's, every country had its own special flag.

*What does the flag mean to you?*

Throughout our land, the flag is on display in places where people gather. Many meetings and events open with the Pledge of Allegiance. Our Pledge was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy in remembrance of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. Published in a children's magazine, The Youth's Companion, Bellamy wanted to instill a sense of pride and love for country. When we say the pledge, we place our hands on our hearts to show that we mean what we say.

*Recite the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*Where did you first learn the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*Talk about these words: pledge, allegiance, republic, indivisible, liberty, justice.*

6. Francis Scott Key wrote a poem, "Defence of Fort McHenry," during the War of 1812 after a battle at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland. Months later, a Baltimore music store printed it with the title we know today. In 1931, over 100 years after its creation, Congress passed a measure officially making "The Star-Spangled Banner" our national anthem.

*Read or listen to the lyrics of our national anthem.*

The original flag that inspired Key is on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

*Visit this website to see and learn more: <https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/interactive-flag.aspx>*

7. A patriot is a person who loves his/her country and is ready to boldly support and defend it. Patriotism is having a love for or devotion to one's country and to be patriotic is to have or express devotion to and vigorous support for one's country.

*What do you love about America? How do you show your patriotism?*

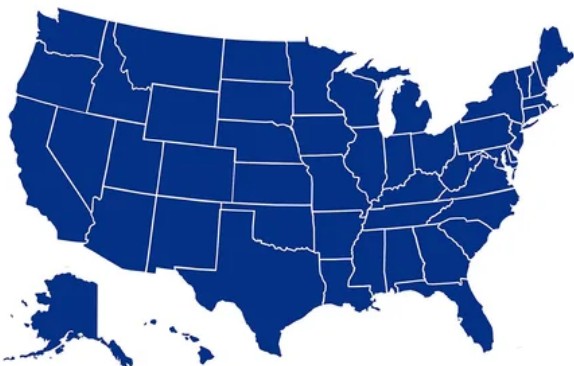
8. Our nation's military is made up of branches: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and Space Force.

*Is there anyone in your family that has served or is serving in our military?*

*Write a letter to someone currently serving in the military, offering your gratitude and encouragement. For guidelines when writing, click on this link: [www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks/write-letters/](http://www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks/write-letters/)*

*Send to: Operation Gratitude, ATTN: Letter Writing Program, 9409 Owensmouth Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311.*

9. Fifty stars for fifty states.



*How many of our 50 states can you name?*

*Listen to the 50 Nifty States song to help you become an expert!  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv5VhuUfwC4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv5VhuUfwC4)*

*Bonus: Do you know the capital cities?  
Can you name the capital of your state?*

10. Washington, D. C. is the center of the United States government. It is a district (D.C. stands for District of Columbia) and is not part of a state. City planner Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the ten square mile diamond of land in an organized grid of streets with wide avenues, plentiful parks and green spaces. The most important government buildings are near the center, including the Capitol building and the White House, with many other important U.S. buildings around them.

*What two individuals do you think Washington, District of Columbia is named for?*

*Learn more about our nation's capital at*

***[www.kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/states/article/washington-dc](http://www.kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/states/article/washington-dc)***

11. The United States has spectacular national parks: Yellowstone, The Grand Canyon The Great Smoky Mountains and many more. The national park system also manages national monuments, historic sites, seashores, military parks, recreation areas and more.

*What national park(s) have you visited? Which one(s) would you like to visit?*

*Check out the National Parks website for fun activities:*

***<https://www.nps.gov/kids/online-activity-guides.htm>***

12. Mount Rushmore National Monument is in the state of South Dakota. The four presidents whose likenesses are carved in stone are: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

*Why do you think the designer and carver chose these four men?*

*Create your own model or travel poster of Mount Rushmore.*

13. Some of these men on Mt. Rushmore are America's founding fathers.

*What other great American men in our history are considered to be our Founding Fathers?*

*Behind every great man is a great woman! Do you know some great women in the founding of our country?*

14. The proper name of our flag is The Flag of the United States of America. "The Star Spangled Banner," "The American Flag," "The Stars and Stripes," "Old Glory," and "The Red, White and Blue" are all nicknames for our flag. The Flag of the United States of America is a symbol of our country. A symbol is something that represents or stands for something.

*What are other symbols of the United States that represent America to you? Go to this website to see some of our country's symbols: ***<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=as9apKNqcG8>****

15. The Declaration of Independence was written in 1776. It includes this famous phrase: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

*Talk about the meaning of this statement and how it applies to our lives today.*

16. The United States Constitution, written in 1787, provides the laws and guidelines for our nation's government. Some of the most famous words ever written can be found in the preamble (introduction) of this document.

*Watch the School House Rock video to learn the words of the preamble.*

***[www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnVmlrAiQB8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnVmlrAiQB8)***

*Were these words familiar to you?*

17. Lots of Americans have Fourth of July / Independence Day celebrations with food. Their barbeques and picnics might include 'traditional' American barbecue foods: hamburgers, hotdogs and salads, or they might eat red-white-and blue food such as strawberries, blueberries, watermelon, blue chips and salsa, rocket pops or red-white-and-blue smoothies. Find a yummy smoothie recipe here: ***[www.allrecipes.com/recipe/143322/red-white-and-blue-fruit-smoothie/](http://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/143322/red-white-and-blue-fruit-smoothie/)***

*How does your family honor the occasion? Plan a special Independence Day celebration with your family's favorites. What else has to be at your family's party?*

18. Parades are a favorite way to celebrate Independence Day and other patriotic holidays for Americans.

*Is there a parade in your community? If you can, attend a parade with your family.*

*Sing along to some popular patriotic songs or learn a new one:*

"America The Beautiful" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZYH8v42a2w>

"Yankee Doodle" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_BMzqwSdW8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_BMzqwSdW8)

"America" America - My Country 'Tis of Thee <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1W7JDWv50>

"This Land is Your Land" This Land Is Your Land <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRnHx3yVuf4>

19. John Phillip Sousa composed 136 military marches including "The Stars and Stripes Forever," "Washington Post March," and the official march of the United States Marine Corp, "Semper Fidelis." Whenever they are performed, feelings of emotion and patriotism are stirred.

*Listen to some of Sousa's famous marches: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uHhllCvUTc>*

*How does the music make you feel? What instruments do you hear and why do you think they are played at parades?*

20. Fireworks are a popular part of patriotic celebrations.

*Make your own fireworks using shaving cream, red and blue finger paint and glitter. Spray shaving cream in a tray. With paint, draw fireworks using paint brushes and toothpicks. You can add glitter for sparkle.*

21. The promise of freedom has inspired people from all over the world to come to America and become citizens. What do you know about your own family's history? Do you have ancestors who immigrated here? Share the story of your family—why did they come, from where, when and how? Though we come from many different places, we are all Americans. In fact, our country's motto, E Pluribus Unum is Latin for "out of many, one."

*Write down details of your family's story. You can use forms found on the Patchogue-Medford Library's homepage at ([pmlib.org](http://pmlib.org)) under "genealogy" or come up with your own way to record information about your ancestors.*

We hope doing these activities has inspired you to find out more about our country's history.  
Be sure to visit your library for fun and interesting books of all kinds to learn more!

To assist you, here are some of the topics on these pages and their call numbers:

The Flag of the United States of America 929.9		
The Pledge of Allegiance 323.6	U.S. History 973	American Revolution 973.3
The American Presidency 973.09	U.S. Military 355-363	War of 1812 973.52
Washington, D.C. 917.53	Flag Day 394.2684	Fourth of July 394.2684
The White House 975.3	U.S. Constitution 342.73	National Parks 917.3
Declaration of Independence 973.313	Fifty States 973	Mt. Rushmore 917.83

To read about people, look in Biography by the subject's last name.  
Don't forget to look for appropriate songs in 782.42 and for poetry in 811.