

**Flags:** United States  
France  
Poland  
Haiti  
Netherlands  
Mexico

## United States

At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, [July 4, 1776](#), one commonly flown flag was the [Continental Colors](#). This flag may have been initially flown by order of George Washington and it is thought it was first raised by Washington's troops at [Prospect Hill](#) on [New Year's Day](#) in 1776, although there is good reason to believe the flag was actually the King's Colors. At the time of the [American Revolution](#) the East India Company flag would have been identical to the [Grand Union Flag](#). The flag probably inspired the **Stars and Stripes** (as argued by Sir [Charles Fawcett](#) in 1937). [\[4\]](#) Comparisons between the Stars and Stripes and the Company's flag from historical records present some convincing arguments. The John Company flag dates back to the 1600s whereas the United States adopted the Stars and Stripes in 1777[\[5\]](#). This flag formed the basis of the Stars and Stripes, consisting of 13 red and white stripes (although sometimes red-white-blue stripes were used) with the original British [Union Jack](#) in the canton. The Grand Union Flag is similar to the [East India Company](#) flag of the same era, although the East India Company flag could have from 9 to 13 stripes, and was not allowed to be flown outside the Indian Ocean.



 Continental Colors, sometimes erroneously called the Grand Union Flag.

On [June 14, 1777](#), the [Second Continental Congress](#) passed the Flag Resolution which stated: "Resolved, That 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." [Flag Day](#) is now observed on June 14 of each year. A false tradition holds that the new flag was first hoisted in June of 1777 by the [Continental Army](#) at the [Middlebrook encampment](#).

The Flag Resolution did not specify any particular arrangement for the stars. The pictured flag shows the thirteen stars arranged in a circle, the so-called [Betsy Ross](#) flag. However, though this is the most famous "first flag", this was the least popular design at that time;

the preference was to arrange the stars in rows of 3, 2, 3, 2, and 3, as seen in the table below, or more commonly in rows of 4-5-4.



 13-star "Betsy Ross" flag

In 1795, the number of stars and stripes was increased from 13 to 15 (to reflect the entry of Vermont and Kentucky as states of the union). For a time the flag was not changed when subsequent states were admitted, probably because it was thought that this would cause too much clutter. It was the 15-star, 15-stripe flag that inspired [Francis Scott Key](#) to write "[The Star-Spangled Banner](#)," now the [national anthem](#).

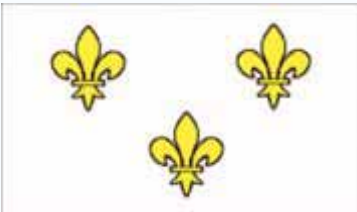
Finally in 1818, a plan was passed by Congress at the suggestion of U.S. Naval Captain Samuel C. Reid<sup>[6]</sup> in which the flag was changed to have 20 stars, and a new star would be added when each new state was admitted, but the number of stripes would remain at thirteen to honor the [original colonies](#).



 15-star, 15-stripe "Star-Spangled Banner" flag

The origin of the U.S. flag design is uncertain. A popular story credits [Betsy Ross](#) for sewing the first flag from a pencil sketch by George Washington who personally commissioned her for the job. However, no evidence for this theory exists beyond Ross' descendants' much later recollections of what she told her family. Another popular theory is that the flag was designed by [Francis Hopkinson](#). Hopkinson was the only person to have made such a claim during his own lifetime, when he sent a bill to Congress for his work. He asked for a Quarter Cask of the Public Wine as payment initially. The payment was not made, however, because it was determined he had already received a salary as a member of Congress. It should be noted that no one at the time contested his claim to have designed the flag.

# France



Flag of Royalist France prior to 1789



French tricolour flag

The origins of the *tricolore* are said to be a [rosette](#), created in July [1789](#) during the [French Revolution](#), which (according to legend among [vexillologists](#)) used a combination of the colours of the coat of arms of [Paris](#) (red and blue), symbolically separated by the royal colour (white), with the combination often being credited to the [Marquis de Lafayette](#). There are many theories and suppositions about the choice of colours and indeed Lafayette's involvement in the process. One theory says that **Lafayette** was inspired by the [colours used by the American revolutionaries](#); another that it symbolised the control of the people over the monarchy (Paris' colours - blue and red - bordering monarchy's colour - white) at a time when parliamentary monarchy was still seen as a possibility in France; another that the French design and scheme originated with the [Dutch flag](#) - the first tricolour. [[Image:Cityhall.JPG|thumb|[French Flag](#) on the [Brisbane City Hall](#) ]]

After the restoration of the [Bourbon monarchy](#) following the defeat of [Napoleon](#) in [1815](#) the *tricolore* was replaced by the royal white standard with [fleur-de-lis](#) which had been in use before the Revolution. However, the revolution of [1830](#) saw [Louis-Philippe](#), the Citizen-King, ascend to the throne who again designated the *tricolore* as the national flag, which it has remained ever since.

The flag of France represented a new revolutionary movement; as such, it influenced many other flags, including those of [Belgium](#), [Chad](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Mexico](#), [Norway](#) and [Romania](#).<sup>[\[citation needed\]](#)</sup> The flag of the [Acadians](#) is based on the French flag.

In the case of Romania, the French flag influenced the placement of the colours and the proportions; the colours themselves had been traditionally used to represent Romania before that. The flag of the [Netherlands](#) was imposed by the [Napoleonic](#) regime and went on to influence the design of the flag of [Luxembourg](#).

## Poland

For centuries, the Polish flag consisted of a red background emblazoned with a [White Eagle](#). During the times of the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](#) the flag featured both symbols of Poland and of the [Grand Duchy of Lithuania](#), though in fact there was little need for a state flag in a modern sense. Most of the [military units](#) flown the flags of their lands or founders (usually featuring [coat of arms](#)) and only the royal regiments used the royal standards. Some of the detachments however adopted the red and white stripes as their symbol. The shapes however often differed.



The situation changed in [19th century](#), during the [partitions of Poland](#), when Polish patriots required an easily-recognizable flag that could be used both for identification of troops on the battlefield and as a [symbol](#) of the state. On [February 7, 1831](#) during the [November Uprising](#), the [Sejm](#) decided that national colours of Poland are those of [Coat of Arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](#), that is white above red. However, after the fall of the uprising the official flag of [Congress Kingdom](#) was changed back to that of the [tsars of Russia](#).





## Haiti

For a country's citizens, the national flag is indisputably a symbol of general pride. They would consider any offense to their flag to be an offense to their country. Beyond being an icon though, a flag's origin can often say a lot about a nation's social make-up or history. Haitians feel no different and even reserve a special day to honor it. That day is **May 18<sup>th</sup>**.



In the early days of revolt in St. Domingue, the slaves did not have a flag. However, they did notice that their former masters were using the French Flag. From 1791 to about 1793, the revolt became more widespread and gave rise to a number of large groups still fighting independently. In those times, each main leader would use any piece of cloth as a flag. Slowly the slave movement found some



synergy and came to follow the leadership one main person:

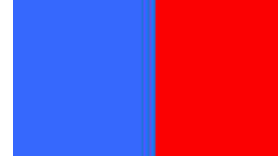
**Toussaint Louverture**. Realizing that you cannot fight three enemies at the same time, Toussaint and the army of revolted slaves fought successively for the Spanish against the French (1793-1794), for the French against Spain and England (1794-1802) and ultimately against France. As such, he carried the color of whichever European power he was fighting for. He later realized that it was silly to use the same flag as the enemies. He then invented his own flag, which was a white piece of cloth with a Negro head to represent the blacks.

After Toussaint's deportation, The Indigene Army went back to the French flag for a while. A little explanation is needed here: The French flag as we know it now is a product of the French Revolution. It was made up of Red and Blue, the colors of the City of Paris, and a band of white representing the monarchy (*La Nation, la Loi et le Roi* –). On the white portion of the flag was the emblem of the French Republic. The Revolution of St. Domingue was in some ways motivated by the French Revolution and for years, the masses main objectives were for freedom and better treatment. To them, the French Flag represented the ideals of Liberty and Fraternity. They hoped that those same principles would be applied to them, non-whites According to Thomas Madiou (1814-1884), a renowned historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, they also saw in that flag a symbol of blacks, whites and mulattoes living in harmony. Therefore, carrying the French was not stupidity, but rather an expression of their ideals.

As time went on though, a break with France seemed inevitable and to symbolize their resolve of never fighting for the metropolis again, they had removed the French arms from the blue white and red flag they were using. As early as **February 1803** however,

**Petion**, leader of the mulattoes and **Dessalines** had decided to create a unique flag to represent their troops. Thus, starting with the French Flag made up of three blue, white and red bands placed vertically respectively; Dessalines removed the white and created the **first unofficial flag** with blue and red bands placed vertically. By so doing, he also wanted to impart on the French the message that they had lost that colony forever. To them the blue symbolized the mulattos and the blacks while the red symbolized their blood. While this flag was observed in most part of the country; **Cangé**, a general in the south used a black and red flag instead.

By 1803 as we saw, the leaders of the free slaves and the men of color had decided to fight for the creation of an independent nation. Before marching on Port-Republicain (Port-au-Prince's name at that time) Dessalines and Petion needed to make a strong statement. On **May 18, 1803**, in the city of Arcahaie, not far from Port-au-Prince, they agreed on an **official flag**, with blue and red bands placed vertically. blue and red placed vertically respectively. Haiti's first flag was sewn by a lady named Catherine Flon.



On Independence Day however, **January 1<sup>st</sup> 1804**, the flag was modified again. The Blue and Red bands were placed horizontally this time, with the blue band on top of the red band. This was the first flag of the independent republic.



**In 1805**, shortly after Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed himself emperor, the Haitian flag color was changed to black and red bands placed vertically respectively. After the emperor's death, **in 1806**, the country will be divided into two republics for 14 years. **Henri Christophe**, in the northern part kept the flag that Dessalines used.



In the south and the western part of the country, **Alexandre Petion** went back to 1804's flag that was blue and red only this time he added the white squared portion that included the country arms and the famous phrase "**L'UNION FAIT LA FORCE**", meaning that **through unity we find strength**.



---

# Netherlands

---



---

## Netherlands Flag Description:

The flag of the Netherlands consists of three equal sized horizontal stripes - the top stripe is red; the middle one white; and the bottom stripe is blue. The red stripe which was originally orange, along with the white and blue stripes, are based on the heraldic colors (coat of arms) of Prince William of Orange, who led the fight for Dutch independence.

## Netherlands Flag History:

The Netherlands flag was originally orange, white and blue and featured up to nine stripes. The Netherlands flag is nicknamed the 'Prince's Flag' and was based on the heraldic colors (coat of arms) of Prince William of Orange, who led the campaign for independence against Spanish rule in 1568. The Netherlands independence was finally recognized by Spain in 1648. The orange-white-blue flag first appeared around the early 1570s. In the early to mid-17th century, the orange stripe was changed to red but the reason is unclear. One theory is because red is more visible than orange when viewed from a distance. Red, white and blue were officially announced as the colors of the flag in 1796. The flag was banned for a short period at the turn of the 19th century after France occupied the Netherlands. The Netherlands was again independent in 1813 and the flag was reinstated.

The Netherlands flag influenced the design of the Russian flag when Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, visited the Netherlands in the 17th century to observe the country's shipping industry. When he returned to Russia he assembled his own shipping fleet and designed a white, blue and red flag in honor of the Netherlands. That flag eventually became the state flag of Russia. The Russian flag would then inspire the flags of many other Slavic nations, and the colors became known as the pan-Slavic colors.


# Mexico

Before the adoption of the first national flag, various flags used during the [War of Independence](#) from Spain, which had a great influence on the design of the first national flag. Although it was never adopted as an official flag, many historians consider the first Mexican flag to be the Standard of the [Virgin of Guadalupe](#), which was carried by [Miguel Hidalgo](#) during the [Grito de Dolores](#) on [September 16, 1810](#).<sup>[8]</sup> The Standard became the initial symbol of the rebel army during the Mexican War of Independence. Various other Standards were used during the war. [José María Morelos](#) used a flag with and image of the Virgin to which was added a blue and white insignia with a crowned eagle on a cactus over a three-arched bridge and the letters V.V.M. (*Viva la Virgen María* – "long live the Virgin Mary").<sup>[9]</sup> The Revolutionary Army also used a flag featuring the colors white, blue and red in vertical stripes. The first use of the actual colors—green, white and red—was in the flag of the unified [Army of the Three Guarantees](#) (pictured above) after independence from Spain was won.<sup>[10]</sup>



Flag display at the History Museum of [Monterrey](#), [Nuevo León](#).



 The first official national flag was established in 1821, the first year of Mexican sovereignty. The [imperial](#) government that was set up chose a tricolor flag of green, white and red and charged with the national coat of arms. The official decree stated that *"Sole article:(...) the national flag and flags of the army shall be tricolor, adopting forever the colors green, white and "encarnado" [flesh-colored red] arranged vertically, with the crowned eagle in the center of the white stripe, according the following design..."*<sup>[11]</sup>

While similar to the national flag that is used today, the eagle in these arms is not holding a serpent in his talons and a crown has been affixed to the head of the eagle to signify the

Empire. Variants of this flag that appeared in this period also included a naval flag that had the tricolor pattern, but only contained the eagle with the crown above its head. The military also used a similar, square, flag, but the eagle was larger than on the national flag. The national flag was officially decreed by [Agustín de Iturbide](#) in November 1821 and first officially used in July 1822. This flag was no longer used upon the abolishment of the empire.<sup>[12]</sup>

The second national flag that was adopted came around the same time of the establishment of the first federal republic in 1823. The new flag chosen for the republic in April of that year, with the only difference is the appearance of the central emblem. The crown was removed from the eagle's head and a serpent was placed in the eagle's right talon. Another addition to the flag is a branch of [oak](#) and [laurel](#) branches, a tradition that was carried over to the current flag. This flag was discontinued in 1864 upon the dissolution of the federal republic.<sup>[13]</sup>