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November 11, 2011

United States Flag Foundation™
Flag Plaza
1275 Bedford Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
ATTN: Flag Etiquette

Dear USFF:

I have a question regarding the United States Flag that I am hoping you can answer. I know that there are different rules of etiquette when it comes to flying the flag, how and when it should be taken down, and where it should be placed when flown or displayed with other political or religious flags. I learned many of those rules when I was in the cub scouts, but that was so long ago and I have no other flags that I fly on a regular basis, so I regret to say that I had forgotten most of the flag rules.

I still recall many of the basics, like not allowing the flag to touch or drag along the ground, not flying a flag when its material becomes torn and tattered, and not setting fire to the flag even when trying to make a political statement. So it was more in the area of U.S. Flag placement relative to other flags that I seemed to have lost my grasp of the rules.

In recently brushing up on my Stars and Stripes etiquette, I now recall that when flown from the same pole, the U.S. Flag is always flown above any other "inferior" flags. When displayed with other flags on individual poles, the U.S. Flag is given the most prominent position of honor standing furthest to its own right (which is actually the position furthest to the left as perceived by an audience or congregation).

But I have a new question that is not really addressed in the above explanation. When I affix multiple postage stamps to an envelope for delivery by the U.S. Postal Service, and one or more of those stamps happens to be a U.S. Flag stamp, how do I determine its proper placement on the envelope in relation to the other stamps? I often mail letters heavier than one ounce which require me to add additional 20¢ stamps. But if the letter isn't tremendously bulky, it may or may not require that additional postage. So if I put a 44¢ U.S. Flag stamp in the upper right corner of the envelope, and then discover that the letter weighs 1.1 oz, I have to add a 20¢ George Washington stamp. If I add that stamp to the left of the flag, am I dishonoring the U.S. Flag? Would it make a difference if the 20¢ stamp was George Washington as opposed to say, Groucho Marx?

What about the scenario where I am mailing an oversized envelope and need to use multiple 44¢ U.S. Flag stamps? Or better yet, where I have 44¢ U.S. Flag stamps intermixed with 44¢ Lady Liberty stamps (the post office now combines those two designs together on a single roll of stamps, you know) -- am I dishonoring the U.S. Flag if the Lady Liberty stamp is affixed to the envelope in a position of higher or more left-most prominence than the U.S. Flag stamp?

It wasn't very long ago that I often received and used rolls of first class stamps that depicted images of various state flags. Would it be improper to put a Maine state flag stamp above or to the left of a Stars

and Stripes stamp? (See the photo below).



DISCLAIMER: The Maine flag stamp depicted in this photo is affixed to the envelope with double sided tape, but the U.S. Flag stamp is NOT stuck to the envelope and is simply placed in a lower position for illustration purposes only!!! I did not mail out a letter this way.

Those oversized state flag stamps always bothered me. With the post office always complaining about their rising costs and decreased sales, why in heaven would they produce a line of stamps that is double the width of a regular stamp yet still only worth the same postage value? If you can squeeze first class postage onto a $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 1" stamp, why issue a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " x 1" stamp? That doubled their cost of production materials in every single roll of state flag stamps they produced. That just screams of government waste to me! If it weren't for such wasteful practices, we could probably still mail one ounce first class mail for 13¢. But that is another point entirely that doesn't concern you.

Please let me know how the U.S. Flag rules of etiquette apply to postage stamp placement and whether there are any other scenarios that I should be aware of. I can't imagine that I am the first person to ever ask this question. Do you have any pamphlets which explain these points in greater detail that I could circulate among my friends? Please let me know!

Sincerely,

Rusty Lucas

p.s. Do you have any USFF baseball caps? If you have a USFF baseball cap that you could send to me for free, please send it to my address above. If there is any postage fee for the free baseball cap, please let me know and I will send that to you so that you don't have to pay your own money to send me something for free. I will do my best to send you stamps in denominations and design artwork that will be least likely to offend any U.S. Flag stamp placement. If the arrangement is overly complex, I will map it out and include a diagram so that you do not have to waste your own time figuring out the proper postage stamp placement sequence.