



FLAG PROTOCOL

Forward

If you feel magnificent when astride your horse, you will feel absolutely majestic mounted with an American flag in your hand. Carrying the American flag also carries with it an inherent responsibility to respect the honor enough to make sure you are attentive to the proper handling and protocol. The flag represents the living country and is to be regarded as a living thing deserving the highest honor.



Our goal is to establish a resource for judges and mounted groups to reference when considering flag protocol. The intent is to provide information relating to the appropriate display and use of flags, guidons, and pennants while mounted.

The term “Standard” applies to the flag when carried by a mounted unit, the term “Colors” when carried by foot. The “National Standard” and “American Flag” may be used interchangeably.

It is said that the American Flag is how our country signs her name! It is truly an honor to carry her in a parade or drill, respect and honor those that have fought for our right to hold her high.

While the U.S. Code is the primary source of flag protocol it does not address protocol specifically while mounted. Military sources like the *Flag Manual of the U.S. Marine Corps*, the *Cavalry Drill Regulations Guide*, and the Army AR840 are limited in addressing flag protocol in a mounted environment other than in ceremonial review. Therefore many of the rules regarding mounted flag protocol in a drill environment has been established by someone in the drill community and handed down. Often different “rules” are handed down and vary from judge to judge making it extremely difficult for teams to conform to. **California State Horsemen’s Association Inc.** requires all judges at **CSHA** events to judge only by the protocol guidelines established by **CSHA**. It is a good practice to question judges at a drill master meeting prior to an event to clarify in advance any questionable flag protocol issues.

Flag Symbolism

What do the colors red, white and blue of the American Flag symbolize? The Continental Congress left no record to show why it chose the colors. However, in 1782, the Congress of the Confederation chose the same colors for the Great Seal of the United States and listed their meaning as follows;

White: To mean purity and innocence

Red: For valor and hardiness

Blue: For vigilance, perseverance, and justice

Composition: From a book about the flag published in 1977 by the House of Representatives...

"The star is a symbol of the heavens and the divine goal to which man has aspired from time immemorial; the stripe is symbolic of the rays of light emanating from the sun."

On June 14, 1777, in order to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the **first Flag Act**: "Resolved, That the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation."

The current American flag consists of thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red alternating with white, with a blue rectangle (referred to as the Union) in the canton bearing fifty small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars. Each of the 50 stars represents a specific state, from top to bottom, left to right, they reside in order of the states admission. The 13 stripes represent the thirteen colonies that rebelled against the British monarchy and became the first states in the Union.

Deference

No other flag may be larger or fly higher than the American Flag. Neither should a flag precede the American Flag. If flags are carried by riders on horses abreast the American Flag must be on the far right with all other flags to the left. In a column the American Flag must be in the lead. No other flag should exit the arena before the American Flag. The flag should never travel backwards as this denotes retreat. The American Flag does not dip or salute to anything or anyone. Subsequent flags should dip in respect to the American Flag then these flags are returned and carried upright for the drill. The flag should be clean and in good repair when used in drill. Notice above we said to the right of other flags. Technically speaking, flag protocol pertains to flags not non-flag bearing riders. So, can an American Flag be in the center of a group of non-flag bearing riders? Technically yes, but it is frowned upon by so many that generally the universally accepted rule in drill competition is NO.

A point of training in drill should be for non-flag bearing riders and non-American flag riders to practice always looking where their American flag(s) are. If your American gets behind on the outside of a wheel it is a flag protocol violation. If you are in an abreast unit and your California or club flag gets a step in front of your American it can be deducted as a flag violation.

National Anthem Protocol

During rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart, eyes on the Flag. Men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should render the military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note.

A subject of much discussion in the drill community is around the presentation of the American Flag for the National Anthem. The discussion revolves around the debate should an American Flag remain stationary or is it allowable to ride around the arena during the Anthem? Let's settle it here, the American Flag should remain stationary during the Anthem! Yes, it pastes a spectacular sight charging around the arena under a spotlight at a rodeo event but do that to America The Beautiful or other patriotic music. Why you ask? Think about the above paragraph, how is the audience ask to stand, at Attention. Standing at Attention involves not moving so if you are supposed to keep facing the flag and the flag is moving, the person standing at attention would be required to move and would then no longer be at attention. You will never see a military color guard mounted or not marching during the Anthem,

it is not done. If a rodeo tries to get you to charge around the arena, explain it to them, rodeos are the most patriotic sport we have but not everyone is clear on protocol, we can help educate.

If you are asked to present the American Flag for the Anthem, you may present it solo or as a color guard. A color guard may consist of an American, a State, an organization, city or other flag, with the American to the right. The flags to the left of the American will depend on what flags they actually are. If you have a Canadian team participating in a U.S. Drill competition you would have the American with a Canadian flag to the left, then a State flag etc. If you are presenting military flags check the protocol as they go in branch order of formation. You should also include a guard on each side of the flags. Yes, you may put a non-flag bearing rider on the right of an American Flag. Consider the duty of a guard; flag bearing riders are defenseless, with the reins in one hand and a flag in the other there is no hand for a weapon. Guards are placed on the sides to protect the defenseless. Do your guards need to be armed? Of course not, but it is symbolic to place the riders there.

Order

When presenting the flags on horseback, there is a proper order of appearance that riders must follow. The American Flag should always be first to appear and first to exit an arena. The American Flag must be displayed in the lead and or to the far right. The National flag should be followed by accompanying flags in the following order; State flag, Association flag, Club flag, Sponsor and other flags or pennants. American Flags should be 3-4" higher than accompanying flags with other flags being even in height.

California State Horsemen's Association Inc. has exempted two maneuvers from flag protocol. When in a **Circle** Americans may hold spacing consistent with other riders in the circle. A circle, is a line on a curved plane and flags must maintain the same order throughout a circle as in a column. When CSHA required a space to differentiate between the head and the end of the line it was easily recognizable. The relaxed rule allows the space to be closed but the required order remains the same as in a column. Americans must leave the circle first however in a lead position. In a **Box Cross** it is acceptable for an American to cross behind a non-American flag though technically a violation CSHA has issued an exemption on this maneuver.

Posting a Flag

If a flag is posted during a mounted drill it is correct protocol to post it at what is determined to be the front right hand corner of the arena. If there is seating on three or more sides of the arena generally the right front corner is considered the immediate right corner when you enter the gate, but always verify it beforehand. Associations have various rules regarding the posting of flags during competition. **California State Horsemen's Association Inc.** allows for flags to be posted but they must be involved in a minimum of **4 maneuvers** with the team to qualify as displaying a flag. **CSHA** does not require the use of flags in the Novice division as well as some of the other open divisions so if your team is not ready for flags you may choose to enter these divisions. The High Point divisions of Junior's, Mixed, & Senior do require flags and if you decide to post flags realize you will not be awarded the same point value in the flag point category as a team that has flags participating throughout the drill.

Staffs

There are a variety of flagpoles available on the market or that you can make yourself. Many teams find it works best to have adjustable poles that can be transferred to different riders and horses and be adjusted to the correct height. Adjustable poles have a couple problems, one, they are usually more expensive and two, they usually operate by twist tension and tend to lower themselves at the most inopportune times, like in the middle of a performance or competition. Secure an adjustable pole so they cannot fall by adding a piece of tape where they slide together. Teams often use single fixed length poles but they can be cumbersome to transport. Some poles are divided into two pieces and screw together in the middle. These are a good option for portability but offer no adjustability outside of the boot adjustment. Make sure the strength of the material your pole is constructed of is strong enough to sustain the wind bearing weight of a flying flag at full drill speed. Sturdy poles that do not flex under the weight of a flag at full speed will look more uniform and precise than poles that are flexing. Many rodeo performance teams use PVC poles that flex and give the appearance of going fast, while it may be a good choice for a performance it is not the best choice for competition.

Poles length is influenced by the size of the flag you are carrying. To determine the proper length of pole, add the flag's height and length together. For example, a flag that is 4 feet tall and 6 feet long needs a flag pole that is 10 feet long. A 3' x 5' flag should be carried on a minimum 8' pole. Poles should be high enough that riders can see under the flag when it is flying without bending down. A good rule of thumb is to position the pole height so the bottom of the flag when flying is 6" above the head of the rider. American flags should be 3"- 4" higher than the other flags, all other flags should be even in height.

Fringe

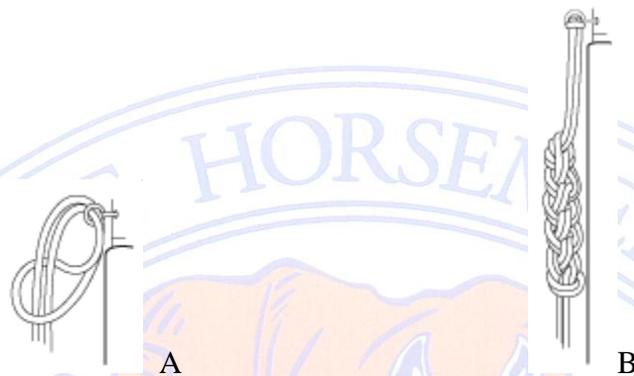
The fringe on a flag is considered an "honorable enrichment only". The gold trim is generally used on ceremonial indoor flags and is believed to have first used in a military setting. A fringed flag is used only inside or on a staff when carried outside by a bearer, it is not flown from a pole outdoors. The Marines prohibit the use of fringe on a flag, but some other branches of the military do use fringe.

Cord & Tassel

Cords and tassels are often used on indoor flags displayed on a stationary stand. They are sometimes used in color guards. In general cords and tassels are not meant for use in flags on the move. The Army AR840 stipulates that you must use a cord and tassel on the American Flag only if another flag being carried is using one. Therefore, it is the position of the **California State Horsemen's Association Inc.** that the use of a cord and tassel does not need to be used during drill. Should you decide to use cord & tassel in a parade you should use the following proper knotting and attachment:

- Fold the cord in half and hold the tassels together in one hand.
- Adjust the cord so one tassel is higher than the other about 3" and the other end forms a loop.
- Push the cord loop through the eye screw at the top of the pole. You will have to "work" the loop through the eye screw.
- Once the loop is through the eye screw, push both tassels through the loop and pull tight to form a slip knot (see illustration A, below).
- About 1/3 further down the cord, make a new loop by wrapping both pieces of cord around three fingers.
- With the other hand, pull the two strands of cord through the loop you made around your fingers, just enough to form a new loop (approximately one inch).

- Pull the cord strands through your new loop to form yet another loop about the same size. Continue this step until you have connected 4 loops.
- On the 4th loop, pull the tassels all the way through and tighten slightly to form a loose knot.
- Adjust and tighten the links to be uniform in size (see illustration B, below).



Finials

The US flag code does not mention the use of ornamentation atop flags. It does not say only the American flag should use an eagle, however, common practice today is for using the eagle only on the U.S. flag and some other ornament, commonly spears, on the other flags. The military has rules of flag protocol that apply to flag ornaments, though not binding on civilians the protocol has been adopted for mounted drill.

Finials or ornaments as they are sometimes called, are required on any staff that carries an American flag during drill. An Eagle is used on the American flag, spears (two sided flat spade) or pikes (four sided coming to a single point) are used on non-American flags. It is also acceptable to use a ball ornament on the American Flag in drill as it is safer if dropped, having no sharp edges. It is now mandated by CSHA, for safety reasons, that spears used in drill be the polystyrene 4 edged spears that do not have sharp edges. When used eagles should always fly facing forward and spears “cutting the wind” (a sharp edge of spear forward). Even a four-edged pike should have one edge facing forward. A ball ornament is the easiest to use while riding as there is no defined forward position. Finials must be kept shiny and in good repair. They must always be attached securely and firmly to the staff.

Place a small sticker or piece of tape on the staff just above your hand marking the place where your spear cuts the wind or your Eagle flies forward to avoid looking up to check the position of the Eagle.



Flag Boot

A "flag boot" is a holder strapped to a rider's stirrup fender so they can carry a flag more securely. By placing the bottom of the flag pole into the flag boot the rider can hold the pole more easily than simply carrying it free-hand, or by placing it on top of, or inside of, their boot. Flag-boots can be difficult to find and often teams have them custom made by a leather craftsman. There is not much to them and are simple in design. Be sure the boot does not grip the flagpole too tightly. While a tight grip might seem nice because it helps keep the pole down in the boot it is dangerous if you drop the flag and it sticks in the boot. A horse running around the arena being chased by a dragging flag is very dangerous for horses and riders. Some flag boots available have only one strap, a two strap boot offers extra security if a strap should break and added stability also holds the boot, thus the flag, straighter.



Flags in Drill

In competition in high point divisions of **California State Horsemen's Association Inc.** it is required that teams carry flags, (novice and some open divisions are exempt). At least one American flag and one other flag, which can also be an American, must be present in the drill. Note: for pseudo cavalry organizations that the Marine Flag manual states "Not more than one national color or standard will be carried by a regiment (or equivalent command) or any part thereof when assembled as an organization". Basically, it states cavalry organizations should use only one American Flag. The choice of flags and how many your team carries impacts the difficulty of choreography, flag protocol and flag carriage. While you may receive extra points for carrying flags properly you may also lose more points by not following proper flag protocol and carriage guidelines. Flags can add a dimension to your drill that impacts viewers on an emotional level. Crowd appeal, Overall, and Spectacularity points may also be impacted by the successful use of flags.

- All American or like flags - Teams that have all members carrying American flags make an impressive and patriotic statement and it makes drill design easy and flexible because they do not have to concern themselves with protocol in positioning of flags. All decorative alike flags are also used. It is referred to as a consistent flag system.
- Assorted Flags, Guidons or Pennants – These teams usually carry two to four flags and the rest of the team carries guidons or pennants. The pennants are smaller and easier to carry than full sized flags and can add color to your drill. They must observe proper flag protocol with the regular flags and proper carriage technique.
- One American – Teams that carry only one American and no other flags often post that flag throughout most of the drill and reposition it every so often. Teams that most often do only exhibitions may not have a drill designed for a flag but need to throw one in upon occasion.
- Two or Four Flag - Teams that carry either two or four flags is common in competition today. It is the hardest to work out a drill design around because you are designing under the constraints of flag position protocol. It is referred to as a flag protocol system.

- Guidons - In the United States Army, Marines, and Air Force, a guidon is a military standard that company or platoon-sized elements carry to signify their unit designation and corps affiliation. A basic guidon can be rectangular, but sometimes has a triangular portion removed from the fly (known as "swallow-tailed"). Guidons are often used in conjunction with traditional flags.

Note: Drills tend to have a different style look to them depending on if a team is using a consistent flag or a flag protocol choreography. Flag protocol often appear smoother and flowing with a follow the leader type style while a consistent flag system often appears more random and can be exciting and unpredictable.

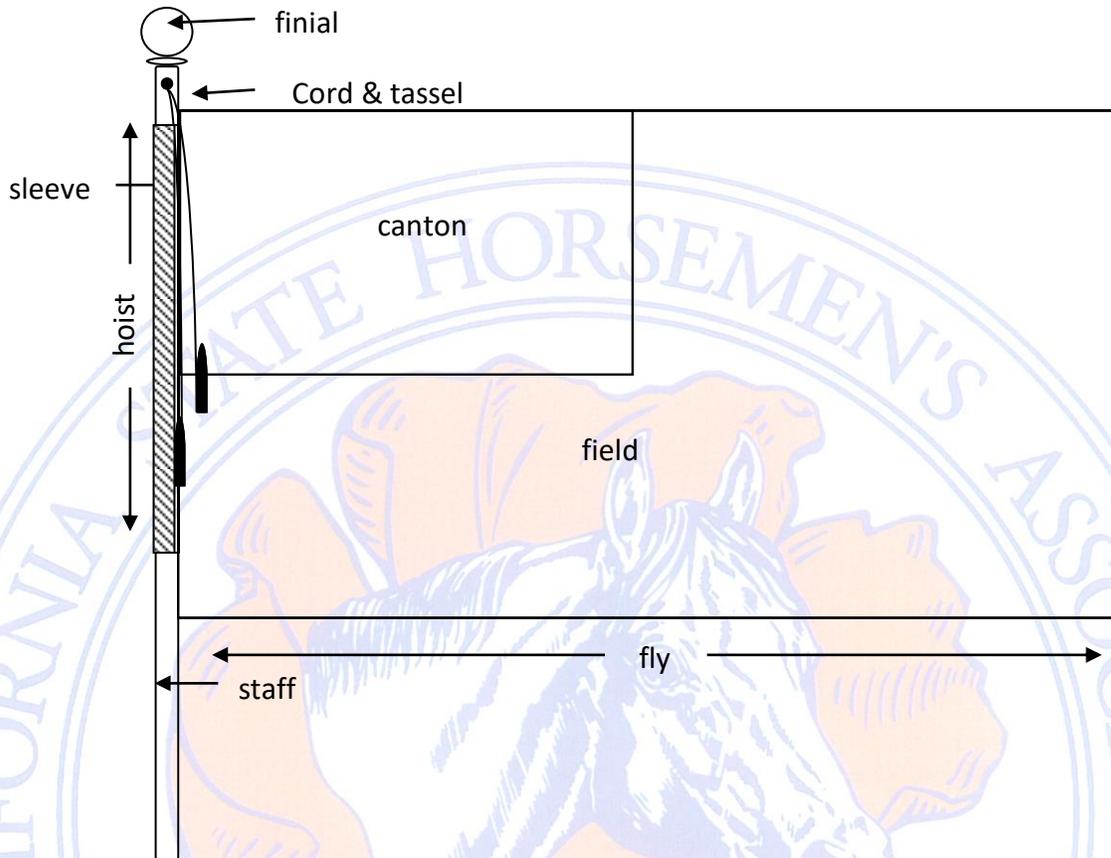
Flag Carriage

Flag Carriage: The manner in which the flags are carried is termed “flag carriage”.

- Shafts must be perpendicular at all times. Never leaning due to speed or turns.
- Forearm should be parallel to ground.
- Elbow should be flexed at a right angle and kept in tight to the body.
- The finial should be pointed forward. Eagles flying forward, spears cutting the wind,
- Flags should be kept free and not allowed to wind around a pole or rider.
- The American flag never dips or salutes anything or anyone.
- The bottom edge of a flag in flight should be a least 6” above the rider’s head.
- The flag should be carried by experienced riders and horses only.
- If the flag is dropped it should be rescued and returned to its position immediately.



Anatomy of a Flag

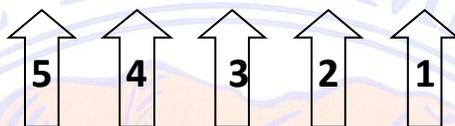


- **Hoist:** Hoist is used to describe the height of the flag while flying. The term also refers to the vertical edge of the flag that is attached to the flagpole or staff.
- **Fly:** 1) The length of the flag as measured from the attachment to the farthest point. 2) The distance from the end of the canton to the free end of the flag. 3) The width (length) of an extended flag.
- **Canton:** When it exists, the canton is found in the upper left-hand corner of a flag. By definition, it is the "top inner corner of a flag." Flags with cantons include the United States flag, the Georgia flag, the Hawaii flag and the Mississippi flag.
- **Field:** The section of the flag between the hoist and the fly ends is called the field or, sometimes, the ground. It does not include the canton.
- **Staff:** A flag is most often attached to an object of support such as a flagpole, staff or flagstaff, or mast. In general, when a flag is flown outdoors, it flies from a flagpole. When a flag is carried in a parade, on horseback, or displayed indoors, it is attached to a staff. On a boat or ship, a flag may be attached to a mast.
- **Finial:** The flagpole or staff may be topped with a decorative ornament or finial. A finial is an uppermost decoration such as the sphere illustrated above.
- **Sleeve:** Doubled fabric that slides over staff. A tab inside sleeve has a hole that slides over the screw on the staff to hold the flag on.
- **Cord & Tassel:** Parade and indoor flags are often adorned with gold fringe. If a fringed flag is used a matching cord with tassels may be attached through the eye screw on the staff. (See instructions above for CSHA requirements and correctly attaching a cord & tassel).

Flag Protocol Diagrams

There are multiple possibilities depending upon the flag configuration a team decides to use in their drill. Below some of the most commonly used configurations. If all riders on your team carry American flags you will not need to worry about protocol, but you will need to perfect the proper flag carriage by all riders.

Units Abreast



Here are the most common three assortments of flags carried:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. American | 1. American | 1. American |
| 2. State | 2. American | 2. State |
| 3. Association | 3. State | 3. Club |
| 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Sponsor |
| 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider |

The American or Americans are always furthest to the right of all other flags or riders. All riders must remain abreast of or behind the American flag. A deduction may be taken if an American falls behind the rest of the line when abreast.

Units in Single File Column



Flag Assortment:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. American | 1. American | 1. American |
| 2. State | 2. American | 2. State |
| 3. Association | 3. State | 3. Club |
| 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Sponsor |
| 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider |

Units in Column—Pairs

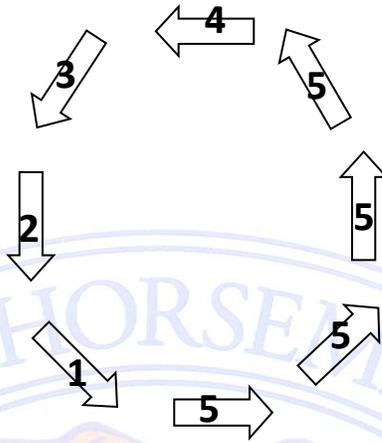


Both of these alignments are acceptable. Either all flags on the right, one behind the other, with non-flag on the left or the flags in pairs, in order, right to left with non-flags behind.

Flag Assortment:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. American | 1. American | 1. American |
| 2. State | 2. American | 2. State |
| 3. Association | 3. State | 3. Club |
| 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Sponsor |
| 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider |

Circle



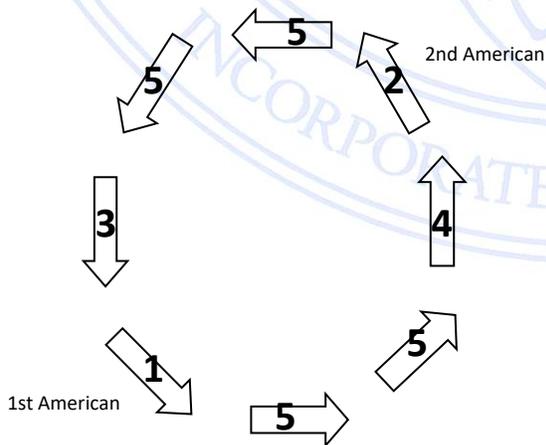
A circle is a column on a curved plane. Flags must ride in the same order as a column. CSHA does allow teams to close the circle, you do not need to leave extra spacing between the last rider of the column and the first rider. The American or Americans must be at the front of the column and must exit the circle first and in the point of lead.

Flag Assortment:

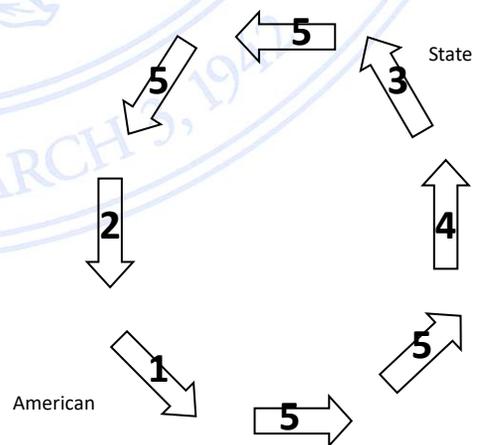
- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. American | 1. American | 1. American |
| 2. State | 2. American | 2. State |
| 3. Association | 3. State | 3. Club |
| 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Club or Sponsor | 4. Sponsor |
| 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider | 5. Non flag rider |

If riding with two American flags it is considered a violation to have non American flags or non flag riders between the two American flags in a circle. It is acceptable to have non flag riders between non American flags.

Incorrect



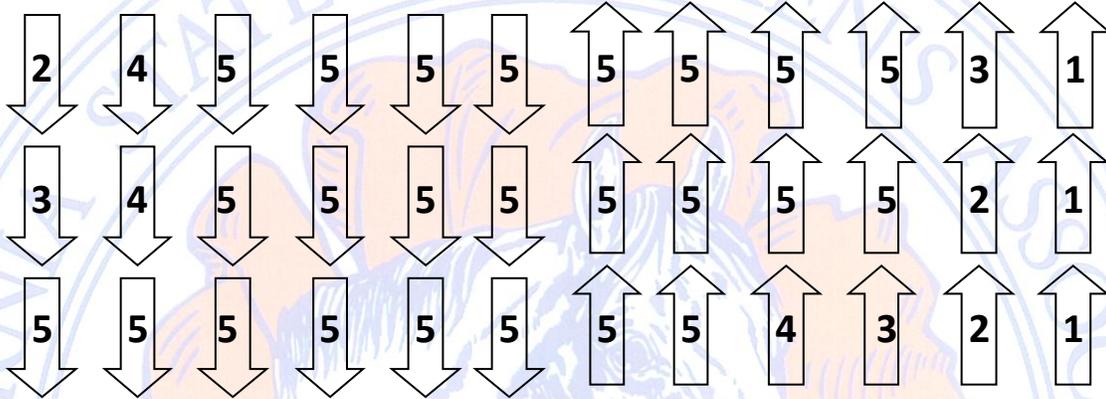
Acceptable



Wheel

A wheel containing one or more American flags must go in a counterclockwise rotation to allow the American to be positioned on the right on the outside of the wheel. In a clockwise wheel the American would be positioned in the pivot and there would be riders to their right going in the opposite direction

Acceptable



Flag Assortment:

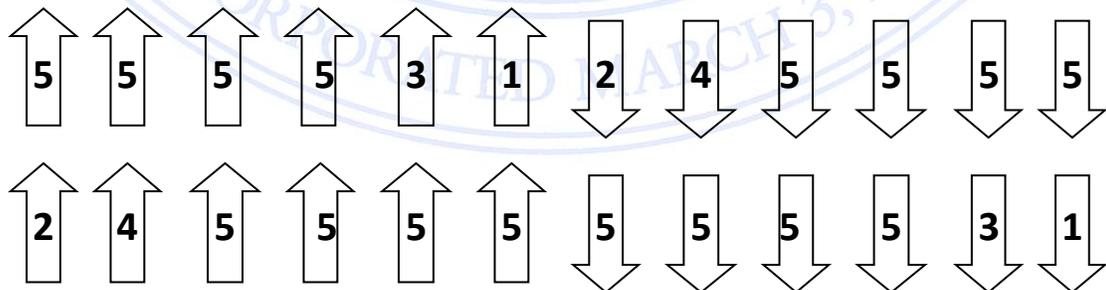
- 1. American
- 2. State
- 3. Association
- 4. Club or Sponsor
- 5. Non flag rider

- 1. American
- 2. American
- 3. State
- 4. Club or Sponsor
- 5. Non flag rider

- 1. American
- 2. State
- 3. Club
- 4. Sponsor
- 5. Non flag rider

Incorrect

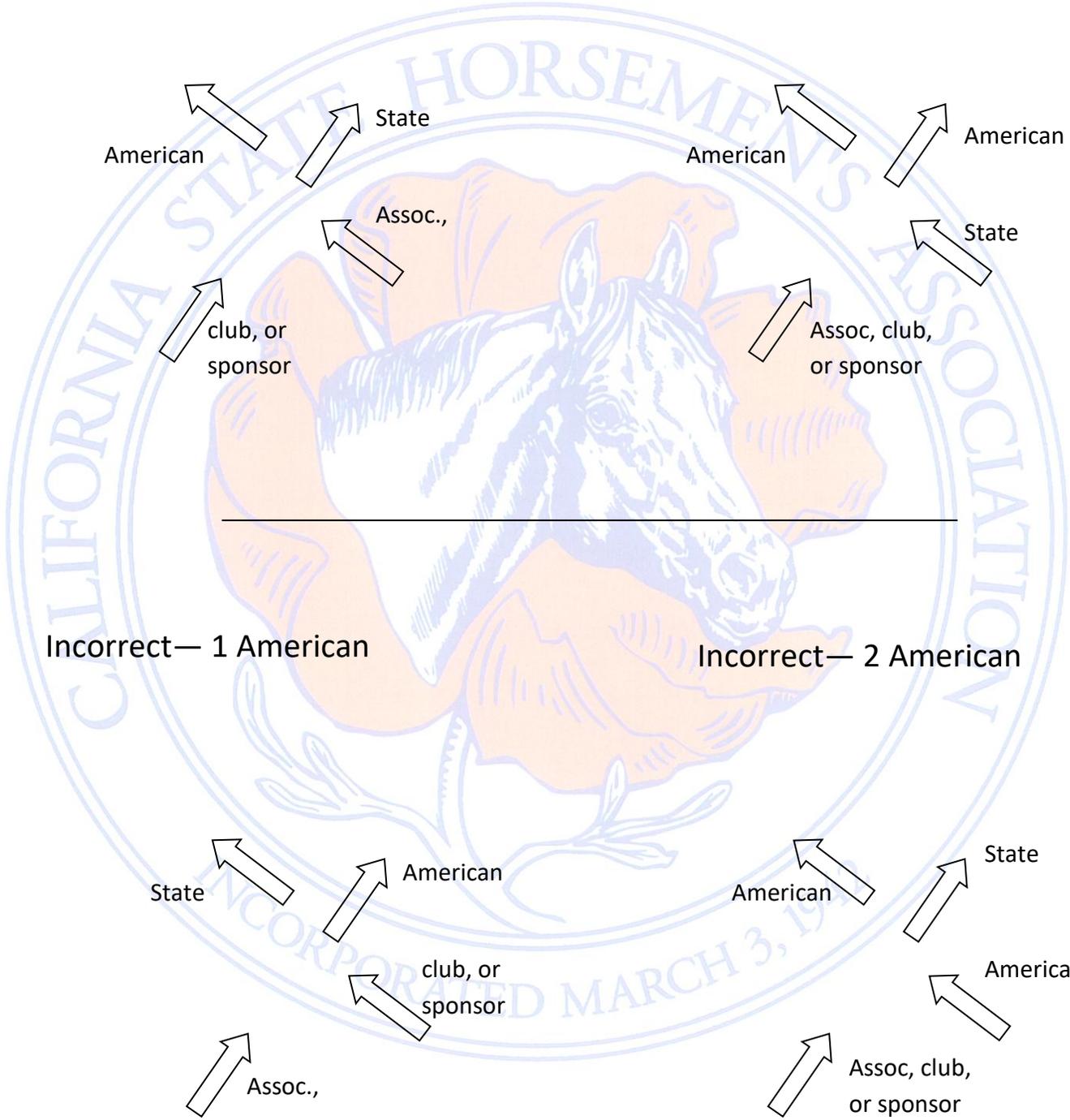
Flags on inside of clockwise wheel is a violation as is flags on the outside as they are now on the left.



Single File Cross

Correct— 1 American

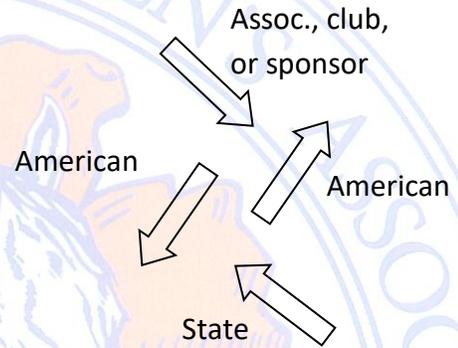
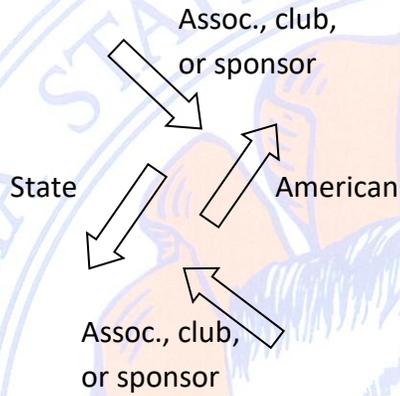
Correct— 2 American



4 Way Cross

Correct— 1 American

Correct— 2 American



Incorrect— 1 American

Incorrect— 2 American

