Manual for Flag Guards

Secretariat of Public Education - México

English translation by Patrick Fiehn and Ian Fritz, January 2020 for the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA)
Objectives
- Reaffirm national pride and patriotic fervor
- Strengthen the practice of civic obligations
- Promote national identity
- Generate bases of firm respect towards patriotic symbols in the students

Synopsis
Flag guards and flag assemblies have been a part of Mexican schools since the late 19th century as a way to help boost civic pride in the Mexican youth and to commemorate the service of the Niños Héroes (Heroic Boys) who defended Chapultepec Castle during the Mexican-American War. This tradition of having children in both public and private schools march as a military squad might seem peculiar to outsiders, but in Mexico, this is seen as a great way to teach children about the importance of national symbols and spark a love for their country.

The following is a copy of the Secretary of Public Education’s manual to help schools set up their own flag guards and train the kids who wish to participate. Throughout the year they train for monthly flag assemblies and nationwide competitions, which places winners on par with school athletic teams. The end result is not only a wonderful performance, but a great way to help future generations understand the importance of their country’s flag.

Appendix A: Instructions
1) Movements
   a) Members of the Guard
      The Flag Guard is comprised of six (6) elements:
      - Four (G1-G4 in Figure 1) guards, one (F) flag bearer, and one (C) commander
   b) Formation and Distance between the Members of the Flag Guard
      The four front elements must be at arm’s length from each other. The two back guards must stand back-to-back with their respective front guards (G3 with G2; G4 with G1), march 3 steps forward, make a full stop, and make a half turn to end up in the starting position.

   ![Figure 1](image-url)
c) Presentation and Uniform
When the Flag Guard is presented at a ceremony, parade, or competition, the elements must keep a clean uniform and neat haircut, with gallantry.

d) At Attention
The default position of the Flag Guard
- Standing straight
- Soles of feet together, toes pointing at 45º
- Hands at the sides, fingers together with the index finger laying over the pants seam
- Chin up, gaze forward

e) At Ease
- Only back guards (G3 and G4) are to assume “at ease” position
- Flag bearer lowers the flag by 10 cm, approximately to the right of the foot at that side, holding it in his right hand at chest-level.

f) Salute
- The Salute must be done in two beats
- From At Attention with a fast motion from the right hand, placing it in front of the chest, at the height of the heart
- The tip of the thumb over the left nipple, fingers held together, and the palm facing downwards
- The middle finger, wrist, and elbow must be lined up horizontally
- The right hand must rise directly to the chest, in a semicircular path, both coming up and back down to At Attention

g) Voice of Command
The command voices that are used for the execution of movements or displacement of the Flag Guard are the following:
- Warning voice: Word or words that serve to call the attention of the Flag Guard, before you indicate what you should do and the time of execution, for example: "Attention."
- Preventive voice: Word or words that indicate the action to be executed, is an order to be fulfilled to another indicator voice, for example: "At Attention", "Forward, march", "Guard to the right", etc.
- Executive voice: Word or expression that indicates the precise moment in which the indicated must be executed, with the voice of "now!" It is recommended not to abuse the voice of "Attention," procuring always to make a small pause.
h) Command of the Flag Guard
   The command voice will be ordered by the commander and should be issued with energy, clear voice, and security and precision.

i) Unsheathing
   The action of displaying the flag.
   - Once the Guard is aligned and in the “at attention” position, the commander gives the order to salute, the salute remaining in the first position.
   - The commander moves three steps to the front and a left-flank, followed by three steps to the front and a left-flank, stands in front of the flag bearer and salutes in two stages.
   - The flag bearer vigorously tilts the flagpole on the right side without removing it from the wedge.
   - The commander receives the upper end of the pole with his left hand, can rest it on his shoulder and proceeds to remove ties and cover, accommodating them in the hand, shoulder, belt or waistband.
   - If the commander is far from the position that allows him to perform this maneuver, he can take up to two steps always in front, which must be taken back when the flag is displayed.
   - The flag bearer and the commander proceed to unfold the flag, the commander must protect it with his right hand, preventing it from touching the floor.
   - The flag bearer picks up the flagpole energetically, putting it upright.
   - The commander salutes in two stages and retires on the left flank, three steps forward, right flank, three steps forward and half a turn (remains in the salute position), orders firm.
   - Six elements must participate only.

j) Sheathing
   Protocol action that marks the termination of the honors to the flag and/or routine.
   - At the end of the participation of the escort, the flag is carried out following the same procedure used to draw.
   - The commander greets before and after he holsters.
   - The commander can use both hands for the maneuver and should not exceed one minute.

k) Receiving the Flag from a Proper Authority
   In the executive voice of the commander, the Guard will salute and remain in that position, at that time the designated authority will deliver the flag to the flag bearer, who will take it and place the flagpole in the wedge in 4 steps:
1. Extension of arms and taking of the pole (right hand up and left down).
   2. Energetic jerk towards the shoulder.
   3. Entry to the wedge.
   4. Left hand at his side.

The commander will order: At attention!, .. Now! The authority will salute in 2 beats and will leave.

l) Bearing the Flag
   - The flag bearer will place the flag carrier so that the wedge (leather cylinder that holds the flagpole) falls on the right hip.
   - He will introduce the flagpole to the wedge.
   - He will hold the flagpole with his right hand and palm inward and at shoulder height, ensuring that it is vertical.
   - The flag bearer will never hold the flagpole using the flag, nor allow it to touch or cover his face.

m) Marking the Step
   - In signature position, at the command:
     - The left foot will rock on the front with the tip down and the leg extended, returning it to the initial position and at that time, the foot heel will be lifted right.
     - At the preventive voice the articulation of the left knee is semiflexed
     - After the command, proceed to raise the left leg as in a goose step
   - The order will be: Guard! ... Mark the step! ... Now!

n) Forward March
   - In the preventive voice, a semi-flexion of the left knee joint will be performed, while a slight inclination of the body to the front will be carried out simultaneously, carrying most of the weight on the right leg.
   - In the executive voice, the march begins with a forward movement with the entire sole of the foot, with the left leg extended to 45º, with a left-foot starting step.
   - The approximate speed should be 120 per minute, without stopping the natural movement of the passage.
   - The stroke should be performed naturally at approximately an angle of 45 to 90 degrees, without exceeding the height of the shoulders, with the arms extended, literally exceeding the plane of the body backward, without stopping the natural movement of the arm.
   - The fingers of the hands will be extended and palms inward.
o) Short Pace
- In the executive voice, a left-hand offset is made, each step after the movement is marked with the entire sole of the foot (without exaggeration), alternating knee lift without exceeding the height of the hip, at a length of 35 cm and cadence of 120 steps per minute.
- Arms naturally dropped to the sides, with the palms of the hands facing the body.
- On firm foot the order will be: escort... short step! .. now!
- In motion, the order will be: “shorten the pace! ... now !,” suppressing the warning voice.

p) Guard to the Right/Left
- It begins with a semicircular march to the right or to the left.
- One of the sides will serve as an axis and the opposite guide. This will march to the forward march step, describing an arc of the circle of the radius of the unit.
- The other elements will decrease the length of the step as they approach the axis, which will turn on its own ground.
- The alignment will be maintained by the protruding side and the contact towards the shaft element.
- It is used to make only 90 ° rotations.
- The evolution will end in eight beats, with beat nine starting the march.
- This movement will be done without bracing.

q) Turn to the Right/Left
- It begins with a semicircular or circular movement of the Guard to the right or to the left, it must be done by turning on the axis until rotations greater than 90 ° are achieved.
- One of the sides will serve as an axis and the opposite guide. The latter will march to the forward march step, describing an arc of the circle of the radius of the unit.
- The other elements will decrease the length of the step as they approach the axis, which will turn on its own ground.
- The alignment will be maintained by the protruding side and the contact towards the shaft element.
- The circular march will end in the voices of: “stop! ... now!” Or those of other commands, in which case the march will continue in the new direction.
- This movement will be done without swaying arms.
- The order will be: “turn to the right! ... Now !”
r) Single-File Line
- In the executive voice on the march, the commander and the right guard (G1) will extend the passage diagonally and in front until it is in front of the flag bearer, followed by guard 2 (G2), left back guard (G3) and at the end the right back guard (G4).
- This movement will be carried out in 8 beats, with beat 9 to keep going in forward march step.
- They will align themselves taking as preference the flag bearer, who must advance in the evolution.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 2*

s) From Single-File Line to Regular Formation
- This movement will be executed in 8 beats and starts when all the members give a left-foot starting step to retake their positions, leaving the first guard, the flag bearer and the second guard to the left of the commander.
- Guards 3 and 4 will take their escort position behind the second and first guard respectively.
- They will align taking as reference the flag bearer, who must advance in the evolution.
- The commander and guard 1 will move to the right side, waiting for the flag forward to align with him, it is not allowed to move backwards, guard 2 will move diagonally to the left, aligning with the flag bearer.
- The preventive voice will be: “re-form guard!”
t) Double-File Line
- The executive voice will initiate a left-foot starting step, guard 1 will extend the passage diagonally to the right until it is placed in front.
- Guard 2 will move to stand in front of the flag bearer, the commander will be placed behind guard 1.
- The back guards will later integrate the flag bearer and commander.
- It will align taking as reference the flag bearer, who must advance in the evolution.
- The executive voice will be given when the left foot is on the floor.

![Diagram](figure3)

u) From Double-File Line to Regular Formation
- In the executive voice, the commander will move diagonally to the right to place himself on the right side of guard 1.
- Guard 1 will wait for the flag bearer to line up (should not move backwards).
- Guard 2 will move to the left and the flagman will continue his path in a straight line.
- This movement will take place in 8 beats.
- The preventive voice will be: re-form Guard!

v) Side March to the Right or Left
- To the executive voice: the leg will move to the side, on which the march is ordered without flexing the legs, sitting the sole of the foot at the indicated distance, the foot that remained in place will be joined with force and this way the indicated march continues, with a length of 25 cms., the speed must be of 60 steps per minute.
- The body will retain the verticality of the at attention position and the arms will go to the sides, without separating them.
- To stop, “Stop! ... now!” will be ordered.
- In the executive voice, it will be done at the precise moment in which the opposite foot to the side on which it is marching makes contact on the ground and the next step will stop.
- The movement to join will be a movement of the foot until it is in a firm position, without dragging or hitting when joining the heels, the body will retain its verticality of the firm position and the arms will be attached to the sides with fingers together.

w) Stoping
- The march will stop, making a shift with the left foot in front, joining the right foot with an energetic movement (union of heels). In the executive voice, the movement described above will be performed.
- When stopping, the flag bearer will remove the shaft from the wedge and lower it until the end hits the ground at 10 cms. Approximately to the right and at the height of the toe of that side, holding it with the hand at chest height, ensuring that it is vertical.
- The Guard must be located leading the formation.

x) Returning the Flag to the Authority
- At that time the authority to receive the flag will enter, place himself in front of the flag bearer and salute in two beats, then, the flag bearer will hand over the flag and before retiring the commander will order: guard! ... salute !. .. now!
- This movement will be done in two beats.
- After receiving the flag the authority will withdraw.
- When the guard retires to the place of his concentration, he will be ordered: guard! ... forward march, single or double file line! .. now !, stop! ... now !, break the formation ... now!

y) Breaking Formation
- Once the routine is over, the commander will order: guard... salute! ... now! At that moment the flag bearer will deliver the flagpole to the authority, who salutes in 2 beats and then receives the flagpole (it is recommended that it be removed from the left side).
- For the purposes of order and discipline, participants may leave in a row with a forward march: first the commander, then the guard 1, the flag bearer, the guard 2, the guard 3, and finally the guard 4.
- The order will say: guard ... break the formation! ... now!
Appendix B: Flag Guard Routine Rundown