

Why is the Flag Backwards?

Many U.S. military personnel wear a “backwards” U.S. Flag on the sleeve of their uniform. There’s a good reason for this.



During earlier wars, both mounted cavalry and infantry units would designate a standard bearer, who carried the flag into battle. As this standard bearer charged, his forward momentum caused the flag to stream back. Since the flag is mounted with the canton closest to the pole, that section of the flag stayed to the right, while the stripes flew to the left. Therefore, the flag is worn on the right shoulder, and wearing it backward gives the effect of the flag flying in the breeze as the wearer moves forward. The soldier then becomes the staff that the flag is flying from.