

# Nautical Flags and Their Meanings

Signal flags are used to communicate messages, at times because radio silence is required. Here are their names and meanings, both International and/or specific to the Navy, as well as meanings when used in a Sailing Regatta. There is also a signaling system called Semaphore which uses the position of the flags relative to a person to denote the letter.

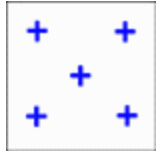


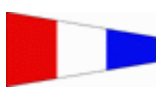





## International Code Flags

Flag	Name & Phonetic Pronunciation	Meaning
	<b>A</b> lfa AL-fah	I have a diver down; keep well clear at slow speed.
	<b>B</b> ravo BRAH-voh	I am taking in, discharging, or carrying dangerous cargo.
	<b>C</b> harlie CHAR-lee	"Yes" or "affirmative". Change of Course (Sailing Regatta)
	<b>D</b> elta DELL-tah	I am maneuvering with difficulty; keep clear.
	<b>E</b> cho ECK-oh	I am directing my course to starboard.
	<b>F</b> oxtrot FOKS-trot	I am disabled; communicate with me. On aircraft carriers: Flight Operations underway
	<b>G</b> olf GOLF	I require a pilot.
	<b>H</b> otel hoh-TELL	I have a pilot on board.

	<p><b>I</b>ndia IN-dee-ah</p>	<p>I am directing my course to port. (International) Coming alongside. (Navy) Round the Ends Starting Rule (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>J</b>uliet JEW-lee-ett</p>	<p>I am on fire and have dangerous cargo; keep clear.</p>
	<p><b>K</b>ilo KEY-loh</p>	<p>I wish to communicate with you.</p>
	<p><b>L</b>ima LEE-mah</p>	<p>You should stop your vessel immediately. Come Within Hail or Follow Me (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>M</b>ike MIKE</p>	<p>My vessel is stopped; making no way. Mark Missing (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>N</b>ovember no-VEM-bur</p>	<p>No or negative. Abandonment and Re-sail (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>O</b>scar OSS-kur</p>	<p>Man overboard.</p>
	<p><b>P</b>apa pah-PAH</p>	<p>All personnel return to ship; proceeding to sea (Inport).</p>
	<p><b>Q</b>uebec kay-BECK</p>	<p>Ship meets health regs; request clearance into port. (International) Boat recall; all boats return to ship. (Navy)</p>
	<p><b>R</b>omeo ROH-me-oh</p>	<p>None. (International) Preparing to replenish (At sea). Ready duty ship (In port). (Navy)</p>





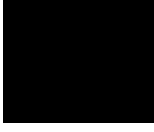
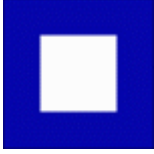
	<p><b>Sierra</b> see-AIR-ah</p>	<p>Moving astern. (International) Conducting flag hoist drill. (Navy) Shorten Course (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>Tango</b> TANG-go</p>	<p>Keep clear; engaged in trawling. (International) Do not pass ahead of me. (Navy)</p>
	<p><b>Uniform</b> YOU-nee-form</p>	<p>You are running into danger.</p>
	<p><b>Victor</b> VIK-tah</p>	<p>I require assistance.</p>
	<p><b>Whiskey</b> WISS-kee</p>	<p>I require medical assistance.</p>
	<p><b>X-ray</b> ECKS-ray</p>	<p>Stop carrying out your intentions and watch for my signals. Individual Recall (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>Yankee</b> YANG-kee</p>	<p>I am dragging anchor. (International) Ship has visual communications duty. (Navy) Wear Life Jackets (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p><b>Zulu</b> ZOO-loo</p>	<p>I require a tug. 20% Scoring Penalty (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p>Code/Answer Code or Answer</p>	<p>Message is understood. Also, numeric decimal point. (International) Flag that follows is from the International Code of Signals. (Navy) Postponement (Sailing Regatta)</p>
	<p>First substitute (First Repeater) First sub</p>	<p>Substitute for the first flag in this hoist. (International) Also "repeats" the first flag or series of flags in this hoist Absence of flag officer or unit commander (In port). (Navy) General Recall (Sailing Regatta)</p>

	<p>Second substitute</p> <p>Second sub</p>	<p>Substitute for the second flag in this hoist. (International)</p> <p>Absence of chief of staff (In port). (Navy)</p>
	<p>Third substitute</p> <p>Third sub</p>	<p>Substitute for the third flag in this hoist. (International)</p> <p>Absence of commanding officer (In port). (Navy)</p>
	<p>One</p> <p>WUN</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral one. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Two</p> <p>TOO</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral two. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Three</p> <p>TREE</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral three. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Four</p> <p>FOW-er</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral four. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Five</p> <p>FIFE</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral five. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Six</p> <p>SICKS</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral six. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Seven</p> <p>SEV-en</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral seven. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Eight</p> <p>ATE</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral eight. (Navy)</p>
	<p>Nine</p> <p>NIN-er</p>	<p>None. (International)</p> <p>Numeral nine. (Navy)</p>

	Zero ZEE-roh	None. (International) Numeral zero. (Navy)
	Pennant one PEN-ant WUN	Numeral one. (International) Pennant one. (Navy)
	Pennant two PEN-ant TOO	Numeral two. (International) Pennant two. (Navy)
	Pennant three PEN-ant TREE	Numeral three. (International) Pennant three. (Navy)
	Pennant four PEN-ant FOW-er	Numeral four. (International) Pennant four. (Navy) Postponement (Sailing Regatta)
	Pennant five PEN-ant FIFE	Numeral five. (International) Pennant five. (Navy)
	Pennant six PEN-ant SICKS	Numeral six. (International) Pennant six. (Navy)
	Pennant seven PEN-ant SEV-en	Numeral seven. (International) Pennant seven. (Navy)
	Pennant eight PEN-ant ATE	Numeral eight (International) Pennant eight. (Navy)
	Pennant Nine PEN-ant NIN-er	Numeral nine (International) Pennant nine. (Navy)
	Pennant zero PEN-ant ZEE-roh	Numeral zero (International) Pennant zero. (Navy)

## Race Committee Flags

Flag/Shape	Name	Sounds	Meaning
	X	1 when raised	Individual Recall
	First Substitute	2 when raised 1 when lowered	General Recall
	AP	2 when raised 1 when lowered	Postponement
	I	None when raised 1 when lowered	Round the Ends Starting Rule
	C	Repetitive	Change of Course
	L	1 when raised	Come Within Hail or Follow Me
	M	Repetitive	Mark Missing
	N	3 when raised 1 when lowered	Abandonment and Resail
	S	2 when raised	Shorten Course
	Y	1 when raised	Wear Life Jacket

	N over H	3 when raised	Abandonment Return to Shore
	Z	1 when lowered	20% Scoring Penalty
	Black	1 when lowered	Hard Start: Disqualification
Class Flag Raised	Warning	1	5 minutes to start
   	Preparatory (or I or Z or Black Flag) Raised	1	4 minutes to start
	Preparatory (or I or Z or Black Flag) Lowered	1	1 minute to start
Class Flag Lowered	Start	1	Start

## Miscellaneous Flags



Small Craft Warning  
Up to 38 mph winds



Gale Warning  
39-54 mph winds



Storm Warning  
55-73 mph winds



Hurricane Warning  
74+ mph winds