

## The Flag of the United States: Designed by a 17-Year-Old High School Student



The **United States flag**, commonly known as the "Stars and Stripes," is one of the most recognizable and revered symbols worldwide. What many people may not know is that the modern version of this flag was designed by a 17-year-old high school student, Robert G. Heft, in 1958.

### Historical Context

In 1958, the imminent admission of Alaska and Hawaii as new states to the Union was on the horizon, bringing the total number of states to 50. This development necessitated an update to the national flag, which had featured 48 stars since 1912, to reflect the new states.

## Origin of an Idea

Robert G. Heft, then a high school student in Lancaster, Ohio, designed the flag as part of a school project for his history class. Motivated by the prospect of new states joining the Union, Heft proposed a new arrangement for the flag. His design featured five rows of six stars alternating with four rows of five stars, all arranged in parallel to represent the 50 states.

This project was more than just an academic exercise. Heft took a 48-star flag from his grandparents, cut out the original stars, and sewed 50 new stars according to his design. When he presented the project, he initially received a B- from his teacher, who felt the design lacked creativity. However, the teacher promised to reconsider the grade if Heft's design was officially adopted.

## Official Adoption

Heft sent his model to his local congressman, Walter Moeller, who forwarded it to the appropriate authorities. After a series of evaluations, Heft's design was chosen out of more than 1,500 submissions to become the new national flag. President Dwight D. Eisenhower formally adopted this flag on July 4, 1960, following Hawaii's admission in August 1959. Thus, the 50-star flag of the United States became the nation's official symbol.

## Legacy

The flag designed by Robert G. Heft has remained unchanged since its adoption, making it the longest-used version of the United States flag in history. Heft's story is an inspiring example of how young individuals can significantly impact national history, demonstrating how a simple idea and personal initiative can become an enduring part of a nation's identity.

Robert G. Heft, who passed away in 2009, is often celebrated as a symbol of patriotism and creativity. His work on the flag stands as a lasting testament to civic engagement and the innovative spirit that are central to the American experience.

The United States flag, with its 13 stripes and 50 stars, continues to be a powerful symbol of the nation's unity and diversity, and the story of its design remains an inspiration to generations.

## Sources

- [simple.wikipedia.org](https://simple.wikipedia.org)