

Flag Etiquette for UK registered vessels

What	When	Where	Why
Club Burgee*	When aboard - Officially Ensign hours - Commonly night & day - Officers night & day	Yacht - masthead Motor boat - jackstaff	Shows club membership
Red Ensign - undefaced	When aboard - Ensign hours	Pushpit/taffrail. Mizzen masthead. Gaff peak. Backstay/Main Leech	Shows the nation state under which you are sailing
Ensigns that require a special warrant - Red Ensign defaced - Blue Ensign defaced - Blue Ensign undefaced - White Ensign	When aboard - Ensign hours. If arriving during Ensign hours the club burgee is raised before its associated Ensign. And when leaving the associated Ensign is lowered before the club burgee	Pushpit/taffrail. Mizzen masthead. Gaff peak. Backstay/Main Leech	Shows the nation state under which you are sailing
Q flag	When requesting Free Pratique	Starboard flag halyard (the signal station) at the top	When requesting customs and medical clearance in a foreign port. Not required for the EU (currently). Required for Guernsey, check Almanac.
Courtesy Ensign	When entering the territorial waters of a foreign country & when in a foreign port - Officially Ensign hours - Commonly night & day	Starboard flag halyard at the top	It is a courtesy to the country whose waters you have entered and indicates that you will abide by their laws. If requiring Free Pratique, raise the courtesy ensign after you have been cleared.
Owners flag	When the owner is aboard	Port flag halyard	Let's people know the nationality of the owner
Dressing Ship - with masthead flags	When underway near a harbour or anchorage on - British National Days**	Ensigns at each masthead and the burgee at the main masthead, plus the Ensign at the stern.++	To celebrate British National events
Dressing Ship - Overall (All the flag signals, order +)	When in port - British National Days** - Club days - Officially Ensign hours - Commonly night & day	Stemhead to masthead(s) to taffrail - see the order below - plus the Ensign at the stern.	To celebrate British National and club events
Pilot Jack - aka Civil Jack or Merchant Jack	At anchor or in harbour	Jackstaff	Requesting a pilot, no longer used
Cross of St. George	Royal Navy ONLY and... Association of Dunkirk Little Ships	Masthead Jackstaff (in bow), plus ADSL burgee and Red Ensign	Admiral on board. In company with other ADSL vessels, shows club membership
Union Flag/Union Jack	Royal Navy ONLY	Jackstaff	British Warship
Skull & Crossbones aka Jolly Roger	RN submarines returning from ops Leisure - I wouldn't, You are telling people you are a pirate.	Masthead	To list kills

See over for * ** + and ++ information

Ensign Hours

0800 to sunset or 2100

From 1st Nov to 14th Feb 0900 to sunset or 2100

Note, an Ensign must be worn in accordance with the Merchant Shipping Act 1995;

- 1) When requested to show it by a warship
- 2) When entering or leaving any foreign port.
- 3) If over 50 gross tons when entering or leaving any British port

* Generally clubs will only allow one burgee to be flown at a time, especially when flown in conjunction with an undefaced ensign that requires a permit and a royal warrant. Some clubs allow other club burgees to be flown at the same time, notably the Royal Yacht Squadron

** British National Days.

Accession Day	6th February
Commonwealth Day	2nd Monday in March
The Queen's actual birthday	21st April.
Coronation Day	2nd June
The Queen's official birthday	usually the 2nd Saturday in June
The Duke of Edinburgh's birthday	10th June
The Prince of Wales's birthday	14th November

+ Dressed overall - the order of the flags

Bow

E-Q-3-G-8-Z-4-W-6-P-one-I-Code-T-Y-B-X-1st sub-H-3rd sub

Masthead

D-F-2nd sub-U-A-O-M-R-2-J-zero-N-9-K-7-V-5-L-C-S

Taffrail.

++ This is getting extremely complicated, especially when we are required to raise an Ensign the same size as our Ensign at the stern, to the main masthead, alongside our club burgee. How many boats have the facility to raise 2 flags to the masthead? Added to which with all the gear up there, a full size Ensign is bound to get caught on something expensive. When dressed overall, I simply have my RSrnYC club burgee at the masthead, my undefaced Blue Ensign at the stern and raise the signalling flags - and fly all these during Ensign hours, although it is commonly accepted that one can leave the burgee flying night and day and the same for the Dressed Overall signal flags.

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