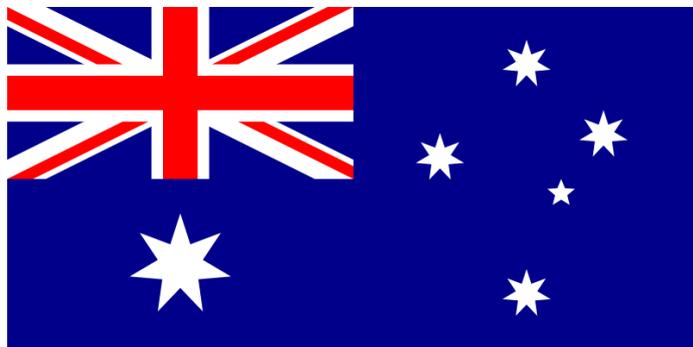


*Australian Studies*

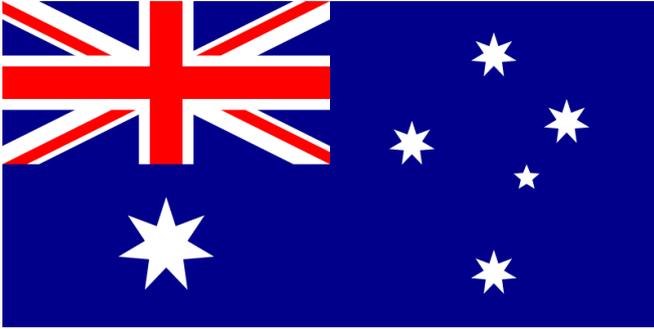
# Australian Emblems and Symbols

Suitable age group: 10 and older

These printable lessons will be added  
to as time goes along.



# Australian Flag



The Australian flag has the Union Flag (the flag of the United Kingdom and commonly known as the Union Jack) in the upper left corner, with a large white seven-pointed star known as the Commonwealth Star underneath. The Commonwealth Star is a seven-pointed star symbolising the Federation of Australia (which came into being on New Year's Day 1901). Six points of the Star represent the six states of the Commonwealth of Australia, while the seventh point represents the territories. The right half of the flag features the Southern Cross constellation, made up of five white stars...one small five-pointed star and four, larger, seven-pointed stars. The Southern Cross is one of the most distinctive constellations visible in the Southern Hemisphere. All six stars on the flag are on a dark blue background.

The flagpole atop Parliament House in Canberra is an impressive sight. It is 81 metres tall and measures 12.8 by 6.4 metres (the size of half a tennis court).

Guidelines for flying the flag are laid out in the 1953 Flags Act. The guidelines say that the Australian National Flag is allowed to be flown on every day of the year and that it "should be treated with the respect and dignity it deserves as the nation's most important national symbol".

The flag must be flown in all government buildings and displayed in polling stations when there is a national election.

The flag should only be flown during daylight hours, unless it is illuminated. The flag should not be displayed upside down under any circumstances, not even to express a situation of distress. The flag is not to be placed or dropped on the ground. Flags that have decayed or faded should not be displayed.

The Australian flag is flown at half-mast on solemn occasions; these include the death of a member of the British Royal Family, ANZAC Day (until noon) and Remembrance Day.

There are many people who would like the Australian flag changed; they would like it to have a completely different design. These people believe the flag should be more 'Australian', perhaps in the green and gold colours of our Olympic teams and maybe featuring an Australian animal -probably a kangaroo. Many say that the current flag doesn't recognize that Australia as a nation has matured and that the Union Flag should be removed. Also, according to these same people, our flag is too similar to some other nation's flags, especially that of New Zealand.

## **Talk about or Write about**

- (1) What do you think of the Australian flag? Do you like it? (say why or why not)
- (2) When (if ever) have you waved an Australian flag? Did it make you feel proud to be Australian?
- (3) Mainland Australia has six states and two territories (we have other territories offshore, for example in Antarctica). Can you name all our states and territories? Maybe you could sketch a large Commonwealth Star and write the names of the states and territories next to the seven points (write the two territories' names alongside one of the points).
- (4a) What is a constellation? (4b) Why do you think the Southern Cross constellation is so-called?
- (4c) Have you ever looked up into the night sky and seen the Southern Cross? (if not, try it!)
- (5) The Flags Act of 1953 states that the Australian flag should be treated with respect and dignity yet there have been a few occasions when individuals and groups have desecrated our flag (some have even burnt it). What might lead some people to do this? Do you think these people should be punished or penalised? If so, what could be a suitable punishment?
- (6) Do you agree that the Australian flag should be flown at half-mast upon the death of a member of the British Royal Family? (after all, these persons are not Australian)
- (7) Do you think our flag should be changed and have a new design? If so, what should it look like? (you may wish to sketch your new Australian flag)