

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands- one nation indivisible- with liberty and justice for all."

HISTORY:

In 1892, Francis Bellamy wrote the words above, the first version of what we now call the Pledge of Allegiance. The first pledge was recited by about twelve million schoolchildren, as part of a celebration of Columbus Day. The daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance became a tradition that is now part of most school students' daily schedules.

In 1923, the words "my flag" were replaced with "the flag of the United States". Many immigrants had come to the United States, and it was thought that "my" could be confusing for a lot of people!

In 1924, the words "of America" were added, to further prevent confusion.

In 1943, the Supreme Court ruled that people could not be forced to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1954, the words "one nation indivisible" were changed to "one nation, under God, indivisible". This was during the Cold War, in which the United States and the (Communist and officially atheist) USSR struggled for dominance. It was felt that putting an emphasis on religion was another way to show the US superiority over the USSR.

MEANING:

But what does the Pledge mean? Many people tend to recite the Pledge by *rote*, or thoughtless routine. It's always a good idea to think about what you say, so let's think about the Pledge for a moment.

- the word *pledge*. A pledge is a formal promise to do something. If you seriously promise to clean your room by Monday, you *pledge* that you will do it.
- *allegiance*. Allegiance is loyalty. This word comes from the time when people pledged allegiance to a lord, which basically meant they promised their services to that lord.
- *to the flag*. The words in this are clear, but the meaning may not be. What's interesting about this part of the Pledge is that in the past, people usually pledged allegiance to another person, like to a king, or to his family. Pledging your allegiance to the flag means that you support the country it stands for, which it doesn't necessarily mean the leaders. This is a change from the old "loyalty to royalty" style.
- *and to the Republic for which it stands*. A republic is a form of government, usually led by a president, in which the power is held by the citizens, who are able to elect their leaders. Pledging allegiance to the flag means that you also pledge your allegiance to this style of government, which is represented by the flag.
- *One nation, under God, indivisible*. Indivisible means incapable of being divided. The United States, a group of individual states, is nevertheless a single unit. *Under God* is explained above.
- *With liberty*. Liberty is freedom from restriction. The right to liberty, as well as to life and to the pursuit of happiness, are guaranteed under the constitution.
- *And justice*. When something is right, it's just. Justice is legal and moral rightness.
- *For all*. This means that liberty and justice are, or should be, available to all of the people in the nation represented by the flag, including the people who do not say the Pledge.

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1. Write out the entire Pledge of Allegiance here. Please write neatly.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance has been around for over one hundred years, and yet there is still some controversy surrounding it. Some people feel that saying the Pledge is a clear sign of their patriotism, and a way to show their support of their country. Some people don't want to say the Pledge, because they don't want to promise their allegiance to a flag. Some people are unable to say the Pledge for religious or personal reasons. Do you say the Pledge? Do you think everybody should say it? What do you think of people who don't say the Pledge? What do you think of people who do? Be prepared to discuss your answers.

3. If you could make changes to the Pledge of Allegiance, would you? What would you change? If you think it's perfect as it is, explain why.
