

The Flags and Their Meanings

In every dojang there are at least two, sometimes three flags on display. Arranged left to right, they are the home country flag, the flag of the style of martial art and the flag of the country where Tang Soo Do originated. It is customary for students to face and salute the flags when entering or leaving the dojang as a sign of respect for what the flags represent.

Flags of a country are called Kuk Gi (or Taegeukgi) and flags of a style are Kwan Gi. The example below shows the U.S. flag, the Moo Duk Kwan flag and the South Korean flag



The U.S. Flag

- 13 stripes for the 13 original colonies
- Red stripes represent valor and white stripes represent purity and innocence
- The stripes themselves signify the sun's rays of light
- Stars are for each state in the union. (1st flag had only 13) They are a symbol of the heavens and the divine goal to which man has aspired
- Blue is the color of vigilance, perseverance and justice

When worn on a shoulder, the flag patch should be on the left, with the blue facing forward and stripes facing back so it appears to be waving as you walk forward.

Moo Duk Kwan Flag

- The fist represents power and justice
- There are 14 laurel leaves on each side for the 14 provinces of Korea and the advancement of peace
- The six red berries stand for the 6 inhabited continents
- Below the fist are three characters:
 - Left side is Tang (China, Tang Dynasty)
 - Right side is Soo (Hand)

- Center in circle is Moo (Stop, Military) - intended to promote non-violence, stop fighting

South Korean Flag (also called "Taegeukgi")

- The Blue part of circle is Um (Ying) and the Red part is Yang. Together they represent the balance of opposites in the universe.
- The White background is the traditional color of the Korean people and symbolizes peace.
- The trigrams (line symbols) also represent the concept of opposites and balance. They are taken from the I Ching (Book of Changes) which has a total of 64 trigrams.
 - Upper left is "Geon" which denotes heaven while its opposite in lower right is "Gon", meaning earth.
 - Upper right is "Gam" for water, and its opposite in lower left is "Li" meaning fire.

Together, the Um / Yang circle and the four trigrams represent universal harmony and unity. This sentiment is embodied in the South Korean pledge of allegiance to the flag, which is:

"Before this proud Taegeukgi, I firmly pledge my loyalty and will devote my body and soul to the eternal glory of my country and people."

