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A piece of fabric bearing a unique design of a specific shape serves a variety of purpose representing a meaning. Generally called as a Flag, these are generally used as a symbol of meaning or as a signaling device or sometimes for the purpose of decoration. Flags prove to be highly useful in conditions where communication seems challenging. Each flag signifies a specific meaning and purpose. Flags are also used in conveying messages to masses or for advertising a particular product.

Flags contribute significantly for signaling at sea, are mostly used for search, and rescue operations. Hence, adherence to government rules and regulations becomes mandatory especially when these are used at sea. Termed as an ensign or courtesy flag, it depicts respect and peace when flown by merchant ships or yachts on its mast while visiting foreign waters. Not flying a courtesy flag or flying it wrongly by a merchant ship in a foreign port can indicate its willingness to fight or not complying with the foreign governmentâ€™s rules and regulations. Severe fines and penalties can be imposed on a merchant ship because of this happening and even till today, this is considered as a grave and intentional fault.

In certain parts of the world, different ensigns are used by yachts meaning whether or not they are carrying cargo on board which requires customs declaration. Implications of the Flags differ like if a boat is found to be carrying merchant goods and flying a yacht ensign, it will be implied as smuggling by some government administrations. For search and rescue at sea, a special set of maritime signal flag exists which signifies a specific meaning corresponding to that environment. These set of flags are dedicated to alphabets and numerals where each alphabet or numeral bears a specific meaning. The method of signaling between merchant ships using flags are also different.

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