

# The Union Flag and Flags of the British Isles

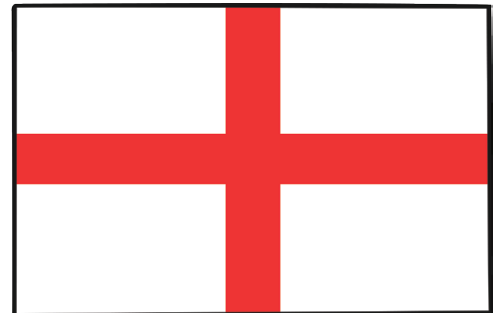
The Union Flag, also known as the Union Jack, is the national flag of the United Kingdom. It is the British flag. It is called the Union Flag because it stands for the union of the countries of the United Kingdom under one King or Queen.



## How Was the Union Flag made?

The Union Flag is made up of the flags of three of the United Kingdom's countries; the countries of England, of Scotland and of Northern Ireland.

England is represented by the flag of its patron saint St. George. The Cross of St. George is a red cross on a white background.



Scotland is represented by the flag of its patron saint St. Andrew. The Cross of St. Andrew is a diagonal white cross or saltire on a blue background.

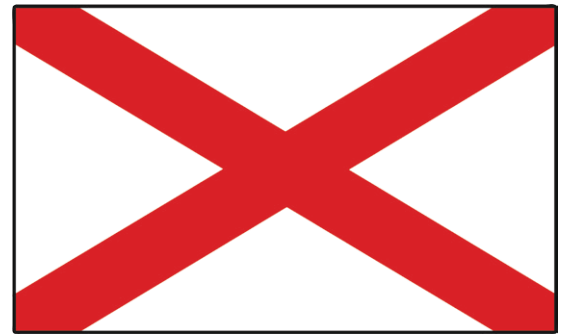


In 1603, when King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England, it was a Union of the Crowns, but not of nations. Each country still kept its own parliament. James wanted England and Scotland to be a united kingdom but which flag would be used? The answer was the creation of the first Union Flag.

On 12 April 1606, the National Flags of Scotland and England were united for use at sea, making the first Union Jack. The reason for the use of the name 'Jack' is not certain. It may have been because the jack was a small flag flown from the jack-staff at a ship's bow or it may have come from the name of King James.

# The Union Flag and Flags of the British Isles

In 1801, Ireland was added to the Union flag. Ireland is represented by the flag of its patron saint St. Patrick. The Cross of St. Patrick is a diagonal red cross or saltire on a white background. However, many Irish people do not recognise this flag as an Irish flag but as a flag designed by the British for Ireland.



The cross of St. Patrick was combined with the Union Flag of St. George and St. Andrew to create the Union Flag that has been flown ever since. This Union Flag was a Royal flag and was ordered to be flown from the King's castles and properties.



The Welsh dragon does not appear on the Union Flag. This is because when the first Union Flag was created in 1606, the Principality of Wales was by that time already united with England.



Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom. The southern part of Ireland is the Republic of Ireland, or Eire. The state was created as the Irish Free State in 1922. It was officially declared a republic in 1949, following the Republic of Ireland Act 1948.