

About Capitol Symbols

VOCABULARY WORDS

- **Symbol:** An object that stands for an idea
- **Chambers:** The rooms where the House of Representatives and the Senate meet and vote on bills

What is a symbol?

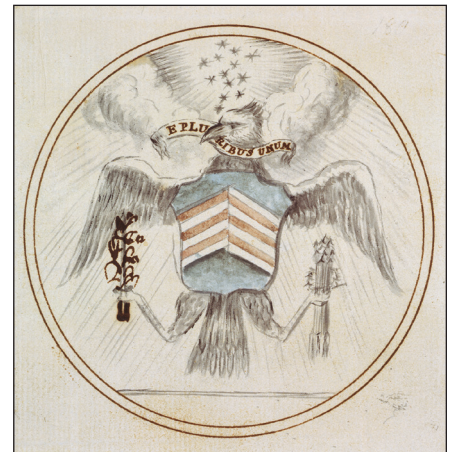
You see and use **symbols** in your everyday life. For example, a ♥ means love. A ☺ means happy. These symbols are messages without words. Two of the most common symbols found at the U.S. Capitol are the eagle and the Union Shield.



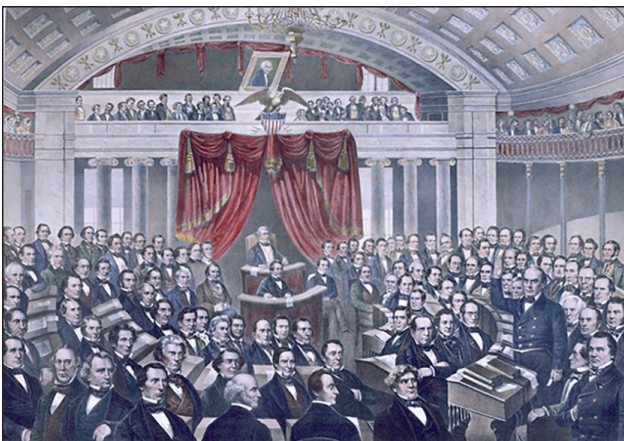
Detail from the Apotheosis of Washington in the Capitol Rotunda. Ballona with Union Shield and Eagle.

When were these symbols chosen?

During the nation's founding, Congress considered many different animals, colors and shapes to stand for ideas about the United States. At one point, Benjamin Franklin suggested that a turkey be the national bird. Eventually, Congress chose a different North American bird - the bald eagle. In 1782, Congress chose the eagle and the Union Shield for the Great Seal of the United States.



Proposed Design of The Great Seal of the United States by Charles Thomson, 1782.



U.S. SENATE COMMISSION ON ART

Daniel Webster addressing the United States Senate, 1850.

What do these symbols mean?

Eagles are symbols of strength in many countries. In the United States, the eagle also stands for freedom. Shields are objects and symbols of protection. The Union Shield also symbolizes the United States. It has 13 stripes to represent the first 13 states. The blue bar at the top that holds the stripes together symbolizes Congress.

Where are these symbols in the Capitol?

They can be seen all around the building in the art and architecture, including the House and Senate **Chambers**. The picture above is an illustration of the Old Senate Chamber. Can you find the **eagle** and **shield** in the picture?

What animals, shapes or colors would you choose to symbolize your state or your country?

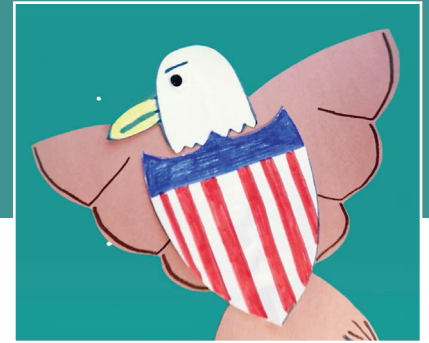


Symbols can also be found on everyday things, like the back of the penny. Design since 2010.

Design Capitol Symbols

YOU WILL NEED:

- Brown and white construction paper
- Glue (liquid or stick)
- 2 popsicle sticks
- Scissors
- Markers or colored pencils



1. **Glue the ends of two popsicle sticks together** to make one long piece. Let dry.
2. **Fold the brown paper in half** widthwise (like a book). Cut along the crease line. Use one piece for the wings and the other for the tail.
3. **For the wings:** fold your brown half sheet widthwise once more. Draw (on only one side of paper) a curved line from the crease. Then, add a wavy line back to the crease. Next cut out the shape while keeping the paper folded. When you open the paper you'll have both wings!
4. **For the tail:** draw a U shape from the top of the paper. Add feathers from the bottom of the U shape. Then cut.
5. **Take your white paper and cut in half** widthwise. Save one half for a different project. Take the other half of the white paper and cut widthwise one more time.
6. **For the head:** Draw an upside-down U shape on one of the small white pieces of paper. Add a wavy line to close the upside-down U shape. Add a beak. Then cut.
7. **For the Union Shield:** Take the other small piece of white paper and fold in half widthwise one more time. Draw two connecting curved lines (on only one side of paper). Then cut the shape while keeping the paper folded.
8. **Now it is time to decorate!** Add a face and feathers for the eagle. For the Union Shield, draw a horizontal line close to the top and color in blue. Then, draw 13 white and red alternating stripes under the blue top.
9. **Finally, glue all pieces** to your popsicle sticks. Begin with the wings in the middle, head and tail next. And finally, the shield on top of the center of your eagle!

