

Illinois State Flag

Prairie State • Capital: Springfield • Statehood: 1818

Overview

The white field carries the state seal: an eagle clutching a shield and banner, perched on rock by water. “State Sovereignty, National Union” is its motto, words in tension yet bound together. “Illinois” is written below in plain letters, making the flag both emblem and label.

Flag specifications

Adopted: 1915-07-06
Designer: Lucy Derwent
Ratio: 3:5
White field with Illinois state seal and the word ‘ILLINOIS’ below.

Colors

 #FFFFFF  #FFD700  #B22234  #002D72

Symbolism

eagle	Represents the United States.
banner	Displays state motto ‘State Sovereignty, National Union.’
sun and water	Symbolize future and prosperity.

Historical timeline

- 1818: Illinois admitted as 21st state.
- 1915: First official flag adopted.
- 1970: Word ‘ILLINOIS’ added below seal for clarity.

Notable facts

- Illinois’s motto balances state sovereignty with national unity.
- The word ‘ILLINOIS’ was added in 1970 after veterans pushed for clearer identity.
- The bald eagle symbolizes the United States.
- The shield on the eagle’s chest represents national strength and defense.
- The banner shows the state motto ‘State Sovereignty, National Union.’
- The flag features the state seal on a white field.
- The current design was officially adopted in 1915.
- Illinois is one of several states to modify its flag for better recognizability.

Seal deep dive

stateSeal

The Great Seal of the State of Illinois centered on a white field.
Meaning: Illinois’ national loyalty, strength, growth, and natural landscape

eagle

A bald eagle grasping a shield and a ribbon in its beak.
Meaning: Federal unity, strength, and protection

motto

The ribbon reading ‘State Sovereignty, National Union’.
Meaning: Balance between state rights and federal unity

Vexillology notes

Design type: State seal on white field

Complexity: 8/10
Readability: 4/10

Printable reference sheet for classroom use.