American Legion Gavel Protocol

When and How Many Times to Rap the Gavel

Based on the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies

Quick Reference

The gavel is used primarily as a ceremonial signal during meetings and special ceremonies.

Signal	Meaning
One rap	Be seated / members take their seats
Three raps	Stand at attention / rise

Regular Meeting — Opening Ceremony

1. The commander announces the meeting is about to open. Officers take their stations.
2. **One rap** — seat those present. The sergeant-at-arms then closes the doors of the meeting hall.
3. **Three raps** — all present stand at attention for advancing the colors, the prayer, the POW/MIA Empty Chair ceremony, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the Preamble to the Constitution.
4. After the Preamble: **One rap** — seat the members.
5. The commander declares the post regularly convened.

Regular Meeting — Closing Ceremony

6. After asking if there is further business and calling for the chaplain's memorial service or closing prayer: **Three raps** — the membership rises, uncovers, and stands in silence.
7. After the colors are retired and the meeting is declared adjourned: **One rap**.

Other Common Uses

The same one-rap (sit) and three-rap (stand) pattern is used throughout other ceremonies in the Manual of Ceremonies:

Initiation of New Members

- **One rap** to call the meeting to order.
- **Three raps** when members stand for the prayer or the obligation.
- **One rap** to seat members.

Draping the Charter / Memorials

- **Three raps** to rise and face the charter.
- **One rap** to continue or seat members.

Installation of Officers

- **Three raps** to bring the post to its feet.
- **One rap** to seat members.

Special Ceremonies

For ceremonies such as Gold Star Banner presentations, Post Everlasting, or funeral-related portions: **three raps** to stand and **one rap** to seat.

Notes

- The gavel is primarily a ceremonial signal for standing and seating during rituals, not a tool for calling the meeting to order in the parliamentary sense or for maintaining order during ordinary business.
- This protocol is consistent across recent editions of the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* (including the 2022 and 2026 editions).
- Always follow the exact wording and sequence prescribed in the Manual of Ceremonies for the specific ceremony being conducted.

Source: The American Legion Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies