



The Five Principles of Citizenship

Every child will use technology to connect with others, becoming a “citizen” of all sorts of online communities. Knowing how to be a good citizen offline is fairly easy as the world is governed by rules, laws, and norms that have been established over time. But that’s not the case online. Many online communities still lack rules, laws, or norms, and if there are any they are sometimes hard to figure out (or buried in “terms of use”). Plus, there are no “police” safeguarding the Internet. That’s why it’s important to introduce children to the “five principles of citizenship.” These principles will help them know how to conduct themselves online, and off.

-The Five Principles of Citizenship come from [Education World](#).

Key Standards—CCSS.ELA-LITERACY: RL.5.2, W.5.2, W.5.2.A, SL.5.1, SL.5.1.A, SL.5.1.B, SL.5.1.C; RL.6.2, RL.6.5, SL.6.1, SL.6.1.A, SL.6.1.B, SL.6.1.C, L.6.6. ISTE: 3d, 4d. CASEL: 3d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5d, 5e, 5f.

Learning Objectives

Children will...

- Understand what it means to be a member, or citizen, of a community.
- Consider all the communities they are citizens of.
- Think of ways community members demonstrate five principles of citizenship.



Introducing The Activity

Ask: Have you ever had to stand in line? At the grocery store or some other place? Did you join the line at the back, or did you go directly to the front? How did you know what to do? Guide children towards the understanding that citizens are guided by certain understandings, or principles, that are generally understood and agreed to by all community members.

The Activity

1. Discuss how we all belong to, or are “citizens” of many different groups or “communities.” Explain the following definitions:

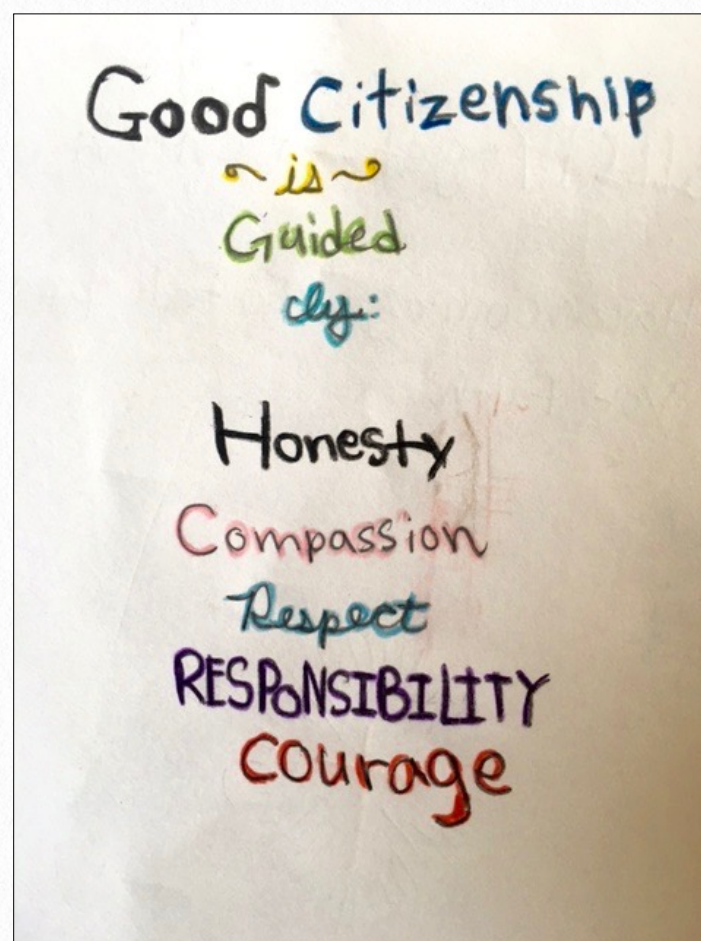
- **CITIZEN:** A member of a community.

The Activity, continued

- **COMMUNITY:** A group of people sharing a space or having characteristics in common.
- **PRINCIPLE:** A rule or code of conduct.

2. Discuss how, likely, the smallest community children belong to are their families. Ask them to think of other communities they might belong to as well, such as their class, their school, a sports team, choral group, church, etc. Help them list all the communities they are “citizens” of.
3. Explain that being a “good citizen” is guided by five important principles. Watch the video and then take a few minutes to review each principle:

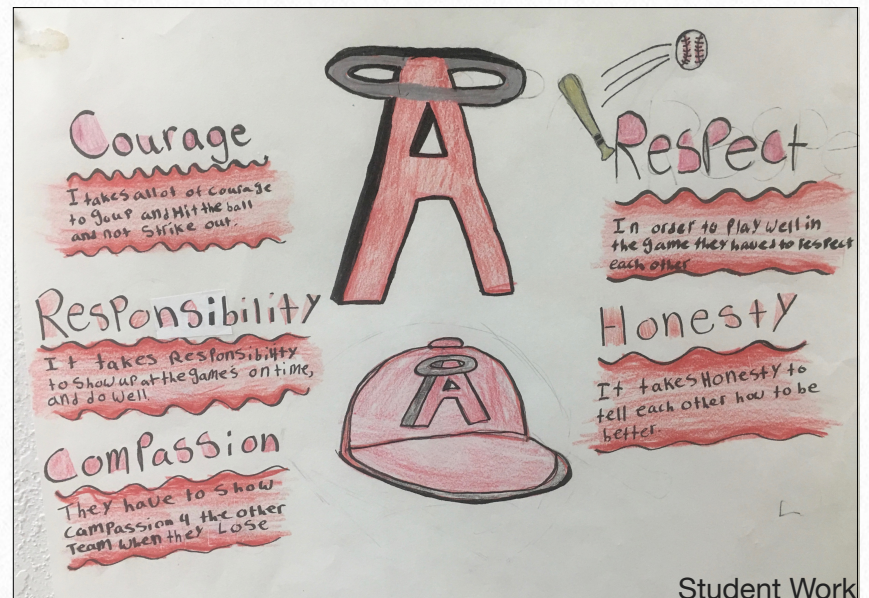
- **Honesty** is being truthful and fair. An honest person doesn’t say things or spread rumors that are not true. They also admit when they are wrong, even if it gets them into trouble. If they deny doing something they actually did, that’s being dishonest.
- **Compassion** is the emotion of caring for people and other living things. Compassion gives a citizen an emotional bond with their world. Research shows that when a person feels compassion for others, regions in their brain linked to pleasure actually light up! So it feels good to show compassion.
- **Respect** is showing thoughtfulness and consideration towards other people or things. A respectful person always thinks about how their actions might affect both friends and strangers. Sometimes respect is even directed towards animals or objects. A good citizen should also have respect for laws.
- **Responsibility** is about being answerable and accountable. A responsible person does what they are expected to do, even when they don’t want to or feel like it. For example, one of the main responsibilities of a student is to learn. A responsible person always owns up to the consequences of their actions, whatever they may be.
- **Courage** is doing the right thing even when it’s unpopular, difficult, or even dangerous. Sticking up for someone who might need an ally shows courage. A courageous person also says and does what they think is right, even when others disagree and they don’t let obstacles or fear of failure stop them from doing the right thing.



The Activity, continued

4. Choose **one community** you discussed, such as your children's *class, school, sports team, club, immediate family, extended family, state, county, or country*.
5. Challenge your children to think of at least **one** example of how members of this community might demonstrate *each* of the five principles. Have them make a list or create a small poster that illustrates their examples. If they need help, share the following example.
6. For this example, students chose a **baseball team** as their community. Here is what they came up with:

- **Honesty:** It takes honesty to tell each other how to play better.
- **Compassion:** It's important to show compassion to the other team if they lose.
- **Respect:** Shaking hands with opponents after a game shows respect.
- **Responsibility:** It takes responsibility to show up to games on time and do well.
- **Courage:** It takes a lot of courage to go up and hit the ball.



7. Take a look at your children's work and discuss.

Goal

Children begin to understand that "good citizenship," both online and off, is guided by simple principles.