

CHARACTER COUNTS!SM – *Citizenship*

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What Is CHARACTER COUNTS!?

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a grassroots initiative based on voluntary citizen action.

CHARACTER COUNTS! has no ideological or political agenda other than strengthening the moral fiber of the next generation by promoting consensus ethical values.

The Six Pillars of CharacterSM . . .

Our communities benefit when people understand the importance of being involved and caring citizens . . . and “doing the right thing.”

CHARACTER COUNTS! uses the following six pillars to describe character and ethical behavior in ways an individual can understand how **a person of character** thinks and behaves.

Trustworthiness means being honest; having integrity; not deceiving, cheating, or stealing; and being reliable and loyal.

Respect means following the Golden Rule; being tolerant; using good manners; being considerate of the feelings of others; and dealing peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

Responsibility means doing what you are supposed to do, persevering, using self-control, being self-disciplined, thinking before you act, and being accountable.

Fairness means playing by the rules, being open-minded, listening to others, not taking advantage of others, and not blaming others carelessly.

Caring means being kind, being compassionate and loving, showing you care, expressing gratitude, forgiving others, and helping people in need.

Citizenship means doing your share to make your community better, cooperating, staying informed, voting, being a good neighbor, obeying the laws and rules, respecting authority, and protecting the environment.

What CHARACTER COUNTS! Is NOT . . .

- A means to introduce religion into public education, although it is consistent with and in no way hostile to religious and spiritually based beliefs about right and wrong.
- Just a “feel-good” or “do-well” program stressing personal happiness and success. It stresses the need to discern right from wrong and the acceptance of a moral obligation to honor the Six Pillars of Character.

What Can Be Done . . .

Individuals: Consciously incorporate the teaching and modeling of the Six Pillars of Character into everything you do, in all areas of your life.

Social and Service Organizations: Get all the organizations to which you belong to take an active role in supporting character-building activities and incorporate them into your group’s plans and actions.

Communities and schools: Be active in bringing character education to your community and schools. Support community efforts.

Citizenship

“Citizenship . . . is not a spectator sport”–Anon.

Being a good citizen means going beyond our own interests and demonstrating a concern for the needs of others. Good citizens recognize their obligations to make their homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and country the best they can be. Good citizens learn that they can make a difference when they follow rules, voice opinions, vote, and work and play cooperatively with one another. They stay informed, listen, do their part for community endeavors, respect authority, and volunteer.

Activity:

- Name someone who is/was a good citizen and explain why you think so.
- Using a large sheet of paper, have participants list the attributes of a good citizen.
- Discuss these attributes as a group.
- Discuss how these attributes can be shared with or taught to others.

Flag Etiquette

Rules to follow when displaying, handling, and/or pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States of America:

1. The flag should be displayed often, especially on national and state holidays.
2. The flag should be displayed on or near the post office and other public buildings, schools when in session, and polling places on election day.
3. When the American flag is displayed from a staff in a classroom, auditorium, or other meeting hall, whether on floor level or on a stage or platform, it should be in a position of prominence. It should be in front of the audience and in the position of honor at the speaker's right, facing the audience or congregation. Other flags, including state flags or a 4-H flag, should be placed on the left of the speaker (to the right of the audience).
4. When the flag is displayed from a staff or pole projecting from a window, balcony, or building, the flag's union (stars) should be at the top of the pole.
5. When the American flag is displayed from the same flagpole with another flag—of a state, community, organization, or Scout unit—it must always be at the top.
6. When flown with flags of states, communities, or societies on separate flagpoles of the same height and in a straight line, the flag of the United States is always placed in the position of honor. The other flags may be smaller, but none may be larger.
7. The flag should be raised briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously.
8. Ordinarily, the flag should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset. It should be illuminated if it is displayed at night.
9. When the flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object; it should be received by waiting hands and arms. For storage, the flag should be folded neatly and ceremoniously in a special order.
10. When carried in a parade or procession, the flag should be to the right of the marchers. When other flags are carried, the flag of the United States may be centered in the front of the others or carried to their right.
11. When the flag passes in a procession, or when it is raised or lowered, all should face the flag and salute. To salute, all persons come to attention. Those in military uniform give the appropriate formal salute. Citizens not in uniform salute by placing their right hand over the heart. Men are to remove hats or caps, hold them in the right hand placed over their heart. Hat rests on left shoulder.
12. When the National Anthem is played or sung, citizens should stand at attention and salute at the first note and hold the salute through the last note. The salute is directed to the flag, if displayed; otherwise to the music.
13. The flag should never be allowed to touch anything beneath it, such as the ground or the floor.
14. The flag should not be displayed in inclement weather and should be cleaned and mended when necessary.

Source: LSU Ag Center, Research and Extension

CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics (www.charactercounts.org).