

# CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH: CITIZENSHIP

October: 3-5

**What is Citizenship:** The Dictionary defines it as “the state of being vested with the Rights, Privileges, and Duties of a citizen”.

## What does it mean to be a good citizen?

You are a good citizen when you follow the rules and help to make the community better around you.

## Ways of Showing Good Citizenship

**Show Respect to Rules, People, Property:** We have rules to keep you and others safe, so we want to follow the rules. We respect people by treating them the way we want to be treated, even when we do not agree with them or we do not like something they are doing. We take care of people’s property. We do not break things that do not belong to us. We do not throw our trash on the ground and leave it for others to pick up.

**Be Honest and Trustworthy:** Honesty is always the best policy. Being honest helps you take responsibility for your actions. Honesty helps keep you accountable to yourself and the community around you.

**Be Responsible:** Anytime we have a right or a privilege, we have responsibilities.

“Ask not what your Country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your Country.” John F Kennedy



## Are you A Citizen?

You are a citizen. You are a citizen in your family, in your school, and in your community. You do not have to be a Citizen of the United States, to be a good citizen in your family, school and community.

# Citizenship in School

## *Rights/Privileges*

You have access to the computers at school

You have books that you are able to read at school

You have playgrounds you get to play on at school

You have a teacher who will help you learn about science and math and work with you on reading and writing.

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## *Responsibilities*

You have to take care of your computer and follow the rules of using the computer.

You have to take care of the books and follow the rules while using the books. You have to put the books away when you are done using them.

You have to take care of the playground and follow the rules while you are playing on the playground.

You have to show your teachers respect. You have to listen to the teacher, raise your hand when you want to speak, and follow the teacher's instructions.

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## **Citizenship Characteristics in the Classroom:**

**Honesty**

Always tell the truth, don't cheat on your school work.

**Kindness**

Be nice to your classmates and fellow students.

**Compassion**

Think about other's and not just yourself.

**Respect**

Treat other's the way you want to be treated.

**Responsibility**

Follow the rules, take care of your school, complete your school work

# Tommy Learns About Being A Good Citizen

Tommy was visiting his grandmother for the weekend. He loved to visit his grandma. She made him cookies and they would play games together. Grandma had dinner ready to go as soon as they arrived. Tommy sat with his mom, dad, and grandmother at dinner and they began talking about school.

Grandma asked Tommy, “what is your favorite thing that you get to do in school this year?”

Tommy replied, “I love gardening club. I get to plant flowers and vegetables”.

“oh, that sounds wonderful” said grandma. “Are you learning a lot about the vegetables and plants?”

“Yes, and I love to see the lizards out by the plants and vegetables too. I want to be a reptile specialist.”

“Well that sounds very exciting. It sounds like your science is covered. How do you like math?”

“It’s boring.” Tommy said with a sigh.

“Okay, I understand you feel that way, but math is very important. Did you know that math helps us in every other area of our lives? It can help us adults as we are shopping, paying bills, or buying a car. It also helps us learn how to think logically, because math teaches us to think through steps. It’s okay that math isn’t your favorite, as long as you still try your hardest and do well. How about history or reading?”

Tommy stood up as he exclaimed, “I almost forgot, we read about history this last week. We were learning about citizenship. We learned about how to be a good citizen and I learned about our freedom. Did you know I can say anything I want because I am a citizen and I have freedom?”

Grandma took a deep breath and smiled. “Well honey, that does sound fantastic. But, you do know that while you have the freedom to say anything you want in this country, not everything is the right thing to say. You are a citizen, so you want to be a good citizen. You want to use your words to build people up and make them feel better about themselves. You don’t want to hurt people with your words. Just because you won’t go to jail for saying something, doesn’t mean you should say whatever you want all the time or that you won’t end up in time out for something you have said.”

“Grandma, if there are things I shouldn’t say, how do I know what they are?” Tommy asked.

“I’ll tell you the easiest way to know if you should say something or not. If you don’t have anything nice to say, then don’t say anything at all. And if you don’t know if it is nice to say or not, ask yourself if you would want someone to say it about you.”

Tommy’s parents smiled and nodded in agreement with Grandma.

“I can remember that. We also learned that we have the freedom to believe anything we want to believe in.”

“Wow, you really are learning about some of the things that make this country special. Yes, we all have the right to believe what we would like. That is why we have so many different types of churches and faiths in this country. As good as it is to be able to believe how we want, this right can be hard. When we believe something, we want others to believe the same way we do. We all have the freedom to believe what we want so we need to make sure that we do not treat people differently or badly if they don’t believe the same way we do. We want to show respect to everyone at all times.”

“okay grandma, but then I have a question.” Tommy stated.

“Yes dear” Grandma replied.

“Well, what if someone isn’t nice to us? My friend Billy called me stupid because I said the best color ever was green and he thinks the best color is blue. I told him he was stupider. Was that okay since he said it first?”

“No dear. He shouldn’t have called you stupid, but we can’t control other people. We can only control ourselves. We have to choose to be kind. We can lead by example and show people how to be good citizens”.

Mom and Dad again nodded in agreement with Grandma. This time Tommy’s mom jumped in with “it is okay to tell Billy that it isn’t nice to call people names and that you can believe differently and still be friends. We don’t always have to agree with other people, but we have to show them respect and that means that we do not say mean things when they do not agree with us.”

“Okay, I understand” Tommy said. “Can we have some cookies now?”

“Of course we can.” Grandma got up to get the cookies as Tommy sat at the table with his mom and dad. Tommy looked sad.

“What’s wrong pal?” asked Tommy’s dad.

“I was mean to my friend. I called him stupider.” Tommy cried.

“Well, you can call him to apologize. Next time you know some things to say instead of saying mean things again. It will all be okay.” Tommy’s dad replied.

Mom asked Tommy, “So honey, what are some ways you can be a good citizen?”

Tommy began reciting, “you can help your teacher clean the classroom, you can pick up trash in the park, you can help someone up if they fall down, you have to be honest, you have to be nice to everyone, and you cannot be selfish”.

“Wow, that is a very good start to your list of being a good citizen. Maybe tomorrow, we can go out and look for ways we can be a good citizen together.”

Grandma came back in with the cookies and milk. As they ate their cookies, Grandma told Tommy and his parents “You know, there are more freedoms than just being able to say what you would like and believe what you would like. In this country, we can choose to be anything we want to be and we can work really hard to get to that point. Many countries don’t allow this. That is why so many people want to come to this country. They want the chance we have. Did you know I wouldn’t have been able to be a doctor in some countries? In other countries, you have to take a test and the test says what type of job and school you will have. In this country, you get to choose the life you want, you just have to make good choices, work hard at everything you do, and remember to always do the next right thing.”

They finished eating their cookies. Tommy gave his parents and grandma a hug good night and went to bed thinking about how he could be a good citizen by just focusing on the next right thing.

# Citizenship in United States

## *Rights/Privileges*

You have access to school

You can work in any career you want

You have rights that many people in other countries do not such as Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion

When you are older, you will have the right to vote

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## *Responsibilities*

Listen to the teachers, follow the rules, take the classes you need, and study to learn everything you need to know.

You have to work toward the future you want. Doing well in school and working hard at everything you do will help you succeed.

You have to respect people who do not have the same beliefs you do. You have to respect that people are allowed to say things you may not like. You do not have to like it, but you have to respect it. This means we are not mean to someone who says or believes differently than we do.

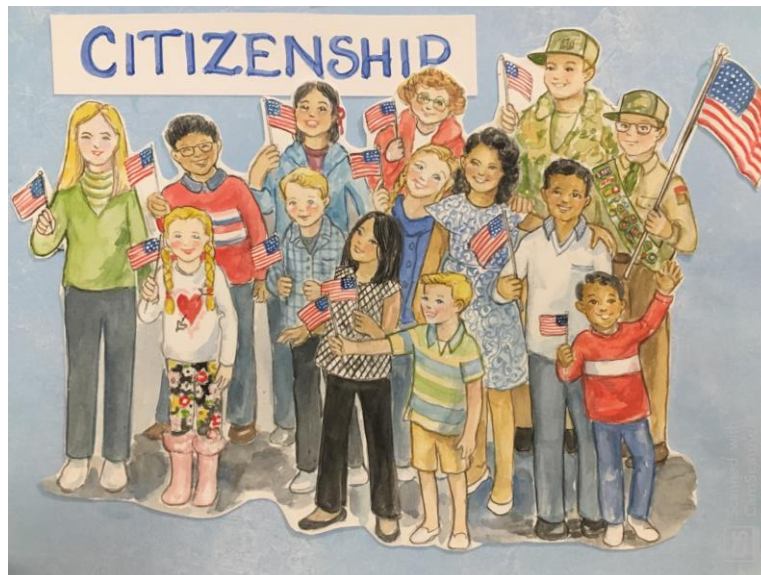
You need to know what you are voting for. If there is a change in laws, you need to know what the change is. If you are voting for a person, you need to know what that person stands for.

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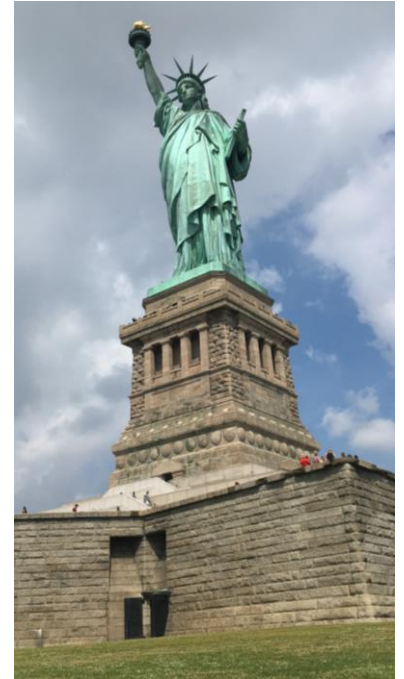
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## Ways to be a Good Citizen in the United States:

- 1) Learn about the history of the United States. When we know our past, we can make sure we have a better future.
- 2) Learn about the most important papers: Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence
- 3) Learn our National Anthem, say the Pledge of Allegiance, Fly the American Flag

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## Discussion:

- 1) What do you think it would look like if there were no rules at home?
- 2) What do you think it would be like if there were no rules at school?
- 3) Is there a rule that you think is really important in school?
- 4) What do you think it would look like if there were no rules in our community?
- 5) Is there someone you think makes a good citizen and why?
- 6) Is there something you can do to be a good citizen?

# Identifying Citizenship

Look at each line and decide if the situation is showing good citizenship

- Adam is playing tag with his friend Mark in a grocery store. (No, this could be dangerous to the people around them)
- Susan goes with her mom to help collect food for the local food bank. (Yes, trying to help the community is very important)
- Kyle stays after class to help his teacher clean up the classroom. (Yes, we always want to try and help clean up the messes we make)
- Sarah sings the national anthem at the school football game (Yes, she is taking part in the most important song for our country).
- The entire class stands and says the Pledge of Allegiance. (Yes, we all want to take part in the Pledge of Allegiance)
- Scott throws his soda can on the ground and leaves it there. (No, we do not leave our trash for others to pick up)
- Stacy paints words and pictures on the side of her school building when she knows this is against the rules. (No, we never want to paint on something that is not ours and we do not have permission to paint. This is considered vandalism and is illegal)
- Lucy is driving around with her windows down and her radio very loud so people all around her are listening to her radio. (This is not being a good citizen. Being a good citizen is thinking about others. Lucy is making others listen to her music and they may not want to. This can also be a safety issue because the people around her can't hear the emergency vehicle sirens over her music.)



# Ways you can be a Better Citizen

## At Home:

- ✓ Help clean the house
- ✓ Help set the dinner table
- ✓ Help take care of pets
- ✓ Help pick weeds from the yard
- ✓ Help plant flowers in the yard

## At School:

- ✓ Help your teacher clean the classroom
- ✓ Pick up after yourself
- ✓ Throw away trash that you see on the ground

## In the Community:

- ✓ Go with your mom or dad to help at food bank
- ✓ Go with your mom or dad to help with community clean up events
- ✓ Help with church events
- ✓ Help at community events with your mom or dad