

ACTIVITY 1: The 5 Principles of Citizenship

While the definition of “citizenship” is certainly evolving, especially given the number of online and offline communities we all belong to today, the central principles of “good citizenship” are evergreen. Learning these principles (definitions adapted from [Education World](#)) gives kids a framework for digital citizenship. This comes in handy as they discover that while most offline communities have rules and norms that have evolved over time, the same does not always hold true for online communities which are newer. Thus, these five principles can help guide youth towards the understanding of what it means to be a good citizen, online and off.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Youth will...

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



INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY

Ask your children: *Have you ever traveled anywhere in a car? (Of course they have!). Ask: What happens when you arrive at a stop sign or red light? Do you stop, slow down, proceed? How does your driver know what to do? What gives your driver the authority to drive? If there are a line of shoppers waiting to pay at a grocery store, do you cut to the front of the line? Why or why not?* Guide them towards the understanding that citizens are guided by certain principles that are generally understood and agreed to by all community members.

THE ACTIVITY

1. Tell your kids that we all belong to, or are “citizens” of many different groups or “communities” Explain that:

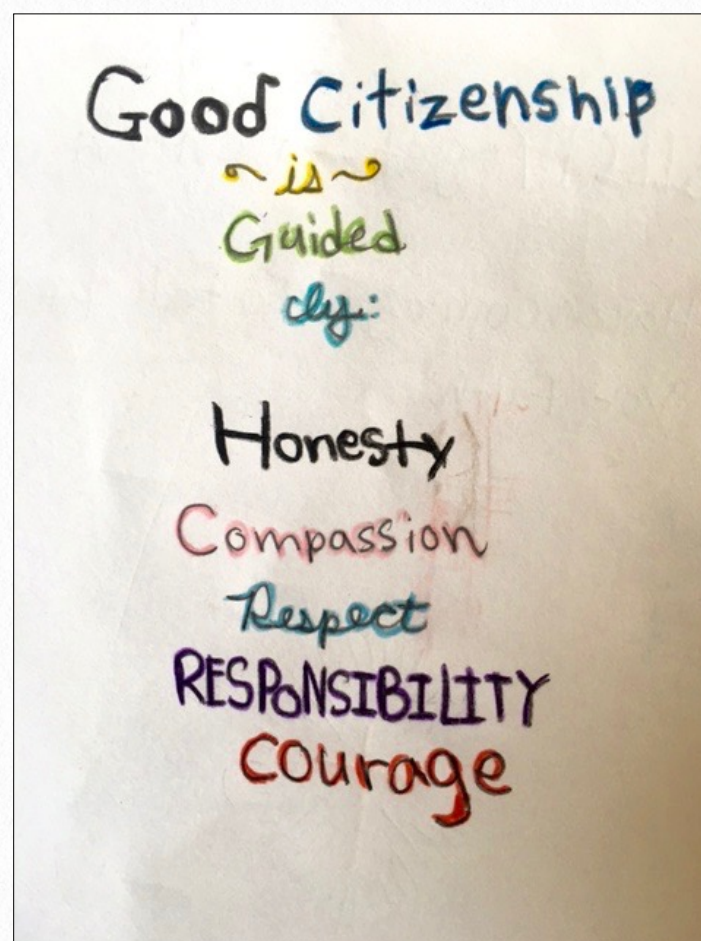
A CITIZEN is a member of a community.

**A COMMUNITY is a group of people sharing a space
or having characteristics in common.**

THE ACTIVITY, continued

2. The smallest community your children belong to is probably your family. Ask them to think of some of the other communities they are members of, such as their class, school, a sports team, choral group, church, city, state, etc. Have them take a moment to list these communities.
3. After your children are finished, explain that being a “good citizen” is guided by five important principles. Take a few minutes to describe and discuss each one.

- **Honesty** is being truthful and fair. A good citizen must be honest with others, and with himself or herself.
- **Compassion** is the emotion of caring for people and for other living things. Compassion gives a citizen an emotional bond with his or her world.
- **Respect** is showing regard or consideration for others. Sometimes respect is even directed toward inanimate things or ideas. A good citizen should have respect for laws.
- **Responsibility** is about being answerable and accountable. For example, one of the main responsibilities of a student is to learn. They must educate themselves so that they can achieve their full potential.



- **Courage** is doing the right thing even when its unpopular, difficult, or dangerous. Many people throughout history—such as Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Mahatma Gandhi—have demonstrated great courage.
4. Talk about how the members of your family show honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility, and courage towards one another.
 5. Next, have your children pick **one** of the offline communities they listed, i.e.: *their class, a sports team, a club, their church, immediate family, extended family, state, county, or country*. Challenge them to think of at least **one** example of how members of this community demonstrate *each* of the five principles. If they need a nudge getting started, share the following example.

THE ACTIVITY, continued

6. In the following example, a child considered how members of a baseball team might demonstrate the five principles, and came up with this:

Honesty: It takes honesty to tell each other how to play better.

Compassion: It's important to show compassion towards the other team's members 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 to the plate and attempt to hit the ball.

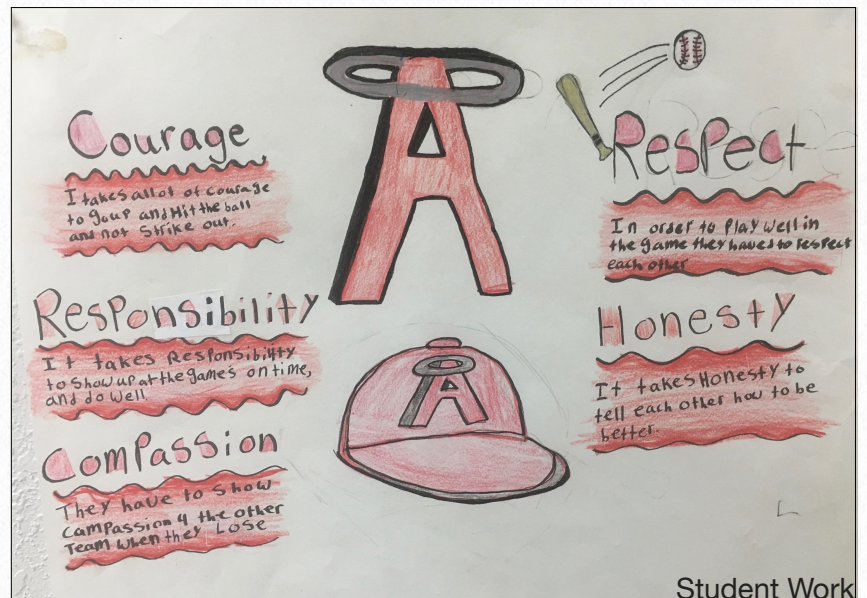
7. Have your children make a small poster illustrating the examples they came up with (see our example).
Display it in your home!

8. If you haven't done so already, together with your children, watch our video:

<https://www.cyberwise.org/cyber-civics-for-families>

GOAL

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



*Definitions for the five themes adapted from [Education World](#).