



# A Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World Newsletter

A CURRICULUM OF  
HOPE FOR A  
PEACEFUL WORLD

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Dear Readers,

I don't know about you, but I am really concerned about the polarization we are experiencing in our country. We are losing what we had in common, our values— our agreement across cultures and classes as to what is the right way to behave and what is the wrong way to behave. We seem to have lost our ability to disagree in a respectful manner and we are losing courtesy, civility, and our manners. In my opinion, this country is a mess, and we need to figure out how to fix it.

I had my knee replaced in July, and during my recovery I watched a lot of shows on Netflix and Hulu. During one episode of *Emily in Paris*, Emily Cooper says, "I like rules. They force us to behave". This statement has stuck with me. It got me thinking about when and how our rules for behavior came to be.

Every year my third grade class is introduced to the Magic Tree House series. We read about Jack and Annie traveling back in time and, in the second book, spying on a feast taking place in a castle. Imagine living in the Middle Ages and being invited for dinner at The Great Hall at your king's abode. A goblet of wine is passed around the table for everyone to drink from. Using a knife, which is the only utensil, someone stabs a piece of meat, tries it, and when it does not impress it is returned to the platter and the platter is again passed. Noses are blown in hands, guests chew with their mouths open, and bones are thrown on the floor. There are no napkins, so hands are wiped on shirts. People used the corners of the room as bathrooms. While hygiene should be the reason these table manners became obsolete, manners changed as society developed and the classes became more defined. Good manners were how the lower class needed to treat the upper class and how the upper class needed to treat each other. Eventually a set of manners developed that all classes in a civilized society needed to use, mainly because economically, the classes became dependent on each other. Rules became necessary for safety's sake. Please and thank you were expected. During childhood children learned manners and how to control their impulses so they were ready to take their place in society as an adult.

We seem to be at a point where some children are not getting training in manners, and some adults do not have self-control, thus they are breaking the "rules" – think road rage, being unfaithful, using bad words, saying cruel things about others, the inability to make rational decisions, not using good judgement. When these behaviors occur, they are not necessarily leading to others' disdain or their ability to label them as harmful or hurtful. Some behaviors are even admired and repeated.

When George Washington was elected President, he set both formal and informal practices for future presidents which included setting standards for all aspects of the new democracy including politics, the military, and economics. He began working on these when he was 16 years old and they were based on "110 rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation" written by the French Jesuits in 1595. While I wish I could list them all here, you may read them at [www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/rules-of-civility](http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/rules-of-civility) and there is an activity based on 10 of them in this newsletter. These were expected not only between people in his company, but of the entire new nation. It seemed like these rules stuck for a very long time.

Do we need new rules? How can we open the conversation and come to some agreement about courtesy, civility and manners? If we continue to lose our sense of right and wrong, will it impact our democracy and send society backwards?

This issue focuses on manners and respect. Hopefully you will find something that resonates with you and gives you something to not just think about, but talk about.

Janice McKusick, Editor

## George Washington's Rules of Civility



*This activity comes directly from the George Washington's Mount Vernon website. The site has a wealth of information including primary sources, lesson plans, videos, online learning, virtual tours and more. We appreciate the opportunity to reprint it in its entirety.*

When George Washington was a teenager, he wanted to make a good impression on his elders. Good manners were important to him. He made sure that he knew how by copying *Rules of Civility* from a French rulebook in his own handwriting. *Rules of Civility* was a list of 110 rules for people to follow. These rules dealt with different situations, such as how to be respectful to people, how to be polite when dining with others, and how to behave. Here are ten of the rules:

1. Every Action done in Company ought to be with Some Sign of Respect to those that are Present.
2. In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.
3. Sleep not when others Speak, Sit not when others stand, Speak not when you should hold your Peace, walk not on when others Stop.
4. When you Sit down, Keep your Feet firm and Even, without putting one on the other or Crossing them.
5. Shift not yourself in Sight of others nor Gnaw your nails.
6. Do not laugh too loud or too much at any Publick Spectacle.
7. Use no Reproachfull Language against any one neither Curse nor Revile. Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came.
8. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others.
9. Undertake not what you cannot Perform but be Careful to keep your Promise.
10. Speak not Evil of the absent for it is unjust.

Examine the rules with your students. You might have the students act them out so they understand their meaning. You can point out how language was used at that time including capital letters, spelling, and punctuation.

Ask the students if they have rules like this in their homes or at school. Ask which of these rules they consider the most important. Discuss what these rules tell us about George Washington.

Have the students rewrite some or all of the rules in their own words and discuss whether they can be used as class rules today.

[www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/rules-of-civility](http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/rules-of-civility)



**It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.**

**-Frederick Douglass**

It's only one straw,<sup>3</sup>  
said 8 billion people.  
— Unknown

## Caring for Our Planet

**Do Plastics Ever Biodegrade?** Petroleum-based plastics like PET don't decompose the same way organic material does. When organic material is buried in a landfill, the wood, grass and food scraps are transformed by a process known as **biodegradation**. These materials are changed by bacteria in the soil into other useful compounds. But bacteria avoid plastics and therefore you would assume that plastic will never biodegrade. However, in 2008, Daniel Burd, a Canadian High School student, isolated two bacteria (*Sphingomonas* and *Pseudomonas*) that at the correct temperature ate almost half of a plastic sample within six weeks.

Single-use  
plastic is a  
ticking time  
bomb for the  
environment.  
Avoid it  
wherever and  
whenever  
possible. —  
Jennifer  
Nini, editor  
Eco Warrior

Researchers continue to work to replicate Burd's experiment and find a way for waste treatment plants to apply this new process. Until then, the only real way to break down plastic is through photodegradation. This kind of decomposition requires sunlight instead of bacteria. When UV rays strike plastic, they break the bonds holding the long molecular chain together. Over time, this can turn a big piece of plastic into lots of little pieces. But plastic buried in a landfill is usually not placed where it is in the light. In the ocean, which is where a lot of plastic ends up, plastics are in as much light as they are water. In 2009, researchers from Nihon University in Chiba, Japan, found that plastic in warm ocean water can degrade in as little as a year. This plastic ends up inside animals or washed up on the shore where humans are most likely to come into direct contact with the toxins.

One solution to this environmental catastrophe is biodegradable plastic. There are two types currently on the market -- plant-based hydro-biodegradable plastic and petroleum-based oxo-biodegradable plastic. Plant-based plastic, polylactic acid (PLA), is a plastic made from corn. PLA decomposes into water and carbon dioxide in 47 to 90 days -- four times faster than a PET-based bag floating in the ocean. But conditions have to be just right to achieve these kinds of results. PLA breaks down most efficiently in commercial composting facilities at high temperatures. When buried in a landfill, a plastic bag made from corn may remain intact just as long as a plastic bag made from oil or natural gas.

Resistant plastics like PET take much longer to decompose since they require UV light to break down, not bacteria. Estimates suggest that it can take plastic bottles around 450 years to decompose in landfills.

*Adapted from Howstuffworks by William Harris | Updated: Apr 15, 2021*

[How Long Does It Take for Plastics to Biodegrade? | HowStuffWorks](#)



Do something drastic — cut the plastic! — Unknown



# Manners

What better time to teach kindness, courtesy, thoughtfulness, and respect of others than when you are establishing your classroom community. Making these behaviors automatic in children will influence their future and last their lifetime. Here are a few manners you can make sure you teach your children, your grandchildren and/or your students, and manners you should expect to see from them.

- \* Say "Please" and "Thank you."
- \* Hold the door open for others.
- \* Say, "Excuse me."
- \* Use eye contact, when it is culturally appropriate.
- \* Wait your turn.
- \* Use someone's proper title (Mrs. Mr. Ms. Dr.).
- \* Say you're sorry.
- \* Accept compliments.
- \* Have hallway etiquette.
- \* Use table manners.

For children 4-7: [Lesson1 Cover \(freemannerslesson.com\)](http://freemannerslesson.com)

For all ages: [Teaching Manners: Resources and Ideas | Education World](#)

For all ages: [18 Fun Activities That Teach Good Manners | How Does She](#)

For all ages: [Teach Good Manners in Your Classroom - Manners To Go™](#)

(Manners To Go is a for-purchase curriculum across all grade levels and has not been reviewed.)



A search of YouTube finds lots of videos—including the Berenstain Bears, Wolfoo, a few cute read alouds (Mind Your Manners—Manners at School (Part 1 of 4), School Rules and Self-Regulation and How Rude! A little story about manners) and several for older students.

We cannot assume that all children have had manners taught to them at home. Therefore we must make sure that our students develop social skills, know how to interact in a polite manner with people, and treat others with respect. Every child deserves to learn the manners that will help them succeed in life.

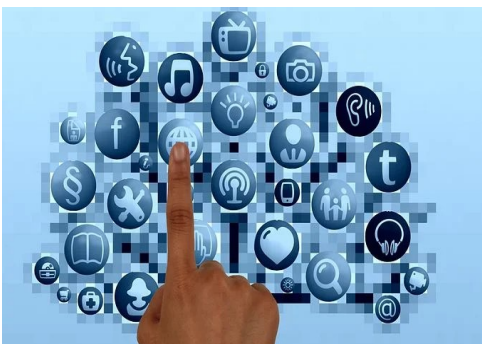
The hardest job kids face today  
is learning good manners without seeing any.  
-Fred Astaire



## One more thing about manners...

Especially for upper elementary and middle school students, the increased use of technology makes it extremely important for students to learn online communication etiquette. This is also an opportune time to teach about internet safety. Students need to learn how to speak respectfully and what qualifies as disrespect or bullying. These rules may be altered over time as technology changes. Make sure your students know what to do if they are having any problems while they are online.

- ◆ Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- ◆ Use the “Would you say it to their face?” rule.
- ◆ Re-read, edit and then wait 60 seconds before you send.
- ◆ Use punctuation and correct spelling. It’s good practice for when you enter the job market.
- ◆ Ask before downloading.
- ◆ Go to approved websites that have appropriate and true content.
- ◆ Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, wealth, social class, ability, sexuality, religion or any other identifying factor is off-limits.
- ◆ No Repeated Attacks: Repeat attacks move an incident from a forgivable offense to the far more serious crime of cyberbullying.
- ◆ No To Intimidation which includes threatening to share information about someone online, threatening to exclude someone for no reason, digging up online information about someone with the goal of harming them, and stalking a person online.



“The internet is  
written in pen  
not pencil.”  
-Unknown

[What Is Cyberbullying | StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-cyberbullying)

[Teaching Netiquette to Kids | Psychology Today](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/relationships/teaching-netiquette-to-kids)

[31 Netiquette Rules for Students & Online Discussion Boards \(2022\)  
\(helpfulprofessor.com\)](https://www.helpfulprofessor.com/31-netiquette-rules-for-students-online-discussion-boards-2022)

Videos are a good way to get this message across.

["Netiquette: A Student's Guide to Digital Etiquette" - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Safe Web Surfing: Top Tips for Kids and Teens Online - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Teen Voices: Oversharing and Your Digital Footprint - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

# Calendar

## September

### 8 International Literacy Day

*Despite progress made, literacy challenges continue. There are 771 million illiterate people around the world, mostly women, who still do not have basic reading and writing skills, and that makes them increasingly vulnerable.*

- [International Literacy Day 2022 - UNESCO global event | UIL](https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy-day-2022)
- [www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/celebrate-international-literacy-20584.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/celebrate-international-literacy-20584.html)

### 17 Playing for Change Day

*Musicians are taking to the streets and stages in their communities to raise money and awareness for the Playing For Change Foundation, a non-profit organization that is bringing music education programs to children around the world.*

- [Playing For Change | Official Website](http://www.playingforchange.org/)

### 21 International Day of Peace

*This year's theme: End Racism. Build Peace.*

- [www.peaceday.org](http://www.peaceday.org)
- [www.internationaldayofpeace.org](http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org)

### 24 National Public Lands Day

*This celebration brings out thousands of volunteers to help restore and improve public lands around the country.*

- [www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org)

## November

### 11 Veterans Day (Remembrance Day in Canada)

*On November 11, we honor the wartime service and sacrifice of men and women in the armed forces.*

- <https://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/veterans-day-activities-intro.html>
- [www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/index.asp) (poster contest)
- [Browse Veterans Day Hands-on Activities | Education.com](http://www.browseveteransdayhands-onactivities.com)

### 16 International Day for Tolerance

*Help spread tolerance and raise awareness of any intolerance that may still be prevalent in the world today.*

- <http://www.doonething.org/calendar/toleranceday.htm>

### 20 Universal Children's Day

*Promote togetherness around the world, awareness of the problems children face in every corner of the globe, and improve the welfare for all children.*

- [www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/)

### 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

- <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women>



## October

### 3 World Habitat Day

*Everyone deserves a decent place to live.*

- <https://www.habitat.org/volunteer/build-events/world-habitat-day>

### 16-22 Worldwide Character Counts Week

*Lots of resources are available to help place extra focus on character education.*

- <https://charactercounts.org/character-counts-week>
- <https://bitsofpositivity.com/free-worldwide-character-counts-week-resources/>

### 16 World Food Day

*Millions of people around the world cannot afford a healthy diet, putting them at high risk of food insecurity and malnutrition. But ending hunger isn't only about supply. Enough food is produced today to feed everyone on the planet. The problem is access and availability of nutritious food.*

- [Home | World Food Day | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](http://www.fao.org/world-food-day)

### 24 United Nations Day

- [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

### 28 Mix It Up Day

*An international campaign that encourages students to move out of their comfort zones and eat lunch with someone new. It can take place on any day.*

- [Mix It Up! | Learning for Justice](http://www.mixitupday.org)

## December

### 1 World AIDS Day

- [www.worldaidsday.org/](http://www.worldaidsday.org/)

### 3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

*Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights.*

- <http://www.un.org/en/events/disabilitiesday/>

### 10 Human Rights Day

- [www.un.org/en/rights](http://www.un.org/en/rights)

### 18 International Migrants Day

*Learn about the challenges and difficulties faced by over 272 million migrants building new lives in every corner of the world.*

- <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/events/international-migrants-day/>



# What Does Respect Look Like?

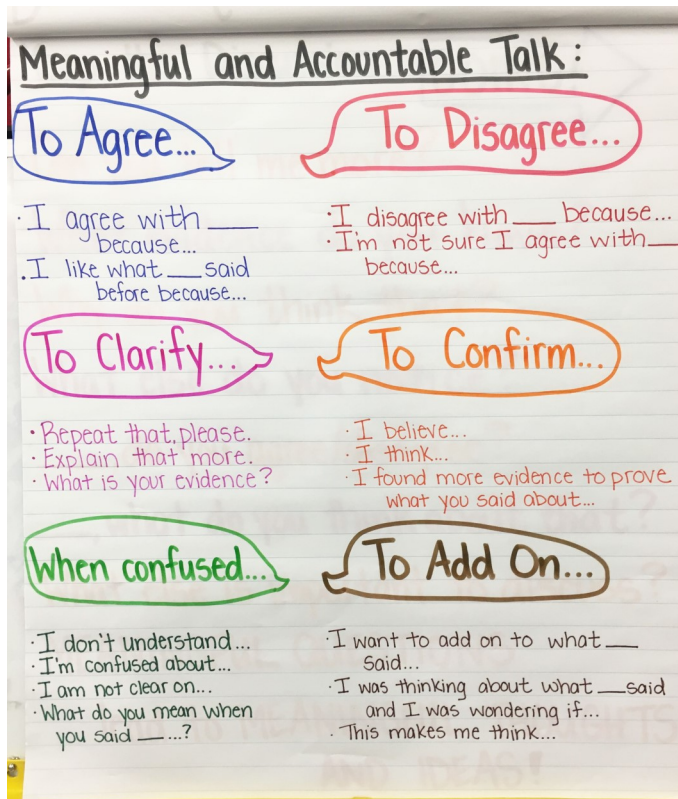
## Accountable Talk

While accountable talk is a strategy we teach to students, it should also be an expectation for adult discourse. Think about contentious Board of Education or town meetings. Accountable talk is a way to talk to and with each other politely and respectfully. When accountable talk is used people listen to each other and respond with respectful statements of agreement or disagreement.

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/accountable-discussions>

[Doing Accountable Talk in the Classroom | Resilient Educator](#)

[\(521\) Pinterest](#)



## Growth Mindset

When you have a growth mindset you believe that through hard work, intelligence can grow and improve. People who have a growth mindset are more successful at work and in life. The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset, which means you believe that intelligence is determined at birth and impossible to change. Students with a growth mindset have respect for themselves and others. Students with a fixed mindset are stuck. We want our children to know that when they have perseverance and determination, they will succeed. Lessons on Respect (as well as other SEL topics) for Pre K—high school can be found at:

[The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation | Free K-8 Lesson Plans: New & Improved](#)

## Children's Books that Promote a Growth Mindset

<https://selfsufficientkids.com/growth-mindset-childrens-books/>

[Salt in His Shoes](#)

[The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes](#)

[What Do You Do With a Problem?](#)

[What Do You Do With an Idea?](#)

[Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin](#)

[Nadia, the Girl Who Couldn't Sit Still](#)

[Beautiful Oops](#)

[The OK Book](#)

[Rosie Revere, Engineer](#)

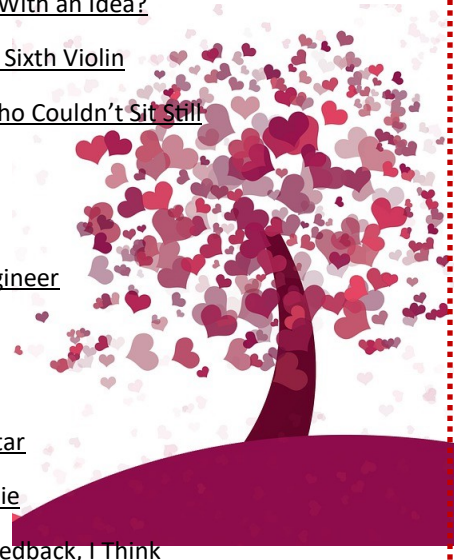
[The Dot](#)

[Ish](#)

[How to Catch a Star](#)

[A Whistle for Willie](#)

[Thanks for the Feedback, I Think](#)



Download the free **Kindness Calendar for Schools**.  
[2021-22 school kindness calendar](#)  
<http://randomactsofkindness.org> Use it in your classroom,  
 or for morning announcements.

## The Last Word

### The Bundle of Sticks

[20 Best Short Moral Stories for Kids \(Valuable Lessons\) - MomLovesBest](#)

Once upon a time, there was an old man who lived in a village with his three sons. Although his three sons were hard workers, they quarreled all the time. The old man tried to unite them but failed.

Months passed by, and the old man became sick. He asked his sons to remain united, but they failed to listen to him. At that moment, the old man decided to teach them a lesson — to forget their differences and come together in unity. The old man summoned his sons, then proceeded to tell them, “I will provide you with a bundle of sticks. Separate each stick, and then break each into two. The one who finishes first will be rewarded more than the others.”

And so, the sons agreed. The old man provided them with a bundle of ten sticks each, and then asked the sons to break each stick into pieces. The sons broke the sticks within minutes, then proceeded to quarrel among themselves again.

The old man said, “My dear sons, the game is not yet over. I will now give you another bundle of sticks. Only this time, you will have to break them together as a bundle, not separately.”

The sons readily agreed and then tried to break the bundle. Despite trying their best, they could not break the sticks. The sons told their father of their failure.

The old man said, “My dear sons, see! Breaking every single stick individually was easy for you, but breaking them in a bundle, you could not do. By staying united, nobody can harm you. If you continue to quarrel, then anyone can quickly defeat you.”

The old man continued, “I ask that you stay united.” Then, the three sons understood there’s power in unity, and promised their father they would all stay together.

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