



Students read and discuss a few of George Washington’s “Rules of Civility and Decency,” then make posters based on those rules.



One copy of the “George Washington’s Rules of Civility” Handout; Posterboard or cardstock for several student groups; Pencils or pens; Coloring materials (Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils).

Total Prep Time: 10 mins.



As this is the third Monday of the month, please consider sharing or re-sharing the Monthly Kick-Off activity, and if appropriate, video at [www.everymondaymatters.org](http://www.everymondaymatters.org). Additionally, a three-minute recap of the previous weeks may add extra context to this week and help connect the dots around the monthly theme.

4 C's	SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING	SERVICE LEARNING
• Critical thinking	• Self-awareness	• Integrated learning
• Communication	• Self-management	• High quality service
• Collaboration	• Social-awareness	• Collaboration
• Creativity	• Relationship skills	• Student voice
	• Responsible decision-making	• Civic responsibility
		• Reflection
		• Evaluation

## GOALS FOR THE WEEK

- Identify different elements of decency and “CIVILITY,” and their practical applications
- Make and implement a plan to practice daily habits of courtesy
- Discover how integrity contributes to being a leader in the community and in other aspects of life
- Understand how “BE CIVIL-MINDED” is an important part of this month’s theme, “MONDAY GETS HONORABLE”



## STUDENT ACTIVITY:

# “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES OF CIVILITY”

### 1) SHARE THE NAME OF THIS ACTIVITY WITH STUDENTS: “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES OF CIVILITY”

### 2) ASK 1-3 QUESTIONS FROM THE LIST BELOW TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THE ACTIVITY’S FOCUS:

**\*NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What does “BEING CIVIL” mean?**
  - Answer: Acting in kind and courteous ways toward others
- **When you think of “BEING CIVIL” toward someone, what types of actions or behaviors come to mind?**
- **What do you think a “RULE OF CIVILITY” is?**
  - Answer: A “RULE OF CIVILITY” is a “RULE” that helps people be kind to and respectful of each other
- **Do you think communities or societies need “RULES OF CIVILITY”?**
  - Why or why not?
- **How might having “RULES OF CIVILITY” help people to make “HONORABLE” choices?**
- **What are some “RULES” that you have where you live?**
  - How do those “RULES” help you to be more “CIVIL-MINDED”?
- **If you could add or take away one “RULE” from your life, what would it be?**
  - Why?
  - What kinds of effects might adding or taking away that “RULE” have on your life and other people’s lives?
- **Do you think people were “CIVIL” with each other during your parents’ or grandparents’ era?**
  - Do you think that time period was more or less “CIVIL” than today?
  - Which time would you rather live in?
  - If there were a “RULE” book written from that time period, what do you think it would include?
- **Do you think the “RULES OF CIVILITY” have changed over time?**
  - Why do you think that?
  - Which “RULES” might change over time?
  - Which “RULES” might stay the same?
- **How does practicing decent and “HONORABLE” behavior tell others that they MATTER?**
  - How does it build a world that is “CIVIL,” kind, and caring?

### 3) SET UP THE “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES OF CIVILITY” ACTIVITY:

- **Explain:**
  - Throughout time, the idea of “CIVILITY” has been important in the world
  - “CIVILITY” contradicts things like war, violence, and miscommunication
  - Society often adopts “RULES” about “CIVILITY”
  - These “RULES OF CIVILITY” can be written or unwritten, and sometimes change over time
- **Ask:**
  - What are some “RULES OF CIVILITY” that you are familiar with today?
  - How can these “RULES OF CIVILITY” be helpful to individuals and a society as a whole?

### 4) START PART ONE OF THE “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES OF CIVILITY” ACTIVITY:

- **Explain:**
  - Even before America was officially a country, there was a written book of “RULES OF CIVILITY” and decency
  - These “RULES” are often attributed to “GEORGE WASHINGTON,” the United States’ first President
  - His time was much different than our own
  - Their clothes, daily jobs, and speech were not like ours today, and they did not have most of the modern conveniences that we have now

- But they still strove to be “HONORABLE” people
- **Continue:**
- “GEORGE WASHINGTON” thought it was important to share his ideas with others
- So he compiled 110 “RULES” and titled them “George Washington’s Rules of Civility and Decency”
- Today we will read some of them in their original language and see if we can figure out what they mean
- Then we’ll decide whether or not that particular “RULE” still applies today
- If the “RULE” applies, we’ll make a poster of it and put it around our school campus
- **Pick 2-4 “RULES” from the “George Washington’s Rules of Civility” Handout to share with students, and read them aloud to students, one at a time**
- **Each time you read a “RULE,” let students try to come up with the meaning of the “RULE” by discussing in either a large group, small groups, or pairs**
- If students get stuck on the answer, you may give hints or read the meaning to them
- Note that if the “RULE” is a longer sentence, it may be helpful to read one portion at a time to support understanding, and ask if there are any words students don’t know or need defined
- **Then, ask one or two of the following questions for each “RULE” you read out loud:**
- Do you think this “RULE” still applies? Why or why not?
- What is a way you could say this “RULE” in a way that makes sense today?
- When might this “RULE” be necessary?
- Note that for younger students, you may read the “RULE” and the meaning, and then ask: Do we still follow that “RULE” today?
- **Allow up to 5 minutes for this discussion**

## 5) **START PART TWO OF THE “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES OF CIVILITY” ACTIVITY:**

- **Once you have gone through 2-4 “RULES,” put students in small groups and give each group materials to make posters: Cardstock or posterboard, pencils or pens, and coloring materials (markers, crayons, and/or coloring pencils)**
- **Ask each group to think of one of “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES” and to put it into their own words**
- **Have them write the “RULE” at the top of the paper, then make an illustration that conveys that “RULE”**
- If students need a reminder about the specific “RULES,” you may show them the leader handout
- **Make sure students understand the instructions and ask them to begin**
- **Allow up to 5 minutes for students to start making their posters**
- **If possible, allow students more time throughout the week to work in their groups and finish their “RULES” posters**
- **When they are done, work with students to hang them around the school for others to see the “RULES OF CIVILITY” and how they still apply today**

## 6) **AFTER THE ACTIVITY, ASK 1-3 OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS REFLECT ON WHAT THEY’VE ACCOMPLISHED AND HOW THEY CAN TAKE THIS FORWARD:**

**\*NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What was it like thinking about “RULES” in a new way?**
- **Why does it MATTER whether we keep “RULES” or not?**
- **How do “RULES” relate to “BEING CIVIL-MINDED”?**
- **Which “RULE” where you live is easiest for you to follow?**
- **Which “RULE” from school is easiest for you to follow?**
- **Can you think of a “RULE” that is difficult for you to keep?**
- How could you get support in keeping that “RULE”?
- Is there anyone you could be accountable to?
- **What are your thoughts about “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S RULES”?**
- **Which “RULE” did you think was the most interesting?**
- **How do these “RULES” remind you to be kind and respectful?**

- What did you like about making your poster?
- What about your poster are you the proudest of?
- What did making your poster teach you about “BEING CIVIL-MINDED” with others?
- What do you think helps make you an “HONORABLE” and “CIVIL” citizen?
- How can you encourage others to be more “CIVIL” and courteous with one another?
- How have you felt today that WE MATTER as citizens?

- 7) THANK STUDENTS FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE “RULES OF CIVILITY” TODAY. REMIND THEM THAT EVEN THOUGH THE WORDING OF “RULES” CAN CHANGE OVER TIME, SOME “RULES” ALWAYS STAY THE SAME AND HELP US BE MORE RESPECTFUL OF THOSE AROUND US.**
- 8) ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO USE THE IDEAS FROM THEIR POSTER TO BETTER THEIR OWN LIVES AND TO BE MORE “CIVIL” WITH OTHERS. CHALLENGE THEM TO NOTICE THE “CIVILITY” OF OTHERS, AND TO STRIVE FOR “HONORABILITY.”**
- 9) CONTINUE TO EXPLORE HOW TO “BE CIVIL-MINDED” BY LEADING ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING EXTENSION IDEAS.**



## EXTENSION IDEAS:

**DO ONE OR MORE OF THESE EXTENSION IDEAS TO BRING THE LESSON FROM 15 MINUTES TO 30 MINUTES OR MORE.**

- 1) More Time for Posters:** Give students time throughout the week to work on their “RULES” posters and then hang them around the school or campus for others to see.
- 2) Rules for This Day and Age:** Let students come up with a list of “RULES” that would be helpful for today, for example, about cell phone use, classroom or home respect, etc. Have students rewrite these “RULES” using language that might have been common in “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S” time. Make your own book of the compiled “RULES.”
- 3) Perform the Rules:** Instead of posters, let students make up their own song, poem, or skit about the “RULES” and present them to the group.
- 4) Matching Game:** For middle school students, create a matching game with the original “RULES” and their meanings. Let students match up the two before creating their posters.

**“EVEN IF WE REMAIN FLEXIBLE,  
WE NEED GROUND RULES.”**

- HORST SEEHOFFER

Note: The following are taken from “George Washington’s Rules of Civility and Decency,” and are written with no changes to the original script.

Source credit: <http://www.foundationsmag.com/civility.html>

**Every Action done in Company, ought to be with Some Sign of Respect, to those that are Present.**

Meaning: Be respectful to others in public.

**Show Nothing to your Friend that may affright him.**

Meaning: Don’t embarrass or scare your friends.

**If You Cough, Sneeze, Sigh, or Yawn, do it not Loud but Privately; and Speak not in your Yawning, but put Your handkerchief or Hand before your face and turn aside.**

Meaning: Cough, sneeze, sign, and yawn quietly. Don’t talk while yawning; turn away and cover your mouth instead.

**Sleep not when others Speak, Sit not when others stand, Speak not when you Should hold your Peace, walk not on when others Stop.**

Meaning: Stay awake when someone’s talking, stand when others around you stand, don’t speak out of turn, and if someone stops walking, wait for them.

**Turn not your Back to others especially in Speaking, Jog not the Table or Desk on which Another reads or writes, lean not upon any one.**

Meaning: Look at someone when you speak to them, don’t bump a table that someone’s reading or writing on, and honor personal space.

**Do not Puff up the Cheeks, Loll not out the tongue rub the Hands, or beard, thrust out the lips, or bite them or keep the Lips too open or too Close.**

Meaning: Avoid making weird faces.



**Do not laugh too loud or too much at any Public Spectacle.**

Meaning: Don't draw attention to yourself or laugh at others.

**In visiting the Sick, do not Presently play the Physician if you be not Knowing therein.**

Meaning: If someone is sick, let the doctor diagnose them instead of you.

**Speak not Evil of the absent for it is unjust.**

Meaning: Avoid talking about people behind their backs.

**If others talk at the table, be attentive but talk not with meat in your mouth.**

Meaning: Listen when people speak at the table, and avoid talking with your mouth full.

**Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others.**

Meaning: Avoid asking people about their scars or flaws/accept them as they are. If a friend tells you a secret, don't make that secret public.

**Play not the Peacock, looking every where about you, to See if you be well Decked, if your Shoes fit well if your Stockings sit neatly, and Cloths handsomely.**

Meaning: Don't look around, comparing yourself to others. Be humble and okay with who you are.