

ACTIVITY 2: How To Be A Good Citizen Online



Now that your children understand the guiding principles of “good citizenship” offline, it’s time to help them apply these principles to online communities they might belong to, or will belong to in the future. Many online communities lack guidelines or have rules that are unclear (or buried in their “Terms of Use”), that’s why it’s important to help your children understand how to be good citizens even in these digital spaces!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Youth will...

- Reflect on the principles of good citizenship.
- Consider how to apply the principles of good citizenship to online communities.
- Understand the possible consequences of **not** being a good citizen.

INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY

Chances are, most of your children will have played soccer at one time or another, or at least have a general understanding of how the game is played. Have them explain the rules of soccer to you. Ask: *Would you enjoy playing this game if there were no rules? What if no one kept score? What if the field had no boundary lines? How would you like it if players could foul whenever they felt like it, without any consequences?* Explain that without rules or guidelines, games like soccer are no fun to play. Challenge your children to think about how the same might be true online. Without guidelines, rules, or principles, playing or engaging with others online can get out of control and end up being no fun too.

THE ACTIVITY

1. Ask your children to recall some of the offline communities they mentioned belonging to during your previous activity. Guide them as they reflect upon how they exhibited the principles of good citizenship within those communities. Next, ask them to list some of the **online** communities they, or other people they know, belong to today (i.e., multiplayer games, online classes, group chats, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, even Google Classroom!). Explain that they are about to explore how the same principles that guide us offline, help us when we are online too.

THE ACTIVITY, continued

3. Explain that **an online community is any digital space where members interact and communicate with one another**. Ask your children to think of an online community they might belong to now or in the future (i.e., TikTok, Fortnite, YouTube, Google Classroom, Instagram, Snapchat). It doesn't matter if they actually belong to these online communities or not.
4. Give your children a large piece of paper and ask them to draw five boxes. In each box, have them write one of the principles of citizenship. Underneath the principle, ask them to write (or draw the logo of) any online community. Challenge them to think about how they might exhibit the principle within that online community, like this:



5. Talk to your children about their examples and then ask them to turn their paper over. Have them, again, draw five boxes with the principles and communities at the top of each one. Now their task is to think of **a possible consequence of NOT demonstrating that principle** within each online community. For example, a possible consequence of not showing compassion on YouTube might be that a recipient of negative comments might feel hurt or depressed. A kind comment might mean the world to them! Remind your children it is possible to be honest without being hurtful. Additionally, posting a positive comment sometimes encourages others to post positive comments too, just as negative or offensive comments often encourage the same. Showing compassion in all communities, often inspires others to show compassion too.

THE ACTIVITY, continued

6. Finish by explaining to your children that participation in any community is a huge responsibility and that their actions impact other community members.

GOAL

To help children take responsibility for their behavior by exhibiting the principles of good citizenship whenever they engage with others, online or off.