



# Exploring Leadership

## SOCIAL AWARENESS: CIVILITY

Civility helps us live peacefully together. It means treating everyone with kindness and respect, regardless of our differences. Many people feel that civility has declined significantly over the past twenty years. We hear stories of ridicule, bullying, and rudeness daily—not just at home or in school, but also online, in Congress, and in the news. Teaching young people civility is essential for building stronger communities and a better world.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

Discuss the 110 Rules of Civility (see Appendix B). These guidelines aim to encourage respectful behavior and actions in social situations.

The word civility comes from the Latin term *civilis*, meaning 'relating to public life' or 'befitting a citizen.' In simple terms, it means being friendly and respectful toward everyone. When you practice civility, you demonstrate kindness and good manners. You show respect even for those you might not like very much. Civility also includes formal politeness, such as how you might behave at a formal dinner.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and rank common rules of civility.
- Discuss why civility is important.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Copies of the Ranking Challenge (Appendix A) cut into parts 1 and 2
- Pens/Pencils
- Speaker to share the podcast
- <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/12/702011061/in-these-divided-times-is-civility-under-siege>

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this activity, you'll explore the importance of civility by ranking some key rules of behavior. This exercise will help us appreciate different perspectives on respectful behavior.

### FACILITATION TIPS:

- Before the meeting, look up rules 7, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 97 from the 110 Rules of Civility (see Appendix B).
- Before the lesson, listen to the 7-minute NPR podcast *In These Divided Times, Is Civility Under Siege?* See the 'What You'll Need' box for a link. Optional: Listen to the podcast as a group as part of the lesson.

- Distribute Appendix A, Part 1, and give participants time to complete their rankings individually.
- Divide participants into groups of 4–5.
- Distribute Appendix A, Part 2, and have each group discuss the importance of each rule.
- Discuss why some rules of civility might be more important than others, whether they can be grouped into categories, and if some categories are more important.
- Have participants share their rankings from Appendix A, Part 1, and explain their reasoning.
- Have each group complete Appendix A, Part 2.
- Regroup to share each group's final rankings.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How did your personal ranking compare to your group's ranking?
- Are there any rules that everyone agreed are particularly important or less important?
- Based on your group's rankings, which rule stood out as the most important? Why do you think it's viewed this way? Do you agree?
- Is there another rule of civility you believe is even more important than those listed? If so, what is it, and why do you think it's more important?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why is civility important in various areas of life, such as at school, within 4-H, in the workplace, and in political discussions?
- What steps can we take to encourage a higher level of civility in our community?
- Think of someone you could make a special effort to show more civility toward. Who is it, and what actions will you take to show this?



## CONCLUSION:

As social media and political divides grow, civility seems to be on the decline. Let's take action to change this together! Social awareness and understanding the importance of civility are crucial. This skill is vital for effective leadership and positive social interactions. Civility connects to essential 4-H leadership skills like self-control, open-mindedness, integrity, self-discipline, kindness, patience, respect, appreciation for diversity, humility, social awareness, and cultural intelligence. Treating everyone with kindness and respect, especially those we may disagree with, is a true testament to what it means to be a decent human being.

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## REFERENCES

- In These Divided Times, Is Civility Under Siege? <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/12/702011061/in-these-divided-times-is-civility-under-siege>
- The Rules of Civility: <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/rules-of-civility>
- Civility 101: Who's Teaching the Class? <https://www.rootsofaction.com/civility-101-whos-teaching-the-class>



# APPENDIX A: RANKING CHALLENGE

## Part 1: Personal Ranking

Directions: Read the following rules of respectful behavior and rank them from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important). There are no right or wrong answers; your rankings reflect your personal opinions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Eat with your mouth closed and keep your elbows off the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cover your mouth when you yawn or sneeze.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turn off or ignore your cell phone while talking with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use phrases like "please," "thank you," and "excuse me."
- \_\_\_\_\_ Share with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid picking your nose in public.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wait for someone to finish speaking before you respond.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid using offensive language or making rude comments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don't get involved in gossip.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Greet new people with a handshake and say, "It's a pleasure to meet you."

## Part 2: Group Ranking

Directions: After you rank individually, share your rankings with your group and explain your choices. Discuss why some rules of civility might feel more important than others, and work together to develop a group ranking (1-10). As you discuss, think about how some rules might fit into categories, and whether those categories are more or less important. Remember to stay respectful during your discussion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Eat with your mouth closed and keep your elbows off the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cover your mouth when you yawn or sneeze.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turn off or ignore your cell phone while talking with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use phrases like "please," "thank you," and "excuse me."
- \_\_\_\_\_ Share with others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid picking your nose in public.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wait for someone to finish speaking before you respond.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid using offensive language or making rude comments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don't get involved in gossip.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Greet new people with a handshake and say, "It's a pleasure to meet you."

Be prepared to discuss your group's rankings with the entire class.



## APPENDIX B: 110 RULES OF CIVILITY

When he was about fourteen years old, George Washington hand-copied *The 110 Rules of Civility* as part of an assignment for school. Originally created by French Jesuits in 1595, these rules became a key part of Washington's personal code of conduct. They taught him how to act with respect and kindness, shaping his leadership throughout his life.

### Directions:

Begin with a short history of the *110 Rules of Civility* (see above). Then, read the following rules aloud. After each rule, discuss what you think it means and why it's important. Conclude by asking, "How do these rules apply to your life?"

- Rule 7: Put not off your clothes in the presence of others, nor go out of your chamber half-dressed.
  - Suggested meaning: Keep your clothes on when people are around, and dress appropriately for the setting.
- Rule 48: Wherein you reprove another, be unblameable yourself; for example is more prevalent than precepts.
  - Suggested meaning: Practice what you preach and set a good example.
- Rule 49: Use no reproachful language against any one, neither curse nor revile.
  - Suggested meaning: Avoid using offensive language or insults.
- Rule 50: Be not hasty to believe flying reports to the disparagement of any.
  - Suggested meaning: Don't jump to conclusions about rumors or engage in gossip.
- Rule 51: Wear not your clothes foul, ripped, or dusty; but see they are brushed at least once every day, and take heed that you approach not to any uncleanness.
  - Suggested meaning: Keep your clothes clean and in good condition.
- Rule 97: Put not another bit into your mouth 'til the former be swallowed; let not your morsels be too big for the jowls.
  - Suggested meaning: Chew your food before you swallow; take small bites.