



# A "CYBER CIVICS" MOMENT

A parent/child digital activity from: *Raising Humans in a Digital World: Helping Kids Build a Healthy Relationship with Technology*  
(HarperCollins Leadership/ Dec. 18).

## The Five Principles of Citizenship

(themes adapted from [Education World](#))

The definition of "citizenship" is evolving, especially given the number of online and offline communities we all belong to today. Yet, the central principles of "good citizenship" are evergreen. Learning these principles, or themes, of citizenship gives young people a framework for digital citizenship. This comes in handy as they begin to discover that while most offline communities have rules, rights, and responsibilities that have been established over time, the same does not always hold true for online communities which are newer. Thus, these five principles can help guide children towards good citizenship, both online and off.

## Here's What To Do

1. Ask your children to imagine waking up tomorrow to discover they were the only inhabitant of Planet Earth. Ask: *Would you have to go to school? Brush your teeth? Stop at red lights? Do chores? Practice piano? Do your homework?* Guide them towards the discovery that they would be free of all rules and responsibilities!
2. Explain that because none of us, thankfully, are alone here on earth, we all belong to or are "citizens" of many different groups or "communities" that are guided by rules or "principles." Explain what these words mean:

**A CITIZEN is a member of a community.**

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

**A PRINCIPLE is a rule or code of conduct.**

3. Ask your children to think of all the communities they belong to, such as their family, their class at school, a sports team, choral group, church, etc. Have them think of any online communities they may be "citizens" of too. Next, explain that being a "good citizen" is guided by five important principles or themes. 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.



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- **Responsibility** is 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 Mohatma Gandhi—have demonstrated great courage.



4. Once you have discussed these principles, ask your children to think of one of the **offline** communities they belong to: *their class, a sports team, a club, their church, their family, their state, their county, their country*. Challenge them to come up with at least one example of how they might demonstrate each principle within this community. For example, a **baseball player** might demonstrate these principles within the **community of a baseball team** as follows:

**Honesty:** Team members don't cheat when playing baseball.

**Compassion:** They care for other team members when they get hurt.

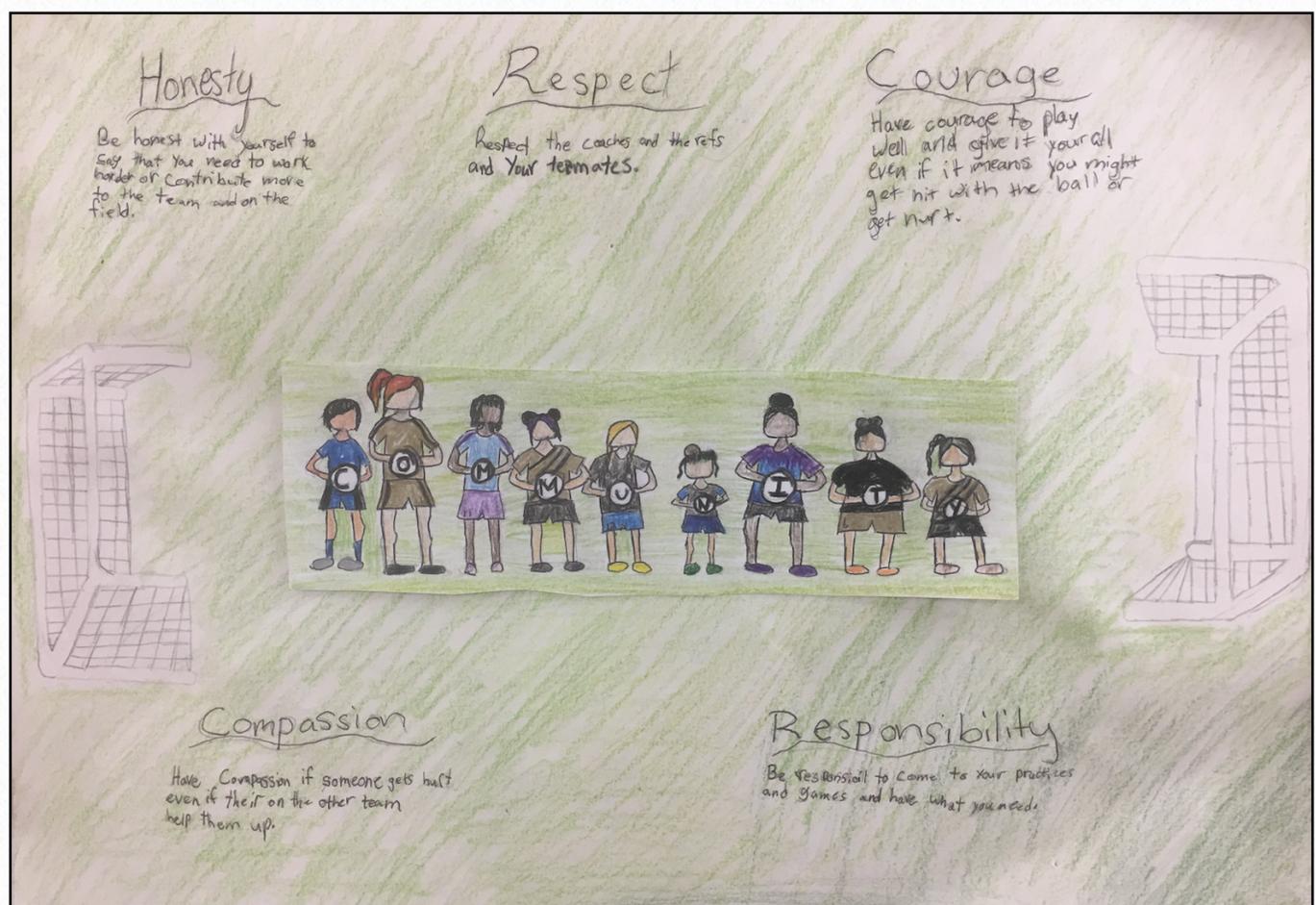
**Respect:** They are respectful to the teams they play against, and to their coaches.

**Responsibility:** They show up for practice on time.

**Courage:** They stand up to other team members who are mean or disrespectful.

5. You might have your children illustrate the examples they came up with (like the example below).

6. Talk to your children about what they create and help them draw connections to online communities they may already belong to or may join in the future.



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