

Character Matters

Be Fair

In middle school and high school, fairness means equal opportunities for everyone, having and following rules, and making judgments based on worthiness and ability. Here are some ways you can make sure that you treat others fairly and justly.

1. Stick to the rules

Rules—in school, in sports, at home, and in society—exist for a reason. Because rules apply to everyone, and everyone is expected to abide by them, they keep things orderly and fair. Just keep in mind that sometimes rules need to be changed based on a person's specific needs—so that everyone has an opportunity to be successful.

2. Pull your weight

Whether you're part of a group project in class or working at an after-school job, you should always strive to do your share of the work. It's very unfair to expect others to do things you should do. On the flip side, it's appropriate to expect your classmates and co-workers to do their share too.

3. Listen to all sides

Conflicts happen. When they do, it's important to not only share your perspective, but to also listen to what others have to say. Being open-minded might teach you something new and open your eyes to perspectives and ideas you hadn't considered.

For more information on conflict resolution, watch this quick video.



VIDEO

4. Don't take advantage of others

When you take advantage of someone, you use them for your own personal gain. For example, if you're only friendly to someone when you need or want something, you're taking advantage of their good nature—and that's not fair to them.

5. Accept consequences

If you've done something wrong, don't make excuses or blame someone else. Admit what you've done and accept the consequences for your actions.

Think About It

People often think fair and equal mean the same thing, but they don't always. Treating people equally means treating everyone exactly the same. Treating people fairly means giving everyone the same opportunity to succeed.

1. A classmate who has vision problems always gets to sit at the front of the room.
2. Two students take turns choosing teams in gym class.
3. All students are expected to be quiet in the school library.
4. A student with a food allergy can choose from a special menu in the lunch room.

Fairly Equally

☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐

Be Positive



Having a positive attitude and outlook will help you live a happier, healthier, and more successful life!

People with positive attitudes believe in themselves and in their abilities. They expect the best to happen, and when they encounter difficulties, they look for constructive ways to solve their problems.

Regardless of how others view life, you can be a positive, happy person by choosing to do so.

You can't control what others say or do, nor can you control everything that happens around you. But you can control your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

"Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will." Zig Ziglar

Think Positively

Think for yourself

Don't allow other people's thinking dictate how you think. Choose to think positively. Be the kind of person who sees a glass as half-full, not half-empty.

Practice positive self-talk

We all have a voice inside our head, and when things aren't going well, that voice can be negative and critical. You can help yourself become a more positive person by using positive "self-talk."

Instead of, *"I'm no good at math"* think, *"I'm smart. I can do this."*

Visualize success

Sports psychologists teach athletes to envision themselves making free throws, perfect dives, and 10-foot putts. You can do the same. When faced with a challenge, "mentally practice" by envisioning the situation and the steps required to accomplish your goals. Then visualize yourself succeeding.

"If you say you can or you can't, you are right either way." Henry Ford

Look to those you admire

Think of people you admire, and when faced with a difficult or challenging situation, ask yourself how they would respond.

Have a Positive Attitude

Have confidence in your strengths

You are a unique individual with many strengths and talents. Identify your talents and abilities, and look for ways to nurture and develop them. Believe in yourself and in your ability to succeed.

"To succeed, we must first believe that we can." Korda

Know that you're a work in progress

If you tend to be hard on yourself, cut yourself some slack. No one is perfect. Just strive to do your best—and to be the best "you" possible.

Be willing to try new things

Challenge yourself, stretch your boundaries, and look for new experiences. Have a "can-do" attitude and expect to succeed.

Be flexible

One key to maintaining a positive attitude is to understand that things don't always go as planned. When circumstances change, or things don't go as you intended, stay positive, react constructively, and adapt to the changes.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." Max Planck

Take Positive Actions



Do what you love

Find activities that are fulfilling and satisfying. Better yet, find something to be passionate about.

Surround yourself with positive people

Seek out friends who are supportive, positive, and encouraging. When possible, avoid people who are negative, critical, or self-destructive.

Practice random acts of kindness

Pay someone a compliment or lend someone a hand. Help out a classmate, or do a chore at home without being asked.

Achieve balance

Between school, activities, hobbies, family, and friends, you have a lot going on. Work to achieve balance in your life, and be sure to set some time aside to rest, relax, and rejuvenate.

Be true to yourself

Try to always act in accordance with your values.

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." Mahatma Gandhi

Ways to Cultivate Happiness

Spend time with friends and family. Most of us get our greatest joy from the connections we have with others.

Exercise. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals (endorphins) which make you feel good.

Develop a hobby. Collect, create, or build something. Write poetry, draw, take photos, paint, build a model, or plant a garden.

Spend time outside. Listen to the birds, look at the clouds, and watch for wildlife.

Laugh and smile. Watch a funny video or talk to someone who makes you laugh.

Learn something new. Learn how to fix a bike, cook, create a web page, or play an instrument.

Make time for fun and relaxation. Read a book, watch a movie, or listen to music.

Adjust your attitude. To be happy, sometimes you just have to act happy.

"Most people are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Abraham Lincoln

What Are Employers Looking For?

What employers look for in a candidate varies from industry to industry, and from job to job. There are, however, a few common traits and soft skills that most employers look for. *Which ones do you have? Which ones do you need to work on?*

Problem-solving skills: Employers want employees who can confidently take on a challenge and figure out the best way to tackle it without getting discouraged.

Ambition: Having plans and goals for the future tells employers that an applicant values growth and hard work.

Digital literacy: More than just computer skills (although they're important), digital literacy means anything from being comfortable doing research online to being able to quickly learn whatever software or apps the company regularly uses.

Leadership skills: Being able to motivate others, take initiative, and make smart decisions are qualities employers value and look for.

Flexibility: Employers want employees who are able to adapt to different situations, tasks, and people. Being flexible means being comfortable with change and open to new ideas.

Communication skills: All jobs require communication skills, and employers are looking for people who are good at listening, speaking, writing, negotiating, and providing customer service. Employees with these skills are also typically the ones who advance through the ranks.

Cultural competence: We live in an increasingly diverse society, and job applicants are at a distinct advantage when they can demonstrate their knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse peoples, cultures, and values.

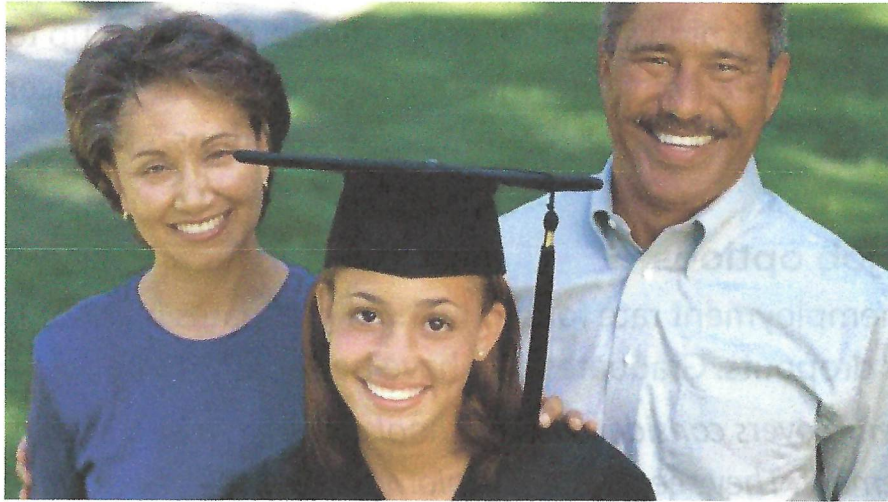
Good character: Having good character means being the type of person others can rely on, and want to be around. Examples of character traits employers often look for include:

- ▶ Dependability
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Self-control
- ▶ Respectfulness
- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ Resilience



High School Success

Make Graduation Your Goal



Graduating from high school and getting your diploma is definitely a goal worth striving for.

Having a diploma will provide you with greater opportunities and numerous rewards. Graduating from high school is an achievement that you can be proud of for the rest of your life!

The rewards that come with getting a high school diploma make it well worth the effort!

One out of every four students doesn't finish high school.

It's almost impossible, however, to find someone who's dropped out of school who doesn't regret it.

Graduation Rewards

Here are six reasons why it's important to stay in school and graduate.

1. Greater income and better lifestyle

High school graduates earn an average of 40% more than those who don't finish high school. Over a lifetime, that adds up to about \$200,000. A greater income means a better lifestyle—a nicer car, better place to live, money for travel and vacations, etc.

2. More job options

The unemployment rate for high school graduates is about half what it is for dropouts. Graduates also have better jobs to choose from.

Many employers consider a high school diploma to be a minimum requirement. They see having a diploma as an indication of a person's ability to work hard and follow through.

3. More education options

A high school diploma is your ticket to a wide range of educational opportunities. With a high school diploma, you can go to a community college or to a four-year college or university.



Graduation Rewards

4. Greater career opportunities

High school dropouts generally don't have careers. They have jobs. With a diploma and just one or two years of additional education, you can have a promising career in health care, human services, computer science, business, or the skilled trades.

5. Greater knowledge and skills

The knowledge you gain and the skills you develop in high school will help you throughout your life.

Whether it's having the math skills to set up a budget, the skills to write a good letter, or the ability to talk intelligently about what's happening in the world, your high school courses will help you become a more capable, confident, and interesting person.

6. Sense of pride

Perhaps the biggest reason to stay in high school and graduate is a sense of personal satisfaction and pride.

Having your high school diploma is an accomplishment you can be proud of!



Dropping Out is Never the Answer

Most of the students who consider dropping out of school have a hard time in their classes, a difficult personal life, or both. As a general rule, one or more of the following statements describe their situation or how they feel:

- ▶ I don't fit in at school.
- ▶ I have difficulty with school work.
- ▶ I have friends who have dropped out.
- ▶ I need to care for younger siblings.
- ▶ I don't feel safe at school.
- ▶ I must work to help support my family.
- ▶ I often drink alcohol and/or use drugs.
- ▶ I must deal with difficult situations at home.
- ▶ I am a parent myself.

If you can relate to any of the above, you are not alone. While all of the above make finishing high school more difficult, with help, you can overcome any obstacle and graduate.

If you are dealing with problems or issues that make staying in school difficult, get some help. You don't need to go it alone.

Don't Go It Alone

Your teachers, counselor, and principal all want to see you graduate. Work with them, and don't hesitate to ask for help.

► **Talk to your counselor**

Your high school counselor can help you come up with a plan for graduation.

If you are struggling in school, perhaps there's a career or vocational program that would be appropriate for you.

If you are behind in credits, your counselor may recommend summer school or an online course. If you aren't able to graduate with your class, that's OK. Graduating a semester or year later is better than not graduating at all.

► **Have a support person at school**

Find someone at your school you can talk to and who will support you. This may be your counselor, or it may be a teacher or coach.

► **Ask your family for their support**

Talk to family members and let them know that your goal is to graduate from high school. Ask for their help and support.

***"All our dreams can come true, if we
have the courage to pursue them."***

Walt Disney