

What is a Good Citizen?

1 - What is a good citizen?

Good citizens understand that they have a responsibility to the community, environment and law. An effective citizen is someone who takes time away from their “pursuit of happiness” to do things that sustain our freedoms and keep the country safe. These things, called *citizen actions*, are done on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis; when the opportunities arise; and when action is needed. Some are easy, some are fun and some require sacrifice.

2 - How to be a good citizen

- Know your heritage and believe the country is worth keeping strong
- Stay informed on issues and voice your opinions by meeting and voting
- Support individuals with a special responsibility for keeping the country strong
- Understand the workings of our government
- Know and understand the freedoms in our Constitution and obey our laws
- Be a good neighbor by caring about others
- Share your time and skills with the community to make it cleaner, safer and better

Unfortunately, most of us aren't effective citizens. As evidence of this, consider that voting is often considered the measure of a good citizen yet fewer than 40 percent of eligible voters actually vote.

3 - Is good character the same as being a good citizen?

Many confuse having good character with being a good citizen. They aren't the same. It would be similar to saying that having good character is the same as being a good parent or being a good manager.

Character relates to the quality of ones actions such as acting in a manner that is honorable, courageous, compassionate and ethical. As Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, said “It's not always the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen.”

4 – Traits of a bad citizen:

- looking out only for yourself
- littering and wasting resources
- not voting or being involved in the community

5 - You can be a positive role-model for citizenship by doing the following:

- Show concern for the success and safety of others.
- Use non-judgmental language that does not offend or demean.
- Do the right thing, especially when it is difficult.
- Do the right thing, even when no one is looking.
- Take responsibility for your actions.
- Reflect on how your actions affect the welfare of others.

Quotes about Being a Good Citizen and Citizenship

“All that is needed for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.”

— *Edmund Burke, British statesman and philosopher (1729 - 1797)*

“Americans need a broader view of citizenship - it goes well beyond voting, jury duty, and community.”

— *Nick Homer, Executive Director - Good Citizen*

"Ask not what your country can do for you - □ ask what you can do for your country."

- *John F. Kennedy, 1961 Inaugural Address - 35th President of the U.S. (1917 - 1963)*

“We don't need a war on drugs, a war on crime or a war on poverty. What we need is a war on complacency.”

- *Nick Homer, Executive Director - Good Citizen - (August 2004)*

"The freedoms and privileges afforded every citizen in our democracy are unwittingly being threatened by the very citizens they were designed to benefit. The term 'American Citizen' is too often considered to be a status, gained either through birth or naturalization, rather than a role to be fulfilled."

- *Matthew Horton - Good Citizen Director (August 2003)*

"Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

- *Adlai E. Stevenson, Jr - American statesman and diplomat - twice Democratic presidential candidate - (1900 - 1965)*

“It’s not always the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen.”

- *Aristotle, Ancient Greek Philosopher, Scientist and Physician*

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.”

- *George Jean Nathan, American Journalist, Critic, Essayist and Editor, (1882-1958).*

“ A passive and ignorant citizenry will never create a sustainable world.”

- *Andrew Gaines, creativity trainer, sustainability philosopher, b 1938*

- "The 'Silent Majority'? There is no 'Silent Majority'. It's an oxymoron. In a democracy, when the majority is silent, they are the minority."

- *Nick Homer, Executive Director - Good Citizen (May 2003)*