

Rights & Responsibilities

Grade Level: 4-7
Time: One Class Period

Objectives

- Learn about your responsibilities as a citizen who is given certain rights

Curricular Connections: Language Arts, Civics

Materials:

Procedure:

Divide the class into five groups (focusing on five different rights). They can record their thoughts and report out to the large group:

1. Group One: Freedom of Expression

You attend a meeting at school for a group creating playground rules. You have the right to add suggestions and speak your mind.

- What responsibilities should you have in the way you speak and in what you say?
- What responsibilities should the other students have toward your right to speak?
- What responsibilities should you have toward their rights to speak?
- What might happen to the freedom of speech if people didn't follow the responsibilities you've outlined?

2. Group Two: Freedom of Religion

You are allowed to believe or not believe in any form of God you wish. You are also permitted to practice your religious beliefs. What responsibilities go along with those rights?

- If you attend a church or temple in your community, what responsibilities should you have in the way you practice your beliefs?
- What responsibility do others in your community have (those who either believe in a different religion or don't believe at all) to protect your right to practice your beliefs?
- What responsibilities do you have to protect other people's rights to practice their religious beliefs or not to have any religious beliefs?
- What might happen to freedom of religion if no one fulfilled these responsibilities?

3. Group Three: The Right to be Treated Equally

The government cannot favor certain citizens because of such things as their age, gender, race, disability status, etc.

- Your community is planning a public picnic. What responsibilities do they have to be fair to you no matter your age, gender, race, or disability status?

- If you were helping to plan the picnic, what responsibilities do you think you should have to other people no matter their race, age, gender, or disability status?
- What might happen to the right to be treated equally if no one fulfilled these responsibilities?

4. Group Four: The Right to be Treated Fairly by Your Government

The government must be fair when gathering data and making decisions.

- If someone accused you of breaking the law, what responsibilities should that person have toward you?
- What if you accused someone else of breaking the law; what responsibilities should you have toward them?
- What might happen to the right to be treated fairly if no one fulfilled these responsibilities?

5. Group Five: The Right to Vote and Run for Public Office

At age 18, you will have the right to vote. You will also have the right to run for public office (different offices have different age floors).

- If you were going to vote in an election and there were five proposed laws on the ballot, and two candidates for Congress, what responsibilities should you have?
- If some community members don't agree with the way you are going to vote, what responsibilities should they have toward your right to vote?
- If you don't agree with the way some of your friends will be voting, what are your responsibilities toward their right to vote?
- What might happen to the right to vote if no one fulfilled these responsibilities?

Reflection:

1. What are the most important responsibilities you have in order to protect your rights?
2. What responsibilities should you take to protect the rights of others?

Assessment: Review the completed lists.

Adapted from: Center for Civic Education, the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution and the US Department of Education.