



Little Citizens: Learning Citizenship

Every day you instill values in your young children. They listen to what you say--and they copy your behaviors. This applies to citizenship behaviors as well.

Being a good citizen is something adults may do every day. Adults practice good citizenship by obeying traffic laws, paying taxes, helping a neighbor, or picking up trash in public places. Your child may learn about these and other acts of citizenship by observing you. However, you can help your toddler or preschooler learn important citizenship skills in some intentional ways.

Intended Citizenship

- **Teach her how to be a good citizen.** Help her to learn how to cooperate, obey family rules, show respect for people in charge, and how not to litter. These early home lessons provide a firm foundation.
- **Help your little one begin to think of himself as a member of a community.** Give him opportunities to feel connected to the outside world. Visits to the store, park, or neighbor's house introduce him to a bigger world than his house.
- **Teach your child that there are connections between the community and her daily life.** Explain about various things she encounters in her widening world. When you hear the siren of an emergency vehicle when driving, explain that you stop and pull over to allow someone else to get help. Talk to her

when you are, "following the rules of society," and explain why this is important. This includes traffic signals, handicapped parking spaces and taking time to park shopping carts in the designated corrals.

Encourage your little one to *want* to be an active member of his world at home and in his outside world. When you volunteer in your community, encourage your child to participate. There are many things he can do that will show that his actions are important--and that they contribute to making life better for everyone in his city or town.

Other "good citizen" activities include:

- ◆ Helping bake cookies for a senior citizen home
- ◆ Sending cards to a neighbor in the hospital
- ◆ Going on a walk to pick up litter and trash



She may not understand all that you explain to her, however, the more you talk and teach, the more she will understand--and the more she will value being a *citizen* in the community.

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