

George Washington & the Rules of Civility and Decent Conduct

Guiding Question

- How do the *Rules of Civility* demonstrate respect and humility?

Objectives

- ☑ I can explain how Washington's study of the *Rules of Civility* influenced his character and leadership.
- ☑ I can identify examples of humility and respect in the *Rules of Civility* and describe how practicing these virtues can shape character over time.
- ☑ I can choose a rule and explain how I could apply it in my own life today.

Scaffolding note: Vocabulary defined in text.

Background Information

As a teenager, George Washington wrote out *Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation*, likely as part of a penmanship exercise assigned by his tutor. The 110 rules were largely from a French Jesuit text that was translated over to English. As he copied and studied them, he learned important rules about civic virtues and acting properly. The rules would play an important role in shaping Washington's character throughout his life as he sought to practice them.

George Washington's Rules of Civility and Conduct

Source: <https://customsitesmedia.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/370/2015/05/17225158/George-Washingtons-Rules.pdf>

Text	Notes/Summary
Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect, to those that are present...	
Let your countenance [expressions] be pleasant but in serious matters somewhat grave. The gestures of the body must be suited to the discourse you are upon [conversation engaged in].	
Strive not with your superiors in argument but always submit your judgment to others with modesty [humility]. Undertake not to teach your equal...; it savors of arrogance [comes across as full of oneself]	
Use no reproachful [expressing disapproval] language against any one neither curse nor revile [insult]. Be not hasty to believe flying reports [rumors] to the disparagement [harm] of any. Speak not evil of the absent [those not present] for it is unjust.	

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. How do the *Rules of Civility* demonstrate the civic virtue of respect, defined as: "Regard for and defending the equal rights and inherent dignity of all human beings, including oneself?"
2. How does the practice of civic virtue help to shape character over time?
3. Choose one of the above rules. What is a specific way that you can carry it out in your life today?