Building Good Character

Guide to Reading

Building Vocabulary
Write the terms below. As you come across them in the lesson, write the definitions next to each term.
- character (p. 47)
- integrity (p. 48)
- role model (p. 50)

Focusing on the Main Ideas
In this lesson you will be able to
- explain what character is.
- identify traits of good character.
- describe how to develop good character.
- access reliable information on community organizations where you can volunteer.

Reading Strategy
Skimming Look over the major and minor headings in this lesson. Then write a paragraph describing what you think this lesson will cover.

What Is Character?

When Michael talks with friends, he listens to them. When he borrows money, he pays it back promptly. He keeps his promises and treats others with respect. When someone needs help, he offers a helping hand. Through his actions, Michael demonstrates the qualities of good character. Character is the way a person thinks, feels, and acts.

People with good character show certain qualities. They tend to be trustworthy, fair, responsible, respectful, caring, and good citizens. Having good character improves your relationships. You get along better with your friends and family. Being in strong friendships with people who like and trust you benefits your social health. Taking responsibility for doing your schoolwork benefits your

Quick Write
Write a short description of a person who has been a positive role model for you.

Now that you're a teen, you can take on more responsibility. What are some behaviors that show you are ready to handle more responsibility?
mental/emotional health. Showing respect for yourself by eating healthfully and getting enough sleep benefits your physical health.

**Traits of Good Character**

Groups function best when each member demonstrates good character. You are probably a member of many groups, like a family, a sports team, or friends. In order for all members of a group to get along, they have to have good character traits. There are six basic traits of good character. The traits are described below and Figure 2.6 on the next page shows the actions that demonstrate them.

**Trustworthiness.** Part of being trustworthy involves integrity, being true to your ethical values. When you have integrity, people know they can count on you to do the right thing.

**Respect.** Having respect means listening carefully and speaking kindly to others. You disagree without arguing and understand that others have the right to see situations differently. You show respect for yourself by practicing healthful behaviors and avoiding those that can be harmful. You respect your peers even when their abilities and skills differ from your own.

**Responsibility.** You take responsibility for everything you do. You accept credit when things go well and accept advice and feedback when they don’t.

**Fairness.** When you are fair, you treat people equally and honestly. You are open-minded and willing to listen to other opinions.

**Caring.** Teens who are caring communicate consideration and acceptance of others. They listen to others’ concerns and offer support and encouragement when needed.

**Citizenship.** Teens who obey rules and laws are responsible and are demonstrating citizenship. Citizenship is also doing what you can to help your school, community, and country. You protect the environment and encourage others to be good citizens, too. You accept the responsibilities and the privileges of being a citizen. You practice the skill of advocacy. Advocacy involves supporting causes you believe in, such as helping to prevent violence and making your community safe.

**Academic Vocabulary**

- **demonstrating** (DEM uhnt streyt ing) (verb) showing, describing, illustrating, or explaining. *Max enjoyed demonstrating how a volcano works at this year’s science fair.*
**Showing Good Character**

You can see people demonstrate good character around you every day. Name three examples of good character you saw in the last week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits of Good Character</th>
<th>Major Qualities of Good Character</th>
<th>Examples of Good Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Honest, truthful, can be counted on</td>
<td>Promptly returns borrowed items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Listens, disagrees without arguing</td>
<td>Listens carefully to others’ concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Keeps promises, thinks before acting</td>
<td>Completes household tasks without being asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Treats people equally, open-minded, patient</td>
<td>Considers new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Is kind, generous, compassionate, helpful</td>
<td>Helps younger students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Obeys rules and laws, practices advocacy</td>
<td>Follows school rules and helps others to follow them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What Shapes Your Character?**

Unlike hair or eye color, you don’t inherit character traits from your parents. You choose to be a person of good character. The choices you make are the building blocks of your character. However, many things can shape the development of your character.

**Life Experiences**

As a child, you learned good character traits from your parents or guardians. When your parents said, “Share your toys,” you learned that being fair was important. When you heard, “Hey, that’s cheating!” you understood that you should be honest, too.

You also learn character by how you are treated. If you are treated with kindness and respect, you can better understand how to practice these traits. As you grow older, you also learn about character from your teachers and coaches.
Accessing Information

Organizations to Get Involved With
Getting involved with activities that help others will help you build the character trait of good citizenship. Finding the right organization to support is the key to your success. Here is a list of some groups to get you started.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

Habitat for Humanity—Brings together volunteers to build affordable housing in communities.

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)—Promotes ways to help teens avoid unhealthful behaviors.

Youth Volunteer Corps—Provides ways for young people to become volunteers.

ENVIRONMENT

Earth Day Network—Creates ways for teens to help the environment.

Global Response Youth Action—Provides ideas for protecting the environment.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Hugh O' Brian Youth Leadership—Conducts ethical-leadership training.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America—Runs leadership training courses.

MENTORING

Reading Is Fundamental—Provides teens with mentoring opportunities.

America's Promise—Provides resources for teens who want to become mentors.

With a Group

Work with a partner to choose three organizations that interest you. Use reliable online and print resources to research each of the organizations. Create a fact sheet on each organization and present your findings to the class.

You can also learn good character by being involved in activities that help others, such as tutoring younger children or volunteering with organizations that fight hunger and poverty.

Role Models

Watching how others behave is a way to learn good character traits. Your parents or guardians were probably your first role models. A role model inspires you to think or act a certain way. Other health role models include older siblings, teachers, coaches, doctors, police officers, and other community workers.

Reading Check Identify What is a role model?
How to Develop Good Character

Developing good character requires effort. It involves thinking about what you say and how you act. Are your words and actions trustworthy? When you are honest, people know they can count on you. They can be confident in your ability to take on more responsibility. Do you speak respectfully to others? This shows other people that you care about them. How do you respond when someone wants to discuss a problem? You can show your good character by being a good listener. Do you help make your school or community a better place? When you see something wrong, you can show good character by speaking up about it.

Do you have any character traits you'd like to improve? When you discover a behavior or attitude in yourself that you would like to change, take action! Everyone has the potential to become a person of good character. People of good character not only strengthen their own total health, but also make the world a better place in which to live.

Lesson 3 Review

After You Read

Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.

What I Learned

1. Vocabulary Define character and use it in a sentence.

2. List Name at least two examples of people who can be role models.

3. Identify What are two influences that can shape a person's character?

Thinking Critically

4. Hypothesize Think of an act of courage performed by someone you know or have heard or read about. What values do you think this person stood up for? What risks did the individual take in doing what he or she thought was right? How did this demonstration of good character benefit the community?

5. Apply What do you think is your strongest character trait, and why? Explain your answer in a brief paragraph.

Applying Health Skills

6. Analyzing Influences Who are your role models? Write down the names of three people whom you look up to. List the character traits that each role model demonstrates. Then describe the ways in which each one has influenced you.