

# The ABCs of Citizenship



**A K-3 Lesson  
for  
Teaching Civics Standard 3 in Delaware**

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# The ABCs of Citizenship

**Lesson Description (Abstract):** In this lesson, students will read and analyze an *Alphabet Book for Young Citizens* to reinforce their understandings of the distinctions between a right, a responsibility, and a privilege. They will then use the pages in their Alphabet books to create a Citizen's Bulletin Board, an Exhibit on Citizenship, and Civic Improvisations that provide students with opportunities to deepen and apply their understandings. This lesson is designed as a *formative* step toward mastering Civic Standard 3.

**Goal(s):** Students will begin exercising their rights and responsibilities with a better understanding of how such actions help secure their liberties and freedom.

**Grades:** 1-2

**Time Required:** 2-3 hours (days).

## Materials Needed:

- Bulletin Board Space
- Handouts 1-3: Bulletin Board Headers (one copy of each folded in half).
- Handout 4: *Character Map A* (transparency).
- Paper clipped copy of *The Alphabet Book for Young Citizens* (pages 17 to 45 of this lesson).
- Handout 5: *Exhibiting Citizenship Frame* (one for each student).
- Handout 6: *Civic Improv Strips* (cut into individual strips).
- Handout 7: *Character Map B* (one copy for every 2-3 students).
- Handouts 8-9: Assessments (one of each for every student).
- 5 pieces of candy or snacks (e.g. Hershey kisses, Jolly Ranchers, pretzels etc.).

**Benchmark[s] Addressed:** Students will understand that American citizens have distinct responsibilities (such as voting), rights (such as free speech and freedom of religion), and privileges (such as driving).

**Essential Question Addressed:** What is the difference between a right, a responsibility, and a privilege? Why is it important to be able to distinguish and exercise the three?

## Lesson Content:

Civics Standard 3 [Citizenship] at the K-3 cluster stresses understanding the distinctions between three facets of citizenship - responsibilities, rights, and privileges.

- A *right* is something to which a person has a just claim; something to which a person is justly entitled. The American Heritage Children's Dictionary defines right as "A claim that is legal."
- A *responsibility* is a duty i.e. something that a person is supposed or ought to do on the bases of moral or legal grounds.
- A *privilege* is a special benefit or immunity that is earned or granted as an advantage or favor. The American Heritage Children's Dictionary defines privilege as "A special right or benefit that is granted to or enjoyed by some people and not by others."

A *citizen* is a person who is an official member of a political body, such as a country. American citizens enjoy an enviable range of *rights* and *privileges* and are expected to exercise those rights and privileges so that they remain secure and protected and so that might be extended to those to whom they have been denied.

Citizenship might be viewed as an office of government similar to any other office in that it involves responsibilities that flow from the nature of the office. Whether the analogy holds or not, American citizens are expected to fulfill certain personal and civic *responsibilities* such as taking care of themselves, accepting responsibility for their actions, obeying the law, respecting the rights of others, holding elected officials accountable, being informed and attentive to the needs of their community, and voting. Since life in society brings benefits to the individual, the individual is expected to reciprocate. It should also be noted that, because we live in a democracy that has embraced the principles of liberty, self-rule, and limited government, American citizens must be willing to perform some of the roles that governments would otherwise perform and keep watch over those placed in office in order to safeguard individual rights.

Rights and privileges shape how much freedom we actually have but students must understand that privileges, unlike rights, must be earned. Privileges expand our freedom and contribute to our happiness. Responsibilities, on the other hand, help define the requirements and limits of our freedom by highlighting what we are expected to do rather than what we are entitled to do. At the K-3 level, two requirements of freedom most applicable to student might be: contributing to public safety and order by obeying the law and reporting violations of the law; and, performing public services when the need arises.

**Vocabulary:** citizen, exercise (as in *exercise a right*), privilege, responsibility, right, yearn.

**Assessment:** This lesson includes both formative and summative assessments found on Handouts 4, 6, 7, 8, & 9. Opportunities for less formal assessment are embedded within Procedures 1 and 4.

**Procedures:**

**Pre-Lesson Planning:** create a “Citizenship Bulletin Board” divided into three sections – one labeled “Rights,” one labeled “Responsibilities,” and the third labeled “Privileges” (consider creating backgrounds that are color coded red, white, and blue by section). The bulletin board headers are available on **Handouts 1-3**. Fold the headers in half so that the definitions are not showing and post them on the bulletin board. Leave ample space under each header as this space will be filled during the lesson with pages from *The Alphabet Book for Young Citizens*.

1. Lay a Foundation for Transfer: Draw the students’ attentions to your Citizenship Bulletin Board. Point first to the word “**Citizen**.” Tell them that every student in the class is a citizen of a country. Being a citizen is similar to being part of a club or a team. Explain that there are certain benefits (especially in the United States) to being a citizen of a country, just as there are certain benefits to being part of a club or a team. Ask the students to identify some clubs or teams to which they belong. Record one response on a transparency of **Handout 4: Character Map A** (e.g. soccer team). Then, ask them to describe some of the things a member of

that club or team is allowed to do as a result of being on the team (e.g. play in organized games, wear the team uniform). Then, ask them what are some of the things they are *expected to do* as a result of being a member of that club or team (e.g. attend practices, pick up the equipment after the game). Record these responses in the appropriate column on the same transparency. Finally, ask the students to describe some special treatments that they can earn if they are good members or performers on the team or club (e.g. run less laps, serve as captain). Record these responses in the appropriate column on the same transparency.

Tell the students that today’s lesson is designed to help them understand the requirements of citizenship and how citizenship in the United States is very similar to being a member of a club or team.

Ask students to complete the following analogy:

*Being a citizen of a country  
is like  
being a \_\_\_\_\_*

2. Explain to the students that there are special words used to describe facets or requirements of citizenship such as what citizens are allowed to do, are supposed to do, and might be allowed to do if they are good. Point to the word “**Rights**” on the Citizenship Bulletin Board (Handout 1). Ask the students if anyone knows how to define the word “right.” Field responses. Unfold the “Rights” header to reveal (and read aloud) the definition of the term. Discuss and paraphrase the definition until students comprehend it. Then, offer the students the two examples of “rights” listed on the chart below. Repeat this procedure for the words “Responsibilities” and “Privileges.”

Examples of Rights	Examples of Responsibilities	Examples of Privileges
To choose my friends. To go to church.	Move quickly and quietly during a fire drill. Clean up the area where I eat my lunch.	To play with playground equipment. To be first in line for lunch.

**Additional Statements to be considered as exemplars.**

- Report violations of law (emphasized in Clarification document).
  - Perform public services (emphasized in Clarification document).
  - Ride the school bus.
  - Share playground equipment.
  - Bring schoolbooks to school.
  - Homework pass.
  - Accept responsibility for one’s actions.
3. Tell the students that you are now going to read a book that focuses on the three aspects of citizenship you just explored - rights, responsibilities, and privileges. The book uses all the letters of the alphabet to give examples of rights, responsibilities, and privileges. Invite the students to imagine a scene in which each lettered statement is actually happening. After reading the book, they will be asked to decide which lettered statements describe rights, which lettered statements describe responsibilities, and which lettered statements describe

privileges. Then, they will be asked to draw the scenes from the book. Read *The Alphabet Book for Young Citizens* (attached).

4. Distribute one page (or letter) from the *Alphabet Book* on pages 17 to 45 to each student in the class. Beginning with letter A, have each student stand-up one at a time and read their page (teacher may have to read it for the student). Ask the rest of the class to think-pair-share. Their task is to reach agreement on whether the statement under each letter represents a right, a responsibility, or a privilege. Be sure to ask students to explain/defend their conclusions and clarify any misunderstandings (\*answer key below). Ask the “standing student” to circle the appropriate word *Right, Responsibility, or Privilege* at the bottom of each alphabet page after the students reach consensus on whether the statement exemplifies a right, a responsibility, or a privilege.

Rights	Responsibilities	Privileges
Letters E, I, J, P, S, M, Q, Y, Z	Letters A, C, F, H, K, L, O, R, T, V	Letters B, D, G, N, U, W, X

\*Note: Students might effectively argue that some of the lettered statements could fall under more than one category i.e. represent either a right or a privilege. The answer key provided above reflects the author’s initial judgments but is well aware that some categorizations might be challenged. Give credit for conclusions that are well-defended.

5. Exhibiting Citizenship: Distribute copies of **Handout 5: Exhibiting Citizenship Frame**. Ask each student to take the Letter and corresponding statement which they were given and draw or illustrate the statement that appears on their Alphabet book page. Display student work on the walls. Invite parents or students from other classes in to view the new *Exhibit on Citizenship*. Ask students to act as docents, stand near their work, and explain what their drawings illustrate (e.g. a right, responsibility, or privilege) and how it illustrates the dimension of citizenship.
6. Civic Improvs: Place students in triads or groups of three. Give each triad one of the “Improv Strips” found on **Handout 6: Civic Improv Strips**. Allow groups time to think about the roles that appear on the strips. Then, ask each group to select a lettered statement from the Citizenship Bulletin Board (without telling anyone which letter they selected) and, using the identities that appear on the Improv Strips, develop a brief skit that illustrates that right, responsibility, or privilege as it might appear in an everyday situation.  
For example, a group of students might be given an Improv Strip that states “Teacher and two students.” That triad might select letter K from the Alphabet Book. It contains the statement “Keep my workspace clean.” That group would create a skit using the roles of two students and a teacher that focuses on their responsibility to keep their workspaces clean. The rest of the class should be asked what is going on in the skit and whether it involves a right, a responsibility, or a privilege.
7. Place students in small groups. Distribute one copy of **Handout 7: Character Map B** to each group. Tell them that the stick person in the middle of the Character Map represents a citizen of the United States. Their assignment is to come up with 3-5 examples of each aspect of citizenship – rights, responsibilities, and privileges. Ask them to record their responses on the empty lines found on the Character Map just as you did on Character Map A. [You can field and record examples on an overhead transparency if independent group work is developmentally inappropriate].

8. Select a student sitting near to you. Place 2-3 pieces of candy on her desk and tell her that the candy is now hers. Ask her, “now that this candy is your property, what are some rights that you have relating to your new property?” (Possible responses that you might have to offer include “you have the right to decide what will be done with the candy, who can eat it, with whom you can share it, etc.”). Now, politely take a piece of the candy from the student and eat it. Give the students a little time to react and reflect on the incident then ask the whole class to describe how the student (from whom the candy was given) reacted. Did the student object or did she simply allow the teacher to take it? Should she have objected? Why?

Relate this scenario to the question “why is it important for citizens to exercise their rights (e.g., to secure them)?” Depending on how the student with candy reacted, you might ask “What happens when citizens do not exercise their rights?” (e.g., more likely that someone will take them away – like you did with the candy) or “what happens when citizens do exercise their rights or responsibilities?” (they prevent others from taking them away – like candy).

**Debrief then Assess:** (assessments on pp. 15-16)

- What is the difference between a right, a responsibility, and a privilege?
- Give some examples of each.
- Why is it important to be able to distinguish the three?
- Why might it be important for a citizen to be aware of their rights and responsibilities? (see Content Narrative above for sample responses)

**Extension:** Give students one letter from a blank *Alphabet Book for Young Citizens* each evening. Ask them to sit down with a parent or guardian and come up a new example of a right, responsibility, or privilege that includes the featured letter. Have them write their response on the blank alphabet book page, underline the featured letter, then share their conclusions when they come in each morning. Replace a few of the letters on your Citizenship Bulletin Board with the new ones generated by students for homework.

### **Tips from the Teacher**

Field testing suggests that, if students have engaged in lessons that focus on respecting authority [Civics 1b], they might find Procedure 8 a bit confusing. Does a teacher (who is in a position of authority) have the right to take a student’s candy and eat it? Does the student have the right or responsibility to protest the taking of his or her property? Such questions create valuable teaching moments.

Civics 1b suggests that respect for authority is conditional and students should understand this. There are times when even those in positions of authority act inappropriately. Consequently, students must analyze each situation to determine when it is appropriate to exercise rights or responsibilities and question politely those who may be infringing unreasonably on their rights or privileges.

You might modify Procedure 8 by arranging to have another student, who does not have authority in this situation, take the candy from its owner.

### **Bibliography [Annotated]:**

- *National Standards for Civics and Government*. Center for Civic Education (1994). Calabasas, Calif.

- The American Heritage Children's Dictionary. Houghton Mifflin (2003). New York.

**Acknowledgments**

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Right

Something to which  
you are justly entitled.



# Responsibility

Something that you  
are supposed to do.

# Privilege

A special benefit that  
you usually have to  
earn.

**Handout 4: Character Map A**

**A Member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Club or Team**

**...is allowed to**

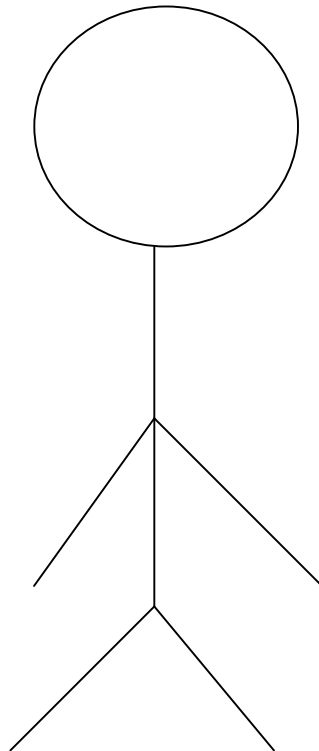
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**...is expected to**

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**...might be allowed to**

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**if he or she is good.**

**Handout 5: Exhibiting Citizenship Frame**



## Handout 6: Civic Improv Strips

Teacher and two students.
Librarian and two children.
Parent (guardian), child, and toy.
Police officer, child, and stranger.
Coach, teacher, student.
Student, friend, and parent (guardian).
Bus driver and two students.
Parent (guardian), child, and pet.
Police officer, child, and car.
Crossing guard, driver, and student.

## Handout 7: Character Map B

# “A Citizen of the United States”

*What are some rights, responsibilities, and privileges of being a citizen?*

**Rights**

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**Responsibilities**

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**Privileges**

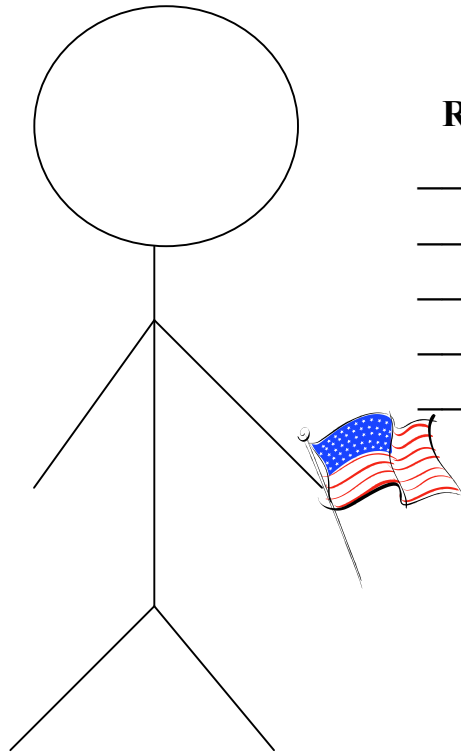
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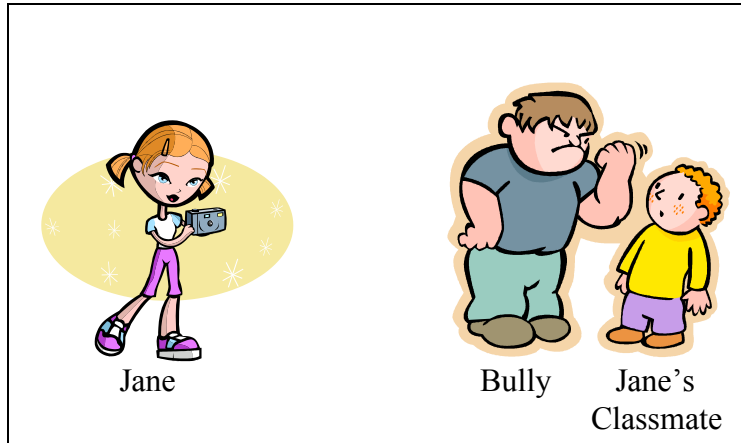
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## Handout 8: Extended Response Items

**Benchmark Statement:** Students will understand that American citizens have distinct responsibilities (such as voting), rights (such as free speech and freedom of religion), and privileges (such as driving).



**Prompt 1:** Jane plans to tell her teacher that a bully is picking on a classmate. Will Jane be exercising a right, a responsibility, or a privilege? Explain why a citizen such as Jane should tell her teacher.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Prompt 2:** Is voting a right, a responsibility, or a privilege? Explain why.

### Rubric

- 2 – this response gives a valid answer with an accurate and relevant explanation.
- 1 – this response gives a valid answer with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no explanation.
- 0 – inaccurate or no response.

### Handout 9: Selected Response Item

**Benchmark Statement:** Students will understand that American citizens have distinct responsibilities (such as voting), rights (such as free speech and freedom of religion), and privileges (such as driving).



**Selected Response Prompt:** Pat is returning a book to the library. Which of the following is Pat exercising?

- a. a right
- b. a privilege
- c. a responsibility.

**Correct Response: C**