



## Fairness

July

Fairness

### Character Qualities

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Caring
- Perseverance
- Unity
- Integrity
- Service
- Moral Courage
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Self Control

**“A person of character plays fair even when others don’t and values no achievement unless it was attained with honor.”**

**Michael Josephson**

City of Mission Viejo  
200 Civic Center  
Mission Viejo, CA 92691

The word *fairness* is usually used with younger children to help them learn about taking turns and sharing. As a person grows older, the lessons about *fairness* lead to the understanding of justice, the most common synonym of *fairness*. Other definitions include impartial, unbiased, equitable rightness or lawfulness without reference to one’s own inclinations. *Fairness* involves listening to get the facts—including opposing viewpoints—before making decisions. There is also the definition of deserved reward or penalty, and use of power to uphold what is lawful. One picture of justice is the personification of the blindfolded woman holding the scale and a sword.

*Fairness* involves playing by the rules, treating others with respect, and being aboveboard in your actions. One who is fair is open-minded, takes turns, and is a good listener. Children can learn *fairness* by sharing, taking turns, and thinking about others. They can practice these skills through playing games and interacting with other children.

In the book, *Raising Kids of Character, One Minute Mentoring Messages*, author and founder of Passkeys Foundation, Russell T. Williams suggests the following foundation for *fairness*: “*Fairness* is the personal commitment to practice the Golden Rule, recognizing we live in a limited, problematic, challenging and sometimes, grossly painful world. Therefore, practicing *fairness* is not the search for reassuring, golden good feelings about everything. Rather, *fairness* is the application of an individual’s affirming attitude connected to positive action in spite of the problems and challenges inherent in living in a world not free from pain.”

Due to the competitive nature of many aspects of our society, including sports, grades, and business, many individuals experience tremendous pressure to excel. There are temptations and opportunities to cheat, cut corners, or take unfair advantages to achieve a

victory. Sophocles stated, “Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.”

The Character Counts! Program has an athletic component called “Pursuing Victory With Honor.” Many high schools and colleges are adopting this program, which includes the following points: Winning is Important but Honor is Most Important; Ethics Is Essential to True Winning; There Is No True Victory Without Honor; Ethics and Sportsmanship Are Ground Rules; and Benefits of Sports Come From the Competition, Not the Outcome.

This commentary by Michael Josephson, founder of Character Counts! provides a good example of practicing *fairness*, honor, and moral courage—even when there is a cost.

### Real Life Example of Fairness

Nate Haasis, a 17-year-old senior quarterback, from Southeast High School in Springfield, Illinois, was about 30 yards shy of setting a conference passing record as well as joining 11 other Illinois quarterbacks who had passed for 5,000 or more yards in their careers. With seconds left, the opposing team had the ball but was hopelessly losing. Nate’s coach secretly made a deal with the other coach that he would allow them to score if they would allow Nate to complete one more pass and set the record, after the kickoff. After the game, the coaches openly admitted the arrangement and it set off a firestorm of controversy. Nate was congratulated because, in a laudable act of sportsmanship, he wrote a letter asking officials not to include the last pass in the record books. Our *fairness* and justice question for your discussion is: was the coach corrupt, misguided or harmless? What would you have done if you were in Nate’s position? (From Radio Commentary by Michael Josephson.)

## Books and Movies of Character

### Fiction

*Cutting in Line Isn't Fair!*  
by Anastasia Suen  
(Preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

*Grasshopper's Song: An Aesop Fable Revisited* by Nikki Giovanni  
(Kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade)

*Mine!* by Kevin Luthardt  
(Preschool to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

*Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*  
by Judy Blume  
(4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade)

*Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens  
(Preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

*Boggin Blizzy and Sleeter the Cheater: A Book About Fairness* by Michael P. Waite and Barbara Derosa  
(Preschool to 5<sup>th</sup> grade)

*Nothing's Fair in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade*  
by Barthe DeClements  
(3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade)

### Nonfiction

*Being Fair* by Robin Nelson  
(Kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade)

*I am Fair* by Mary Elizabeth Salzmann  
(Preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

*Learning About Fairness From the Life of Susan B. Anthony* by Kiki Mosher

*Thurgood Marshall: Civil Rights Attorney and Supreme Court Justice*  
by Mark Rowh (6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

*The Value of Fairness: The Story of Nellie Bly* by Ann Donegan Johnson

*When is it My Turn? A Book About Fairness* by Sandy Donovan

### Movies

*To Kill a Mockingbird*  
*Les Misérables*

## Quotes

“How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.” *George Washington Carver*

“Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.” *H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*

“Rise above principle and do what is right.” *Walter Heller*

“We must be courteous to a man as we are to a picture, which we are willing to give the advantage of good light.” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“These men ask for just the same thing, fairness, and fairness only. This, so far as in my power, they, and all others, shall have.” *Abraham Lincoln*

“Win or lose, do it fairly.” *Knut Rockne*

“Only the just man enjoys peace of mind.” *Epicurus*

“If you treat people right they will treat you right—ninety percent of the time.” *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

### What is Fairness?

- The quality of making judgments that are free from discrimination or bias.
- Playing by the rules.
- Treating others with courtesy and respect.
- Justice, the practice of giving to others what is their due.
- Equitable, proper decisions based on principle.
- Taking turns.

### Practicing Fairness

- Be fair to your teacher and classmates by following the class rules, meeting deadlines, and sharing.
- Respect others.
- Do what is expected of you.
- Be honest, do your own work and do not cheat. Cheating is unfair to others and to you.
- Include someone in your activity that is normally left out.
- Provide input into school, business or governmental policies.
- Stand up for someone who is being bullied or harassed.
- Defend the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Constitution

### Applying Fairness

- Live by the Golden Rule. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
- Coaches: stress the importance of following the rules; treat all team members fairly; show courtesy to opponents; and value honor and good sportsmanship over winning.
- Parents: listen to your children. Be honest and consistent. Demonstrate treating others fairly. Your child will learn from you!
- Teachers: be impartial, open, and sensitive with your students. Be realistic in your expectations and consistent in your discipline.

### Personal Commitments to Fairness:

- I will play by the rules, take turns and share.
- I will be open-minded, get all of the facts, and listen to others--including opposing views--before making decisions.
- I won't take advantage of others.
- I will not cheat in order to win or to get a better grade.
- I will make decisions without favoritism or prejudice.
- I will treat others the way I want to be treated.