

Speaking and Listening – Discussion

Random Act of Kindness or Basic Courtesy? 1

A **random act of kindness** is a helpful act which you do because you want to, not because you have to, and which comes at some personal cost to yourself. **Basic courtesy**, on the other hand, means doing something that you know you should do to get along with other people.

Work with a partner or small group. Read each sentence and decide which group it belongs to: random act of kindness or basic courtesy. Discuss your reasons. Why could each act be required?

Which random acts of kindness do you perform? Which will you start doing? Why? Which would you never do? Why not? Do you always behave with basic courtesy towards others? Why? / Why not?

1. Help somebody without expecting anything in return.
2. Do laundry regularly for a disabled friend or neighbour.
3. When driving, stop at a pedestrian crossing to let somebody cross.
4. Recommend a co-worker for promotion without them knowing.
5. Turn down your loud music because your sister is studying.
6. Stand up to let an elderly man sit down on the bus.
7. Start writing letters to people in prison.
8. Offer to drive your parents-in-law to the airport for free.
9. Leave a love note under your partner's pillow.
10. Do your homework without complaining.
11. Pay for the person behind you in the queue at the coffee shop.
12. Tip your waiter after a fabulous meal.
13. Go on a sponsored walk, run, or cycle to raise money for charity.
14. Let a foreign student stay at your home at a reduced rent.
15. Look at people when they're talking to you – give them your full attention.
16. Bake and take treats for your colleagues at work for no particular reason.
17. Offer to help your friend with revision in the run up to exams.
18. At the supermarket, leave your pound coin in the trolley for the next customer.
19. Don't eat the last piece of your flatmate's birthday cake.
20. Forgive somebody and consider the matter done and dusted.
21. Put down the loo seat after use.
22. When walking across a pedestrian crossing, wave and thank the driver.
23. Put your unwanted furniture and possessions in the paper for free collection.
24. Let other people in the house use the remote control from time to time.
25. Plant trees – even one.
26. Replace the loo roll if it runs out on your watch.
27. Like positive posts on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.
28. Lend your neighbour your lawn mower or car without grumbling.
29. Let a child win at a board game to boost their self-esteem.
30. Give a little bit extra effort at work.

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Answers may vary. Sample answers:

Random acts of kindness:

1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 29.

Basic courtesy:

3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30.

Definitions:

Random acts of kindness are:

- *premeditated or spontaneous*
- *single acts or regular acts*
- *designed to help people in need, who you know or perhaps do not know*
- *charitable and altruistic*
- *acts that cost you something, for example: your time, your money, your effort*
- *acts that you do voluntarily – you choose to do them*
- *acts which may not have negative consequences for you if you don't do them*
- *acts from which you derive no benefit apart from the pleasure of helping other people*

Basic courtesy means:

- *doing what you know to be the right thing – all the time*
- *doing your duty – what you have previously agreed to do*
- *perhaps doing an unpleasant task which you do not want to do*
- *doing something which has to be done – if it is not done there could be negative consequences for you or somebody else*
- *doing things because it is your turn to do them, even though it may be inconvenient to you*
- *being disciplined, dependable, reliable, responsible, supportive, and empathetic*