



How To Be A Good Neighbor: Tips And Etiquette For Positive Neighborly Relationships

6-MINUTE READ APRIL 13, 2021

In many ways, good neighbor etiquette has gotten a lot simpler in recent years as people have relied less on local communities, thanks in no small part to modern technology.

But while you're less likely nowadays to have a neighbor ring your doorbell to borrow a cup of sugar, it's still important to maintain a polite relationship with those who live near you. Unfortunately, the problems and annoyances that often come up when a group of people live close together can threaten that cordiality.

Having a good relationship with your neighbors has a [multitude of benefits](#). It can help you feel safer, provide a quick and easy-to-reach lifeline if you're ever in a pinch, reduce feelings of loneliness and contribute to your well-being. Even if you don't become the quintessential tight-knit neighborhood with regular barbecues and block parties, just knowing the names of the people you share your space with can increase your sense of community.

How can you achieve this sense of community? Simply being nice can go a long way. Here's how to keep the peace in your neighborhood.

What Does It Mean To Be A Good Neighbor?

In general, you want to be pleasant, polite and respectful to your neighbors. Start by doing your best to not create undue nuisances. Respect others' [property lines](#), yards and homes. Keep your pets and kids within the realm of acceptable behavior. Essentially, be the neighbor you'd want to live next to.

A big etiquette issue with neighbors is noise. While some noise is to be expected, being excessively loud, especially at late or early hours, is generally considered to be bad etiquette. If you live in an apartment, avoid vacuuming or doing other noisy projects late at night or early in the morning. If you have to mow your lawn, avoid doing it early on weekend mornings.

If you're planning a big event to be held at your house or in your yard, it's good practice to let your neighbors know ahead of time.

Additionally, make sure you're keeping your space neat. Put trash where it belongs, keep your yard orderly and follow the rules of the community.

7 Tips For Being A Good Neighbor

In an effort to make sure you're being as friendly and courteous to your surrounding community as possible, let's dive into a few more specific pointers for cultivating positive connections with your neighbors:

1. Make Nice

You don't have to be friends with your neighbors, but you should make nice.

Be sure to introduce yourself briefly when moving in. And when new people join the neighborhood, be the first to welcome them to the community.

Even if your interactions don't go beyond that, your neighbors will appreciate knowing there's a friendly face nearby. Plus, introducing yourself right away ensures that the first time you meet isn't when you're bringing up a grievance or after mistaking them for a burglar because you weren't sure what they looked like.

In your day-to-day life, as you're out walking the dog or mowing the lawn, be sure to smile and wave at your neighbors as they pass.

2. Respect COVID-19 Guidelines

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered the ways in which we interact with our neighbors as well as with our friends and family – and it's become more important than ever to be respectful of other people's boundaries. If you live in an apartment building, for example, and you know you're likely to come into contact with your neighbors in public spaces like the hallway, laundry room or mailroom, wear a mask and make an effort to stay 6 feet away from them. If you live in a house and choose to have guests over, consider trying to abide by your state's social distancing recommendations as much as possible. Holding large gatherings in the same way you would have before the pandemic might make some of your neighbors uncomfortable and potentially put a strain on your relationship with them.

3. Be A Good Digital Neighbor

It's now increasingly common for neighbors to connect online through a social media site like Facebook or on a neighborhood-specific social networking app such as Nextdoor.

Connecting with your neighbors online can be a great way to keep up with the goings-on of the neighborhood. It can also be a great source of important information like when the next barbeque is or if someone's cat has gone missing.

However, people also have a tendency to say things online that they would never say in person. If you join an online neighborhood group, don't let that false feeling of online anonymity lead you to burn bridges.

Don't use the page to complain. Remember how difficult it is to convey tone over text. Keep the conversation polite. Don't try to sell your neighbors things or try to get them to take on big tasks for you for free.

4. Stay Off The Grapevine

Sometimes, even the best of us can get caught up in neighborhood drama and gossip. But do your best to stay out of it and keep the peace.

If one of your neighbors has issues with another neighbor, encourage them to approach that person directly. Try saying something like, "That sounds frustrating, but I've only ever had good experiences with So-And-So. Maybe you should talk to them and work together to resolve the issue."

Oftentimes drama can be avoided by simply being upfront and communicative about issues as they arise.

5. Practice Good Pet-iquette

We love our pets, so we might not be as quick to notice when they're acting in a way that inconveniences, or even endangers, others.

No matter what your furry friend's temperament is, you should ensure that your pet stays within the boundaries of your yard and is always restrained on walks. Even if you have the gentlest, friendliest canine, they could still spook the neighborhood kids or anybody who has a fear of dogs. Plus, you don't want to be responsible for a bad allergic reaction if your dog likes to greet passersby by jumping up and getting fur and dander all over them.

Cats tend to be a little easier, but you should still be mindful of your feline friends.

Outdoor cats should also be kept in the yard just as a dog would. Not only are wandering cats at risk of getting hit by a car or attacked by another animal, but your next-door neighbor might not like it when your cat visits and begs at their back door for food.

If your pet has ever shown any signs of behavioral problems, you need to be extra careful to keep them restrained and away from neighbors and strangers they could potentially harm. Depending on the laws in your area, it's very likely you'll be legally liable if your dog injures someone. Not only that, but your neighbors deserve to feel safe in their neighborhood. Being a responsible pet owner shows that you care about your neighbors' [safety and comfort](#).

6. Bring Up Issues Diplomatically

What happens when one of your neighbors breaks etiquette in a way that impacts you? Talk it out face to face – no notes, emails or passive-aggressive posts in the neighborhood Facebook group.

Bring it up at a time when you're calm and not at risk of losing your temper. Getting angry is likely to escalate the issue rather than resolve it. Remember there are probably some things you do that make you a less-than-great neighbor, too. Approach any etiquette-breaching neighbors with the politeness and understanding you'd want to be treated with if someone had an issue with you.

Keep in mind that your neighbor might not even realize that what they're doing is an issue. Loud upstairs neighbors are a classic example of this – most times, it's impossible for loud steppers to know that they've got what sounds like lead in their shoes.

When you're asking your neighbor to change an annoying behavior, like playing music too loudly late at night, ask for reasonable boundaries and be open to compromise. If you put your kids to bed at a certain time each evening, ask the offending neighbor if they could turn their music down after that time. Be gracious and remember to say thanks even if you don't necessarily feel thankful. A little kindness will go a long way in fostering a peaceful, neighborly relationship.

It's important to be able to talk to your neighbors when issues arise. However, it's also important to recognize what is something that should be addressed and what is just a routine inconvenience of living in close quarters with other people. Learn to take some things in stride – you don't want to become known as the neighbor who complains about everything.

7. Lend A Helping Hand

If you're able to, helping your neighbors out from time to time is a great way to show neighborly kindness.

Shovel the driveway for your older neighbor after a big snowstorm, or offer to water plants when someone goes out of town.

When a neighbor goes on vacation, picking up their newspapers and placing them somewhere that isn't visible from the street is a simple and helpful way to show that you're looking out for them.

You don't have to suddenly become the neighborhood organizer, start volunteering to help with big tasks or be a social butterfly if you aren't up to it or don't have the time.

Even small gestures will be appreciated and help contribute to your neighborhood's feeling of community.

The Bottom Line

When in doubt, apply the age-old "Golden Rule" to your neighborly relations, and treat others the way you would like to be treated. Developing connections with the people who live around you that are based in mutual respect and kindness will only be to your

benefit, and it will ultimately make your neighborhood a more enjoyable place for you to live.

Have questions about how to look for a good community to live in? Read [how to find the perfect neighborhood](#)!