

# THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

A social contract is an agreement between people or between people and the government. People agree to give up some of their rights in exchange for law and order and security. People agree to treat each other fairly so everyone can have the same rights.

**We all choose to live together in a society.** We live in communities and build things that help everyone, like roads and schools. We agree that we won't do things that are really selfish or that hurt other people. We respect other people's rights. In return, we expect that other people will respect our rights too.



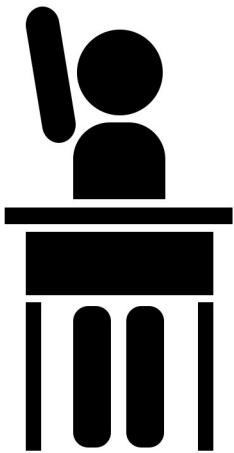
**We don't take things that don't belong to us.**

There are laws against stealing and breaking into other people's houses. If you make or buy something, no one can take it from you without your permission. If you want something, you can't just take it from someone. You have to ask for it, buy it, or make it yourself. This is an example of how we respect each other's property and belongings.



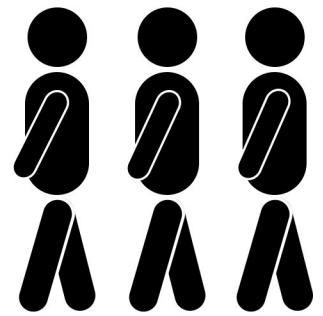
**Teachers and students have a social contract about how they treat each other.**

Teachers agree to treat students respectfully, help them learn, and grade them fairly. Students agree to try their best, behave in the classroom, and be honest when doing their work. Even if you don't say this agreement out loud every day, we all know it is there! This is an example of how we agree to trust each other.



**People agree to stand in line and wait their turn.**

When Americans are waiting to do something or go in somewhere, we agree to wait in line. We don't push or shove our way to the front or cut in front of others. You may wait in line in the cafeteria or to take a turn on the playground. In some cases, we let people go ahead in lines if waiting will be very hard for them. Lines are an example of how try to be fair.



## HOW DOES THIS GET COMPLICATED?

Some parts of a social contract are laws, but other parts are traditions and practices that aren't written down anywhere. When someone moves to the United States – or even from one place to another inside the country – they have to learn those unwritten parts of the agreement.

