

How to be a Good Neighbor

Being on bad terms with your neighbor can make your life frustrating – every day. Taking the time to establish good terms with your neighbors has numerous benefits. The community will be friendlier, safer, and a more comfortable place to live. Being connected to others and feeling safe significantly increases your happiness and decreases stress.

Introduce yourself. Whether you're new in the neighborhood or new residents have just moved to your block, introduce yourself, say hello, offer a welcoming gift, and share or ask about the local area: "Where's the nearest pizza shop?" or "The garbage pick-up is Tuesday."

Consider your neighbors' lifestyle. Get to know your neighbors – what they do for a living, what their schedules might be like, and so on. Sometimes, you can remedy problems before they even start; for example, if they work nights, quiet mornings will be important to them. If they have young children, quiet evenings will be very important to them. Similarly, give them information that will help them be more considerate of your lifestyle. If you do a lot of yard work, or if your teenage son plays the drums, let them know in advance and mention that if it's getting too loud they shouldn't hesitate to let you know.

Be aware of shared walls. If you're in a terrace, condominium, semi-attached house or any structure where you and your neighbors share adjacent living spaces, position any noisy household appliances - even TV's - away from partition walls. If you live above someone, consider putting linoleum or rubber matting underneath your appliances to deaden or muffle the noise, and remember that someone downstairs can hear you walking around.

Control your dog. Keep your dog on a leash and make sure to clean up after it. If you have problems controlling your dog's barking and whining, consider seeking help from your local vet or animal organization.

Practice parking etiquette. When you park your vehicle, be sure not to block anyone's access, or make them have to pull out of a very tight spot. Don't over-rev the engine of your car or motorcycle early in the morning or late at night. Park in front of your home, not theirs. Avoid slamming doors or shining your headlights into your neighbors' windows late at night.

Alert your neighbor to parties. If you're planning a party, be sure to give your neighbors plenty of warning, letting them know when it's going to start and how

long you expect to go on. Leave them a telephone number to contact if they need to ask you to turn it down. If you get along well with your neighbors, why not invite them too? When it comes to the party itself, stick to the agreed-to arrangements and ask your guests to be considerate when leaving.

Keep your yard and garden tidy. Weed your garden regularly, because the presence of weeds is not only unsightly but can also spread to your neighbor's yard. Mow your lawn regularly and keep your flowers, trees, and bushes trimmed appropriately. Put equipment away as soon as you're finished with it. Ask your neighbors if they have any chemical sensitivities, small children or pets before applying pesticides.

Control your bonfire, barbecue or backyard fire. Position it where the smoke and smell will be least likely to blow onto your neighbor's property. As with parties, notify them in advance of your intentions.

Put rubbish/garbage out on the right day. Only put your rubbish/garbage out on the day it's due for collection. If you accidentally miss the collection, bring it back onto your property immediately and contain it. Garbage can attract vermin and insects and is also unsightly. Keep your trash area clean and debris-free. Wash your garbage cans if they begin to smell.

Communicate with your neighbor. Above all, touch base with your neighbors regularly and keep them in the loop. Remember the golden rule and if anything you are planning to do will affect them, minimize it by letting them know in advance. Keep the channels of communication open and avoid misunderstandings before they happen.

Be aware of your surroundings, as well as theirs. Even if you're not in a "neighborhood watch" community, keep your eye on anyone acting suspiciously around your neighbor's property. When in doubt, call the police so they can quickly curtail any criminal activity.

Invite them to contribute to your garage sales, have them over for tea, or offer to babysit their kids while they're away. They'll do the same for you.

If you hear of any neighborhood news (events, crimes, special garbage pickups, special event parking restrictions, etc. give them a heads-up.

Tips

- Really good neighbors watch out for each other. They ask each other for advice and offer to help, especially on matters that impact the larger

- neighborhood. They respect each other's boundaries but are quick to assist in a crisis. They look for opportunities to collaborate and socialize. Great neighbors make for great neighborhoods, and it is well worth the effort.
- Get out more. A morning or evening walk is a great stress reliever that also allows you to meet more of your neighbors and feel more at home in your surroundings.
 - Smile. It's simple enough, but if you're not in the habit of smiling and giving a friendly hello to the people in your neighborhood, it's a good habit to start. While not everyone will immediately return the friendliness, it's a quick way to get to know people and build relationships.
 - Talk with your elders. The more veteran members of the neighborhood often have the inside scoop on the neighborhood. You may be surprised at how much you can learn if you stop to talk to the sweet older lady on the corner. In return for their wisdom and insight, offer positive assistance: help them bring in groceries or, if you notice their mail piling up or you don't notice their lights on at night for some time, knock on their door to see if they are okay.
 - Check local regulations regarding fires and noise levels. There are laws in most jurisdictions regulating such things. Set a good example for your neighbors by complying with them.
 - If you are experiencing problems with an anti-social neighbor and you are unable to resolve issues yourself, check to see if your local government has information on dispute resolution. For example, look for a website with information on how to tackle anti-social behavior in your community.
 - Have pride in your home and your neighborhood. Knowing the people who live around you provides a strengthened sense of pride in your home and your neighborhood. While you may not be able to change the neighborhood in which you live, you can change the experience you have in your own neighborhood by getting more involved with those around you and taking pride in the area in which you live.