

How to be a Good Neighbor

By Sarah Finnegan

I'm sure we've all dealt with terrible neighbors at one point or another. Bad neighbors are the ones who play their music loudly at all times of the day and who let their family and friends steal the coveted parking space in front of your property.

Back in the good old day's neighbors used to greet one another every morning on their way to work. They would put each other's trash cans out on trash day and would even bring each other baked cookies on special occasions.

Not to say these acts of kindness don't happen in today's world, but it is becoming increasingly rare. Still, there's nothing wrong with being a good neighbor from time to time. It's all about proper etiquette. Let's look at a few tips on how to be a good neighbor.

1) Introduce yourself

Introducing yourself to the neighbors seems to be a lost art. Stand out from the rest of your neighbors by being the friendly new guy or gal on the block. It isn't terribly difficult to knock on your neighbor's door and introduce yourself. If the idea of going to your neighbor's home terrifies you try to approach them while they're walking their dog. This is more informal, and the pet allows you to break the ice easily as you're introducing yourself ("nice dog you have their neighbor!").

2) Notify your neighbors before you throw a party

Nothing's worse than coming home from work to find all of the street parking occupied because one of your neighbors is throwing a massive party. A good neighborly thing to do is to warn your neighbors beforehand that you will be inviting over a large group of people. This will give them time to figure out their parking situation. This will also let them know they'll likely be dealing with loud noises for the length of the party.

3) Take care of your yard

Your home is a representation of your entire neighborhood. You don't want to find yourself in a position where your property is the one home on the block bringing down the value of everyone else's property. That's a surefire way to make some enemies.

If you don't want to take care of your yard yourself draft one of your neighbor's kids to do it for you. The least you can do is to keep your yard at the same level of care as the rest of the neighborhood. Another quick tip is to keep your yard from overgrowing to the point where it's creeping over to your neighbor's side. That means maintaining tree limbs, shrubbery, and tall grass at manageable levels.

4) Put your trash out on the right day

Every community has different policies regarding trash pickup. Know when your trash pickup day is so you can put your trashcans on the corner at the right time. Furthermore, use the right cans for the right trash. For example, yard clippings generally go into the green can, general trash goes into the black can and recyclables go into the blue can.

Also be aware of restrictions regarding the disposal of large items and chemicals. Keep in mind most waste companies have regulations in place regarding what you can place on your corner and how. Learn this information so you won't run into issues.

5) Keeping your pets under control

You're responsible for every mess and noise your pet makes. It's only common sense that you clean up after your pet when you take them out for walks. Also, if you happen to have a dog who can't help but howl at the moon every night, consider bringing them inside to give your neighbors some peace and quiet.

You should also keep your pets fully vaccinated to avoid the spread of diseases. Furthermore, if you take your dog out into your front yard always keep them on a leash. This will keep your pet from running after one of your neighbor's dogs if they happen to be passing by.

6) Be mindful of excessive noise

We've already slightly touched on this subject when we talked about throwing a large party, but each city has guidelines for noise regulations. Your city should have a website that lists these regulations for you to follow. As you do your research you'll find certain types of noises, such as using power tools on a home project, is restricted to only certain times of the day.

For the sake of argument, let's say you're well within your rights to make loud noises because it's the middle of the day, but your neighbor has expressed their annoyance. You should go over and speak with your neighbor to try to work out an agreement with them so that you can finish your project. Your neighbor will still have to deal with the noise, but they'll respect you more for speaking with them about the issue.

7) Do favors for your neighbors

It isn't hard to do your neighbor a favor when the opportunity presents itself. For example, if you see one of your elderly neighbors struggling with a package, you should rush over and carry it inside for them. If you see a neighbor taking care of their yard, but they're missing essential tools head over and let them borrow what they're missing. They'll greatly appreciate the gesture and possibly reciprocate when you find yourself in a similar situation in the future.

8) Invite your neighbors over for a friendly BBQ every once in a while

Everyone loves a good BBQ. Perhaps every few months you can invite a few neighbors over for a friendly gathering. This is a great time to have conversations and learn more about your neighbors. After all, people tend to bond best over a good meal and cold drinks. If you really want to do it big you can even request that your neighbors bring a dish so that you throw a massive potluck. Either way, your neighbors will love you for opening your home in such a friendly manner.

9) Deal with all issues face to face

If you live next to someone for long enough, there's a good chance you'll run into one issue or another at some point. For example, your neighbor may be annoyed about a parking space or any number of possible grievances.

Resolve such issues face to face and try to figure out a solution. It's easy to yell at someone over the phone. However, people tend to be more civil when it comes to face to face discussions. Give your neighbor a chance to come up with possible solutions and try to reach a compromise.