

character-in-action.com/character-trait-definitions/ Elizabeth Hamilton (used with permission)

Character traits have in common particular elements. We do not attempt to list them all, but you will want to make note of five major similarities:

1. Understanding flowing into desire and then action. All character traits are built intellectually first. We must understand the trait. Understanding flows into desire for the trait. Desire leads to action as we begin to exercise the trait consistently.
2. Assumption of personal sacrifice if necessary. The exercise of any character trait may require known or unknown personal sacrifice. We must be willing to relegate personal interests to second place in order to exercise character rightly.
3. Acceptance of consequences beforehand. In the exercise of any character trait, we can expect consequences: pleasant or unpleasant. We must choose, even before we exercise the trait, to accept the consequences, whatever they may be.
4. Constancy even when no one observes. Character traits can never be exercised for the benefit of spectators. The nature of character traits is such that they must be exercised faithfully, whether or not anyone is observing.
5. Inability to cancel out another trait. No one character trait ever cancels out another character trait. They are never mutually exclusive. That is, one never excludes or precludes another. Example: Tactfulness can never cancel out honesty.

Every definition below includes those five elements by default. You will want to add them to your study of a specific *character trait*.

Adaptability

...begins by learning for whom I should be willing to make changes, and then acts to fit myself, my priorities, and my deeds with those of that person or persons.

Appreciation

...begins by discovering how to observe and recognize others' good work or good effort, and then acts to mention such work or effort, compliment, and express sincere thanks.

Attentiveness

...begins by finding out on whom or what I should concentrate at a given time, and then acts to focus my thinking undividedly on that person or object for the required time.

Availability

...begins by recognizing what needs to be done, or asks if a need exists; and then acts on the knowledge by showing itself present, ready, and willing to assume the responsibility.

Commitment

...begins by gaining ample understanding of a specific pursuit or belief, and then acts to obligate or emotionally compel myself to begin and continue in that pursuit or belief.

Compassion

...begins by observing the suffering of others, identifies with that suffering as if it were my own, and then acts to alleviate the cause of the suffering and restore emotional balance.

Concern

...begins by calculating carefully the cost of getting involved in the needs of others, and then acts to become involved thoroughly, seeking to meet whatever needs possible.

Confidence

...begins by evaluating realistically, and accepting my true abilities, and then acts positively to believe that I can and, within reason, will succeed in the use of those abilities, even though others may not agree.

Consideration

...begins by seeking to understand the interests and needs of others, and then acts with thoughtfulness and kindness to treat others as I would want to be treated if I had the same interests and needs.

Consistency

...begins by determining what I profess to believe is right and wrong, and then acts to bring my behavior and speech into harmony with what I profess to myself and to others.

Contentment

...begins by becoming aware of exactly what I have and who I am, and then acts to accept my circumstances and person readily, maintaining balance in my thoughts, words, and deeds.

Cooperation

...begins by understanding after careful consideration with whom I should associate or work toward a specified goal, and then acts to reach that goal successfully for mutual benefit.

Courage

...begins by determining what convictions of right and wrong I should hold with no likelihood of change, and then acts to shun fear of others, standing up strongly for those convictions.

Creativity

...begins by becoming conscious of an unmet personal or group need, and then acts, using available materials, to produce a new form that will meet the need.

Decisiveness

...begins by recognizing and understanding all of the choices involved in a situation, and then acts firmly to choose only one of them, resolutely remaining with that choice.

Deference

...begins by understanding whose wishes, opinions, or judgment must be valued, and then acts to give courteous respect to those wishes, opinions, and judgments, submitting to them graciously.

Dependability

...begins by understanding that others rely on me to do what I say I will do, and then acts to be sure every commitment is met on time and in the most complete manner possible for me.

Determination

...begins by becoming aware of a reasonable goal within my individual limits that I want intensely, and then acts to decide firmly on that goal and work conscientiously toward attainment of it.

Diligence

...begins by determining and fully understanding the task before me, and then acts to apply myself to the task with unremitting attention until I have completed it as well as I am able.

Discernment

...begins by gaining an understanding of how to sift facts, and then acts to separate them correctly, deciding which are needed, choosing the superior and rejecting the inferior.

Discretion

...begins by reaching a well-researched decision regarding what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in a given situation, and then acts to choose only the appropriate words and actions.

Efficiency

...begins by gaining an understanding of how to avoid wasted time, effort, and resources, and then acts to apply that knowledge consciously and consistently to every area of my life.

Equitableness

...begins by understanding the value of others, and then acts toward others in a fair and balanced manner, not treating everyone equally (as though exactly the same), but discarding all types of favoritism.

Fairness

...begins by learning where the line of impartiality lies in any situation, and then acts to hold that line without personal interests, prejudice, and favoritism while doing what is best for all involved.

Faithfulness

...begins by understanding to whom or to what I owe my allegiance or commitment, and then acts to adhere consciously and consistently to that allegiance or commitment without swerving.

Fearlessness

...begins by sensing anxiety or strong concern caused by real or anticipated danger, and then acts to perform what is necessary and more important than the feeling of fear.

Flexibility

...begins by grasping the truth that life's daily requirements do not remain the same, and then takes action to embrace changes that occur, adapting to them willingly, yet without sacrificing moral absolutes.

Forgiveness

...begins by recognizing that another person has wronged me, resenting that person for what was done, and then acts to give up my resentment completely, and express my action in words to the one who wronged me.

Friendliness

...begins by learning how to show a kindly interest in other people, and then acts to show such interest, not necessarily becoming friends, but making other feel my kindness.

Generosity

...begins by reaching an understanding of what it means to do good, helpful things for others, and then acts to consciously and consistently do for others things that are both good and helpful.

Gentleness

...begins by understanding how fairness and consideration work, and then takes action to present an even, sweet manner to everyone regardless of my personal rights and interests.

Gratitude

...begins by recognizing every benefit I have received, and then acts to appreciate consciously those benefits and express thankfulness for them in words followed by deeds of appreciation.

Honesty

...begins by giving thoughtful attention to understanding what reality is in the situation, and then acts to avoid any slightest attempt in word or deed to deceive others about the reality for even a moment.

Humility

...begins by gaining a proper, realistic self-esteem, thinking neither too highly nor too lowly of self, and then acts consciously to take a lower place than others.

Integrity

...begins by understanding the need for consistent oneness in every area of life: spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional; and then acts to ensure that such unbroken completeness is always true of me.

Joyfulness

...begins by acquiring a realistic view of both the good and bad of life, and then takes firm action to show cheerfulness and resolutely maintain a quiet happiness in both good and bad circumstances.

Kindness

...begins by observing and recognizing the needs of others, and then acts to meet whatever needs it is able to meet, with no strings attached and no expectation of any kind of return.

Love

...begins by seeking to understand as completely as possible the person who is the object of my love, and then acts to do what is in the best interests of that individual, even when my actions may appear unkind.

Loyalty

...begins by understanding to whom and to what I owe my allegiance or faithfulness, and then acts to remain faithful and true, firm in all of my affections and promises.

Meekness

...begins by understanding my own worth and power, and then acts to control my power, accept a place lower than others, and refuse to exercise my own rights over others.

Mercifulness

...begins by grasping the justice required in a given situation, senses a desire to be kind and forgiving, and then acts to show compassion and caring in place of the harsh, strict treatment that is justified.

Observance

...begins by learning how to pay attention, noticing details with keen and quick perception, and then acts to take a patient look at people and circumstances in order to help in any way needed.

Optimism

...begins by understanding realistically the facts of a situation, and then acts purposefully to put the most favorable construction on those facts and move ahead, expecting a favorable outcome.

Patience

...begins by feeling the pain of suffering, the emotional upheaval of adversity or anger, and then acts to take charge of those feelings and keep myself under control.

Peacefulness

...begins by recognizing the people and things with which I disagree, and then acts to refuse their control over my attitude, consciously choosing to remain quiet and undisturbed.

Perseverance

...begins by being aware of the fact that there will be difficulties in a planned undertaking, and then acts to move through those difficulties, no matter how severe, sticking with the undertaking to the end.

Persistence

...begins by understanding the goal clearly, and then acts to achieve that goal, continuing in spite of interference, discomfort, or other hindrances that may block the way.

Persuasiveness

...begins by becoming so familiar with a situation that I know what action is best for the other person, and then acts to incite that other person to do what is best for them.

Prudence

...begins by recognizing fully the consequences of a given deed or course of action, and then acts to govern myself to do only what is right, regardless of what others may choose to do.

Punctuality

...begins by understanding every deadline I may have for appointments, tasks, etc., and then acts to order life in a manner that allows me to meet those deadlines. (promptness)

Purpose

...begins by deciding what clear goal or target I want to achieve, and then acts resolutely and consistently without quitting until the desired end is attained.

Resourcefulness

...begins by acknowledging a goal or project's need to succeed, and then acts to find and use supplies and means (resources) to attain the goal or project's end without undue expense.

Respect

...begins by understanding whom I should value or consider worthy of high regard, and then acts to show in word, deed, and dress that I do appreciate and highly esteem those individuals.

Responsibility

...begins by determining what task or duty is mine, gaining knowledge of what is involved in its completion, and then acts to complete that task or duty to the best of my ability.

Security / Self-Confidence

...begins by recognizing a potential danger, fear, concern, or anxiety, and then acts to free (secure) myself and others from that danger, fear, concern or anxiety.

Self-Control

...begins by learning to recognize my impulses, emotions, desires, or "itches" that need restraint, and then acts to take power over self, reining them in consistently without being reminded.

Sincerity

...begins by gaining a clear and realistic understanding of who and what I really am, and then acts to be true to that understanding, genuine and pure as I seek to build stronger character.

Submissiveness

...begins by understanding who is in any way in authority over me, and learning what they require of me in a given situation, and then acts immediately to do what is required.

Tactfulness

...begins by understanding that certain words or deeds may offend others, and then acts to exercise kindness, love, and compassion toward that person without sacrificing honesty, integrity, and truthfulness.

Temperance

...begins by recognizing my individual desires, passions, and sensual appetites, and then acts to master not only the deeds involved, but also the thoughts that lead to those deeds.

Thoroughness

...begins by understanding what actions and materials are necessary for completion of a task or responsibility, and then acts to carry that task or responsibility through to full, detailed completion.

Thriftiness

...begins by learning the best ways to economize and manage both my material goods and my money, and then acts to conform every area of my life to that knowledge.

Tolerance

...begins by recognizing ways in which another is different from me, and then acts to bear with that individual while avoiding acceptance and appreciation of differences that are contrary to my convictions.

Trustworthiness

...begins by understanding that others count on me, and then acts consistently to ensure that others can safely believe my words and actions, and rely on me not to let them down.

Truthfulness

...begins by understanding that certain concepts and facts have been shown to be true, and then acts consistently to base my words and actions on only those concepts and facts.

Virtue

...begins by comprehending that there is a clear, absolute standard of right and wrong, and then acts to bring every area of life into conformity to that absolute standard.