



*"Every action in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those present."*

**George Washington**

### What is Deference?

Deference is at the heart of good manners. The root Latin word meant to "remove something." Deference removes the barriers put up by fighting for our personal preferences, clinging to our rights, and promoting ourselves first. It promotes harmony in group settings.

A person with deference does not compromise right action or good character, but does respect the tastes of others over his own.

A person with a deferential attitude is observant of those around him, recognizing their tastes and making efforts to accommodate them. He seeks to view situations with a perspective bigger than his own.

*"While deference yields in matters of preference, it remains firm in matters of truth."*

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### The Rewards of Deference

President William McKinley served the United States as president from 1897 to 1901. At one point, he was trying to choose between two equally qualified men for a certain diplomatic post. As he weighed the qualifications of the two men, he recalled seeing one of the men several years before seated at the front of streetcar in which McKinley was seated at the back. An elderly woman loaded with heavy packages struggled to get onto the streetcar. McKinley recalled seeing the man raise his newspaper to pretend he didn't see the woman, instead of giving her his seat. McKinley himself got up from the back and offered the woman his seat. Because McKinley knew the extreme importance of deference to the tastes of another culture in the diplomatic service, he gave the post to the other man. The man who lost the post never knew how an early display of poor character cost him a position he cherished.

## Deference vs. Rudeness

"Limiting my freedom so I do not offend the tastes of those around me."

I will:

- " notice those around me.
- " respect the feelings of others.
- " not use offensive language.
- " not play loud music in public.
- " be careful how I dress.

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*"Deference is the spirit of teamwork!"*  
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### Questions to Discuss

1. What rights and personal tastes of my own do I promote above those of others?
2. How do I distinguish a choice between right and wrong from a choice of personal preference?
3. How can I learn about other's personal taste and preferences?
4. What are some areas where I could defer to another's way of doing something-and perhaps learn something new?
5. What are some examples in our home or office where someone has shown deference?

*"America's freedom was born out of the power of character - even with a lack of ability [in war]."*

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### Preference vs. Deference

The Latin root for preference has the meaning of putting one's banner in front to show dominance.

Do you put your preferences ahead of those of others?



### What does deference look like?

- "noticing a colleague on the phone nearby and lowering your voice or moving further away to continue your own conversation.
- " wiping off the counter top in a lavatory so that it is dry for the next person.
- " wearing modest clothing so you won't offend others.
- " Giving the last piece of cake to another.
- " letting an argument go, rather than trying to have the last word.

### Blocks to the harmony produced by deference!

- " Refusing to let go of our habitual way of doing things.
- " Being 'self-absorbed,' ignoring the expressed tastes of others.
- " Being so interested in our personal rights and agendas that we ignore the 'bigger picture.'
- " Being confident that our own way of doing things is the best.

Parents - [Click here](#) for "Tips for Parents" in Teaching deference to your children.

Check out the [Just for Kids](#) pages for an animal analogy and a biographic sketch illustrating deference.