

Positive character traits

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Integrity And Honesty

Telling the truth and keeping to principles, including when it costs something.

honest adj. · everyday

Truthful, sincere, and willing to represent facts fairly.

Fits when: someone tells the truth even when concealment would be easier

Not when: you only know that the person speaks bluntly or shares a lot

She gave the cashier back the extra note before leaving the counter.

truthful adj. · everyday

Honest and accurate in expression.

Fits when: a statement or account consistently matches what the person knows

Not when: you are praising tact, openness, or accuracy without evidence of truthfulness

His truthful account included the mistake that made his own team look careless.

sincere adj. · warm

Honest in feeling, intention, or expression.

Fits when: words and actions reflect a person's genuine beliefs or feelings

Not when: the person is merely enthusiastic, polished, or emotionally expressive

Her sincere apology named the harm and the change she intended to make.

candid adj. · professional

Honest, direct, and open in expression.

Fits when: someone gives a direct and honest assessment without hiding an awkward fact

Not when: the delivery is needlessly harsh or the speaker has disclosed private information

The reviewer was candid about the proposal's cost while still treating its authors fairly.

forthright adj. · professional

Direct, honest, and clear in expression.

Fits when: a person states a difficult position plainly and without evasion

Not when: the person is simply loud, forceful, or quick to give an opinion

He was forthright about the delay before anyone had to ask.

transparent adj. · professional

Open, clear, and honest about actions or information.

Fits when: someone makes motives, limits, or decisions open to scrutiny

Not when: you mean emotionally open, easy to understand, or visibly obvious

The treasurer was transparent about every fee and conflict of interest.

principled adj. · professional

Guided by strong and fair moral standards.

Fits when: choices remain aligned with stated moral standards under pressure

Not when: the person is rigid about a preference that carries no ethical weight

Her principled refusal cost the firm a contract but protected the client's privacy.

ethical adj. · professional

Guided by fair and morally sound principles.

Fits when: conduct follows defensible moral or professional standards

Not when: something is merely legal, conventional, or efficient

The ethical adviser disclosed the conflict and stepped away from the decision.

upright adj. · formal

Honest, responsible, and guided by moral principles.

Fits when: a person's conduct is consistently honest and morally sound

Not when: you are describing posture, position, or a single correct choice

Colleagues trusted the upright judge to reject favors from either side.

honorable adj. · formal

Guided by strong moral principles and worthy of respect.

Fits when: someone acts with integrity and a serious regard for what is right

Not when: you mean prestigious, admired, or formally titled

It was honorable of him to keep the promise after the arrangement stopped benefiting him.

virtuous adj. · formal

Acting according to strong moral principles.

Fits when: a pattern of conduct demonstrates strong moral goodness

Not when: you have observed only competence, good manners, or one generous act

Her virtuous leadership joined fairness in policy with honesty about mistakes.

incorruptible adj. · formal

Unable to be persuaded to act dishonestly.

Fits when: a person cannot be induced to betray a duty for money or advantage

Not when: there has been no meaningful temptation or test of integrity

The incorruptible inspector refused every gift offered by the contractor.

scrupulous adj. · formal

Careful, honest, and attentive to what is right.

Fits when: someone takes exacting care to do what conscience and fairness require

Not when: the care is only about detail, neatness, or technical precision

She was scrupulous about crediting the junior researchers whose work shaped the result.

authentic adj. · warm

Genuine, honest, and true to one's character or origin.

Fits when: a person's behavior accords with their real values rather than a performed image

Not when: you only mean original, certified, or stylistically distinctive

His authentic concern remained visible after the cameras and visitors had gone.

Loyalty And Trust

Standing by people and keeping your word.

loyal adj. · everyday

Steady in support, duty, or affection.

Fits when: someone keeps faith with a person, group, or cause through difficulty

Not when: support requires excusing harm, suppressing truth, or obeying without judgment

The loyal friend defended Mira from gossip and challenged her privately when she was wrong.

faithful adj. · warm

Steady in loyalty, accuracy, or commitment.

Fits when: a person remains true to a commitment or relationship over time

Not when: you mean only accurate, religious, or present on one occasion

He was faithful to the agreement long after the informal handshake.

devoted adj. · warm

Giving steady care, loyalty, or effort to someone or something.

Fits when: someone gives sustained care and commitment to a person or worthy purpose

Not when: intensity has become possessive, uncritical, or neglectful of other duties

The devoted mentor kept making time for students after their course ended.

trustworthy adj. · everyday

Consistently deserving confidence or reliance.

Fits when: evidence shows that someone can be relied on with truth, duties, or confidence

Not when: the person is merely likable, familiar, or confident

Because she was trustworthy, neighbors left emergency keys in her care.

dependable adj. · everyday

Consistently reliable and worthy of trust.

Fits when: someone repeatedly fulfills commitments when others are counting on them

Not when: you are describing predictable habits with no responsibility to others

The dependable volunteer arrived before every shift and stayed until the handoff was complete.

reliable adj. · professional

Consistently accurate, effective, or worthy of trust.

Fits when: a person's word and follow-through have proved consistent

Not when: you have only a favorable first impression or one successful result

Her reliable follow-through made her the person everyone trusted with closing tasks.

steadfast adj. · literary

Firm, dependable, and not easily discouraged.

Fits when: loyalty to a sound commitment remains firm through pressure or delay

Not when: persistence continues after the commitment has become harmful or unjust

He remained steadfast beside the family throughout the long appeal.

constant adj. · literary

Steady, dependable, and continuing over time.

Fits when: affection or allegiance stays faithful across changing circumstances

Not when: you merely mean frequent, continuous, or resistant to any change

Her constant friendship survived distance, disagreement, and years apart.

Courage And Conviction

Acting on what you believe when it is hard or frightening.

courageous adj. · everyday

Showing strength in the face of fear or difficulty.

Fits when: someone faces meaningful fear or cost in order to do what is right

Not when: the act is reckless, unaware of danger, or performed for attention

It was courageous to report the abuse despite the threat to his position.

brave adj. · everyday

Ready to face pain, risk, or difficulty with courage.

Fits when: a person acts despite danger, fear, or moral pressure

Not when: there is no real risk, or bravado has replaced sound judgment

The brave witness returned to court and told the full story.

valiant adj. · literary

Showing courage and determination in a difficult situation.

Fits when: courage is conspicuous in a serious struggle or defense of others

Not when: the effort was ordinary, easy, or unsuccessful only through poor preparation

The valiant rescue crew kept searching as the weather worsened.

intrepid adj. · literary

Fearless and determined when facing danger or difficulty.

Fits when: someone enters a daunting situation with purposeful courage

Not when: novelty seeking matters more than service, duty, or conviction

The intrepid advocate continued visiting villages that others had written off as unreachable.

resolute adj. · formal

Firmly determined to pursue a worthwhile aim.

Fits when: a person holds to a considered moral decision despite pressure

Not when: the decision has not been examined or new evidence should change it

She stayed resolute when donors asked her to soften the safety findings.

fearless adj. · warm

Showing courage and freedom from controlling fear.

Fits when: someone appears unafraid while confronting wrongdoing or protecting others

Not when: the person ignores danger, lacks caution, or simply enjoys risk

His fearless defense of the new employee stopped the humiliation immediately.

staunch adj. · formal

Firmly loyal, committed, and dependable.

Fits when: support for a sound principle remains loyal and firm under opposition

Not when: commitment has become inflexible loyalty to a person regardless of conduct

She was a staunch defender of equal access even when the policy was unpopular.

Justice And Responsibility

Fairness, and owning what you do and what is in your care.

just adj. · formal

Fair and guided by sound principles.

Fits when: a decision gives people what fairness and relevant principles require

Not when: the outcome merely follows a rule whose fairness has not been examined

The just decision restored the worker's pay and corrected the record.

fair adj. · everyday

Treating people according to consistent and reasonable principles.

Fits when: someone weighs relevant facts without favoring a preferred person

Not when: equal treatment would ignore a material difference in need or responsibility

The fair coach applied the same selection criteria to every player.

impartial adj. · professional

Fair and not favoring one side without good reason.

Fits when: a person judges without letting allegiance or personal preference decide

Not when: you only know that the person has not stated an opinion

An impartial mediator gave each side equal time and tested both accounts.

equitable adj. · professional

Fair in a way that recognizes different needs and circumstances.

Fits when: treatment is adjusted fairly for relevant differences in circumstance

Not when: you mean identical distribution without considering different needs

The equitable policy gave extra time to applicants who needed accessible materials.

unbiased adj. · professional

Fair and not influenced by personal preference or prejudice.

Fits when: judgment is not distorted by a relevant prejudice or conflict

Not when: no one has checked the method, assumptions, or competing interests

The unbiased chair asked the same difficult questions of every finalist.

evenhanded adj. · formal

Fair and impartial in judgment or treatment.

Fits when: someone applies a balanced standard across opposing sides

Not when: one side's conduct or need materially differs and requires a different response

Her evenhanded ruling addressed misconduct by both senior and junior staff.

responsible adj. · everyday

Dependable and careful about duties and consequences.

Fits when: a person accepts duties and acts with regard for their consequences

Not when: you mean merely competent, authorized, or legally liable

The responsible driver called for a replacement rather than driving while tired.

accountable adj. · professional

Willing to answer honestly for choices and results.

Fits when: someone owns a decision and remains answerable for its result

Not when: the person is being blamed without authority, evidence, or a fair process

The accountable director published the error and the steps taken to repair it.

conscientious adj. · professional

Careful, responsible, and guided by a wish to do right.

Fits when: work and duties receive careful attention because the person wants to do right by others

Not when: perfectionism or anxiety is producing detail with no meaningful benefit

The conscientious nurse checked the instructions again before the patient left.

dutiful adj. · formal

Careful and reliable in meeting responsibilities.

Fits when: someone faithfully carries out a legitimate obligation

Not when: obedience would support harm or replace independent moral judgment

The dutiful guardian kept clear records of every decision made on the child's behalf.

prudent adj. · formal

Showing careful judgment about future results and risks.

Fits when: a person uses sound moral judgment about risks and consequences

Not when: caution is driven only by self-interest or prevents any worthwhile action

The prudent organizer delayed the event when the safety checks remained incomplete.

temperate adj. · formal

Moderate, calm, and free from extremes.

Fits when: someone practices deliberate moderation where excess could cause harm

Not when: you mean mild weather, weak feeling, or avoidance of all pleasure

Her temperate habits left room for enjoyment without neglecting her responsibilities.

Compassion And Generosity

Care, kindness and giving, to people close by and to strangers.

compassionate adj. · warm

Aware of another person's difficulty and moved to help.

Fits when: someone notices suffering and responds with humane concern

Not when: the response is pity without respect, or concern without any willingness to help

The compassionate supervisor changed the schedule while her colleague cared for a sick parent.

benevolent adj. · formal

Kindly and motivated by a wish to do good.

Fits when: a person is disposed to promote other people's well-being

Not when: a gift serves control, reputation, or an expectation of repayment

The benevolent owner quietly funded meals without attaching her name to the program.

charitable adj. · formal

Generous in giving help and fair in judging others.

Fits when: someone gives resources or interprets another person with generosity

Not when: the help is performative, coercive, or careless about what recipients need

His charitable reading of the message allowed for a mistake before assuming malice.

generous adj. · everyday

Willing to give time, help, attention, or resources freely.

Fits when: someone willingly gives time, attention, credit, or resources beyond what is required

Not when: giving creates dependence, ignores limits, or is used to purchase influence

She was generous with credit and named every contributor in the presentation.

selfless adj. · warm

Putting others' needs before personal advantage.

Fits when: another person's legitimate need is placed ahead of personal advantage

Not when: self-neglect, coercion, or lack of boundaries is being praised

His selfless choice gave the last shelter place to the family with a baby.

altruistic adj. · formal

Concerned with helping others without seeking a personal reward.

Fits when: an action is chiefly intended to benefit someone else

Not when: the benefit is incidental to profit, status, or reciprocal exchange

The donor's altruistic decision carried no naming rights or special access.

humane adj. · professional

Showing compassion and avoiding needless harm.

Fits when: treatment reduces avoidable suffering and respects dignity

Not when: a policy is merely efficient, lenient, or pleasant for its administrators

The humane procedure let families remain together during intake.

merciful adj. · warm

Showing compassion by limiting suffering or punishment.

Fits when: someone with power chooses compassion instead of the harshest allowable response

Not when: leniency would expose others to preventable harm or erase accountability

The merciful judge chose treatment and supervision for the first offense.

forgiving adj. · warm

Willing to release resentment and allow repair.

Fits when: a person releases resentment after acknowledging a real wrong

Not when: the harm is denied, accountability is avoided, or trust is restored without evidence

She was forgiving, but she still asked for the damaged equipment to be replaced.

empathetic adj. · warm

Able and willing to understand another person's feelings or perspective.

Fits when: someone makes a serious effort to understand another person's feelings or perspective

Not when: they merely agree, feel sorry, or claim to know an experience they have not had

His empathetic response began with questions instead of advice.

kindhearted adj. · warm

Naturally sympathetic and willing to help.

Fits when: a person's goodwill appears in gentle and helpful treatment of others

Not when: pleasant manners conceal indifference or avoid a necessary hard truth

The kindhearted neighbor brought groceries and stayed to fix the broken latch.

caring adj. · everyday

Showing kindness and concern for another's well-being.

Fits when: someone consistently attends to another person's welfare

Not when: attention has become intrusive, possessive, or based on assumptions rather than listening

The caring coach checked on the injured player long after the season ended.

Humility And Respect

Modesty, and treating other people as equals.

considerate adj. · everyday

Careful not to inconvenience or hurt other people.

Fits when: someone anticipates how their choices may affect other people

Not when: politeness is superficial or avoids a responsibility that causes inconvenience

It was considerate of her to send the agenda early for colleagues using screen readers.

respectful adj. · everyday

Showing consideration for another's worth, rights, or views.

Fits when: a person treats another's dignity, rights, or boundaries as meaningful

Not when: deference is demanded by status or disagreement is being silenced

The respectful interviewer accepted the boundary and moved to another question.

courteous adj. · professional

Polite, respectful, and considerate toward others.

Fits when: good manners express genuine regard during ordinary interaction

Not when: polish is being mistaken for kindness, honesty, or moral courage

The courteous clerk explained the delay without dismissing the customer's frustration.

civil adj. · professional

Polite and respectful, especially during disagreement.

Fits when: someone maintains basic respect during disagreement

Not when: the tone is polite but the conduct remains deceptive or unjust

They kept the debate civil while challenging each other's strongest claims.

gracious adj. · warm

Warm, courteous, and generous in manner.

Fits when: a person responds with generous courtesy, especially when they could claim attention

Not when: charm or social ease is present without consideration for others

The gracious winner thanked the losing team before discussing her own performance.

humble adj. · warm

Aware of one's limits and not claiming more importance than is due.

Fits when: someone sees their worth and limits without placing themselves above others

Not when: the person is belittled, lacks confidence, or hides expertise that others need

He stayed humble about the award and described the help behind the result.

modest adj. · everyday

Not boastful, excessive, or larger than needed.

Fits when: a person makes restrained claims about their own importance or achievement

Not when: the achievement itself is small or the person is pressured to minimize it

She was modest about her role but clear about the team's achievement.

tolerant adj. · professional

Willing to allow differences and treat people fairly despite disagreement.

Fits when: someone respects differences they may not personally share

Not when: harm, abuse, or denial of another person's rights is being excused

The tolerant host made room for practices different from his own.

magnanimous adj. · literary

Generous, fair, and free from resentment toward others.

Fits when: someone acts generously toward a rival or person who has wronged them

Not when: a power imbalance makes the gesture patronizing or accountability is still needed

Her magnanimous reply praised the rival whose argument had defeated hers.

Service And Community

Helping others and looking after the groups and places you share.

public-spirited adj. · formal

Willing to act for the good of the community.

Fits when: someone voluntarily advances the welfare of the wider community

Not when: the action mainly promotes a faction, business, or personal reputation

The public-spirited architect released the accessible plans for every town to use.

civic-minded adj. · formal

Concerned with improving and supporting the wider community.

Fits when: a person takes practical responsibility for the health of civic life

Not when: interest in politics is partisan performance without service or responsibility

Civic-minded residents translated the ballot guide and staffed the information desk.

neighborly adj. · warm

Friendly, helpful, and considerate toward people nearby.

Fits when: someone offers practical goodwill to people in the surrounding community

Not when: friendliness stays social and does not extend to help or consideration

Their neighborly habit was to clear the shared path before anyone asked.