

Character is Destiny

Heraclitus (500 B.C.)

Tests for whether a behavior displays high or low character – it is high character if:

- it contributes to the betterment of both society and the individual
- the action will bring honor to your name

So, what are the behaviors that define character? (The four cardinal virtues)

1. Prudence

Don't make reckless choices. Use good judgment. Analyze, compare, calculate and project. Obviate.

Accurate critical thinking (what's true, what's false, what's relevant).

Open-minded. Flexible. Lack of prejudice or bias.

Keep things in perspective – don't make mountains out of molehills.

2. Justice

Don't advantage yourself, your family or friends at the expense of others.

Seek first to understand before seeking to be understood. See the other person's viewpoint.

The "something for nothing" attitude is wrong.

3. Fortitude

Moral courage. Do the hard thing. Have the hard conversation, in a diffident manner.

Face your harsh realities. Encounter adversity or bear pain with a pleasant disposition.

Gallantry in life's struggles. To Dare. Take risks to improve self or organization.

"There is safety in valor." – *Emerson*, Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage – *Anais Nin*

4. Temperance

Appetites and passions in balance. No vices. Self-control in communication as well as actions. Self-discipline.

Adhere to the Silver Rule: "Don't lose emotional control. Don't raise voice and display anger."

Poise. Stay detached from others' disharmony.

Self-denial. Thrift. Save some percent of every paycheck. "Utter valiant no's instead of ruinous yeses." – *Emerson*

The personality traits which produce our strengths can become our weaknesses, if not kept in balance (all things in moderation). Vigilantly strive to uncover, examine, admit and battle your shortcomings, in the ongoing struggle

to improve how you behave. "I don't excuse my failings, I confront them."

5. Ambition

Dreams. Worthwhile goals. The "Will" to improve yourself, your organization and or society.

Strong desire. Devotion to a great cause. Drive to achieve one's potential – to make the most of life.

Aspiration – longing for something better. There are no successes without aspirations.

"Ordinary goals keep people ordinary. Life's successes result from a lofty aim." – *Brownlow*

6. Work Ethic

Initiative. Action toward a definite purpose. In earnest. Industrious. Orderly. Quality workmanship.

Diligent effort. A hard thinker as much as a hard worker. Determination to succeed.

7. Perseverance

Single-minded persistence in spite of obstacles. Don't allow yourself an "exit strategy."

Focus. Endurance. Take the long-term view. "The virtue lies in the struggle." – *A. A. Milne*

Most great endeavors require a "perseverance" stage. Resolute determination can change the outcome.

Providence comes to the aid of the person who fights on even after the battle seems lost.

8. Honesty

Truthful. Full disclosure. Sincere. "Doing what's right when nobody's looking." – *J. C. Watts*

Pure of heart. Candor. Forthright. Fidelity. Don't equivocate or exaggerate. Pay debts on time.

"I don't lie, cheat, steal or tolerate those who do." – *West Point honor code*

Honest self-assessment. "Afraid of no truth." – *Thom Jefferson*

Don't lie to yourself. "What harms us is to persist in self-deceit" – *Marcus Aurelius*

9. Kindness

Follow the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you'd like to be treated. Friendly. Mild. Gentle. Forbearance. Mercy.
Take a genuine interest in people. Regard for the other person's feelings. Compassion. Tolerance. Forgiveness.

10. Responsibility

"You can depend on me." Trustworthy. Decisive and Self-reliant. Take the blame for your failures.
Careful observance of duty, as a grown child, sibling, spouse, parent, employee or employer.
Instead of seeing yourself as a victim, search for the role "you played" in your negative outcomes.
Nature requires that we earn what we get, and that we get what we earn.

11. Service

Be a good servant – to your spouse, your family, your customers, your co-workers and your subordinates.
Constructive. Helpful. Promote harmony. Be a peacemaker. Encourage others. Altruism.
"You can have everything in life you want, if you help enough other people get what they want." – Zig Zigler
"Extraordinary success is achieved by making those around you successful." – Citrin & Smith

12. Ongoing Education

Continuous learning, development and growth in your field of interest, resulting in ever-increasing competence.
Introspection. A life-long process of 1) self-searching, 2) education, and 3) applying what you learn.
A thirst for self-improvement. Exploring. Discovering. Learn from your failures.
"The purpose of education is not knowledge – it is right action." – Herbert Spencer

13. Enthusiasm

Optimistic. Cheerful. Upbeat. Zeal. Vigor. Internal Locus of Control – believing you can influence your outcomes.

14. Humility

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.
The willingness to admit our faults; to apologize; to accept criticism; to give others the credit.
Humility allows us to see how our wrong thinking or wrong actions have hurt us in the past.
Playing the "big shot" turns others against us and harms our outcomes.

15. Respectfulness

Be courteous and polite. Treat others with dignity. Be punctual. Avoid foul language.
Show respect for all persons and their property. Have respect for yourself.

16. Gratitude

"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." – William James
Show your appreciation. Count your blessings. Be thankful.

17. Loyalty

Toward noble people and high ideals.
One indicator of high character is a large number of long relationships.

18. Generosity

Charity. Charitably interpret the actions of others. Goodwill for others.
Give with no expectation of return, to family, in-laws, neighbors and fellow citizens in a jam.
The power of generosity to make a life of prosperity and consequence.

If you study the lives of people who have achieved above-average "destinies"
you can trace the source back to the "character traits" listed here.

This is the whole list. So if you are good at these, then you are of high character ...

and

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