

How to Talk to Kids About...

PATRIOTISM

A Quick Reference Guide
for Conversations and
Activities with Kids

Key Points ON PATRIOTISM

- * Americans are free because our Constitution recognizes the natural rights of all people and ensures that the government cannot take those rights away. Many people have fought to defend this freedom.
- * Our system of self-government and our American values of freedom, responsibility, equality, tolerance, and generosity have created the best conditions in history for people to pursue their dreams and lead happy and fruitful lives.
- * America is a diverse nation of 328 million people of all races, religions, ethnicities and walks of life. That makes us strong and unique!
- * America is the leader of the free world. Our Constitution paved the way for other democratic societies around the world, and other nations look to America when they need help or guidance.
- * Being proud of your country is a good thing!

Know the Facts!

Americans Are Free

- * The Declaration of Independence recognizes that all human beings have natural rights, including the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The Declaration calls these rights “unalienable”, meaning that no government can take them away.
- * This is different from legal rights, which can be changed, repealed, or limited by government authorities. In the U.S., we strive to have legal rights that reflect and protect our natural rights.
- * Our Constitution, which is **based on the ideals** spelled out in the Declaration of Independence, limits the power of government and lays the foundation for our Republic, giving American citizens a voice in how our laws are made.

America’s Free Enterprise System Benefits Everyone

- * Under the American free enterprise system, people have a right to produce, sell, and purchase products and services without government interference, and the government places very few restrictions on the business activities of citizens.
- * Americans are allowed to spend their money as they choose, which encourages competition.
- * Competition leads to lower prices, as businesses work hard to win customers. It also leads to

more choices in the marketplace, as businesses are encouraged to innovate and improve their products. That’s good for all Americans!

Americans Are Generous

- * The U.S. is the **most generous country** in the world, providing billions in humanitarian aid and outspending any other major power **by an average of \$10 billion**.
- * American private businesses, foundations, voluntary organizations, universities, individuals, and churches give more than twice as much as the American government’s foreign aid budget.
- * In addition, **most Americans—even very poor Americans—donate to charity** in order to help their neighbors.

Americans Are Welcoming

- * The United States is often rightly called “a nation of immigrants” because of our history as a melting pot for immigrants from around the world.
- * The U.S. is home to **more immigrants** than any other country in the world. We welcome about one million new immigrants each year. Immigrants contribute to the diversity of the U.S. culture as well as to the strength of our economy.
- * No matter where you came from, when you become a U.S. citizen, you become a true American and can enjoy all the rights and privileges that affords you.

Patriotism Matters!

- * Patriotism is GOOD! Having pride in your country *doesn't* mean that you think our country is perfect or has never made a mistake. It also doesn't mean that you look down on or disdain people from other countries.
- * American patriotism means that you appreciate that the United States is the last best hope for freedom, opportunity, and prosperity.
- * Recognizing our common history, the challenges and difficulties we've overcome, our failures and our victories helps to ensure national cohesion and friendship with our fellow citizens.

Fun Activities to Teach and Show Patriotism

- * Hang a flag with your kids and teach them the proper way to display, fold, and dispose of a flag. Discuss the meaning of the flag—why there are stars, stripes, and specific colors.
- * Read the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights with your kids.
- * Take children with you when you vote and talk about why the process is important.
- * Attend a naturalization ceremony.

- * Tell your children about your relatives and friends that have served in the military.
- * Visit a military cemetery. Tell your kids about the sacrifices made by those who served and sacrificed their lives for their country.
- * Talk to your kids about the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance.
- * Talk to your kids about the meaning of the Star-Spangled Banner. Listen to or sing the national anthem or [other patriotic songs](#) together.
- * Watch "[Schoolhouse Rock! America Rock](#)" videos together and talk about them.
- * For younger kids, print some [patriotic coloring pages](#) and talk about our history and national symbols as you color together.
- * Explain the patriotic holidays, the reasons for the celebrations, and the differences between the holidays.
- * Tell your children about your family's immigrant experience or that of a neighbor or friend. Explain to your kids why so many people want to come to America.
- * Tell your children about the naturalization test that all immigrants must take before they can become citizens. Let your kids take the [civics practice test](#) online.

Further Reading For Kids

- * *Johnny Tremain*: A work of historical fiction published in 1943, author Esther Forbes provides the reader an exciting tale of a young boy's experience in Boston prior to and during the outbreak of the American Revolution. (Tweens and teenagers)
- * Rush Revere Book Series: This book series covers everything from the Pilgrims to the writing of the Star Spangled Banner. (Elementary school-aged and pre-teen kids)
- * Tuttle Twins Book Series: This series focuses on different principles of a free society: free markets, competition, individual rights, the non-aggression principle, personal responsibility, protectionism, and a variety of other issues. (Ages 5-10 can easily grasp, older kids will still enjoy)
- * *We the Kids: The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution of the United States*: Kid-friendly explanation of the preamble to the U.S. Constitution. The book contains a nifty glossary and a fun story about a dog and three kids on a camping trip. (Elementary school-aged kids)
- * Jean Fritz American History Books: Fritz writes biographies for kids about America's founders as well as other famous American figures, like President Teddy Roosevelt and Pocahontas. (Ages 8-13, but all kids will enjoy this series).

- * *Paloma Wants to be Lady Freedom*: Written by Rachel Campos-Duffy, this book emphasizes what we have in common: our history, our love of freedom, and the pursuit of the American Dream. (ages 4-8)
- * *All the Way to America: The Story of a Big Italian Family and a Little Shovel*: Author Dan Yaccarino tells the story of his great-grandfather's arrival at Ellis Island and offers this good advice: "Work hard, but remember to enjoy life, and never forget your family." (Ages 5-10)

For more



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