

Rights and Responsibilities

What are they and how are they connected?

In Australia, we enjoy many rights and freedoms. We can go to school, travel to other states for holidays, have access to clean water to drink and play with friends. Your parents also have rights and freedoms like being able to live without discrimination, being paid fairly for the work they do, being married if they choose, starting a family or following religious practices.

Rights

A right is something that is so important that it is protected by a law or society's expectations.

In a democracy like Australia, many of our rights provide the freedom for citizens to be involved in the running of the country and include the right to vote, the right to speak freely, the right to protest and the right to be elected as a member of parliament. We also have other rights that allow us to live freely such as the right to go to school, the right to own property, the right to choose who we wish to marry etc. One of the most important rights we have is that all people are to be treated equally.

These rights give the people of Australia the ability to choose how they want to live, and to be able to do so without discrimination. However, where we have rights, we also have responsibilities.

Responsibilities

A responsibility is a duty or obligation to act in a certain way.

When we exercise our rights, we must also consider how our rights might impact other people's rights. We have a **responsibility** to ensure that other people can also exercise their rights.

**Where there is a right,
there is always a
corresponding
responsibility.**



If people only focused on their rights and ignored their responsibilities, it would lead to chaos and harm. Only some people's rights would be protected and that would not lead to a fair and equal society.



Think about this scenario

As an 11-year-old in Australia, you have the **right to an education**. Each State and Territory in Australia has a law that says school attendance is compulsory from the age of six. This is supported by international laws in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

You go to your local primary school where every other 11-year-old in your suburb goes, as they all have the same right to education as you do.

Imagine you are in class and one student called Hermione sits in the front row and insists that the teacher only talks to her and only teaches the things that Hermione enjoys. Hermione gets to answer all the questions, does all the science experiments and artworks she wants, and the music class only plays the flute because Hermione won't play anything else.

She tells the teacher that it is her right to have an education and this means she gets to learn what she wants to learn, when she wants to, regardless of what other students want or need.

What should the teacher say?

Hermione is right, she does have the right to education, but so does every other person in her class. Hermione has the **responsibility** to ensure that she does not stop others from receiving an education. This might mean she has the responsibility to let other people do the science experiments, or she may need to sit quietly whilst other people ask and answer questions.

The Government and Community also have a **responsibility** to ensure Hermione and the whole class can enjoy the right to education. This includes the responsibility to provide schools, equipment and teachers so that education can happen.