ACT Active Citizen Kit

This information kit is a guide on how to be an active citizen in the ACT

*A **citizen** is an inhabitant of a city, town or state that has legal rights and privileges granted by a government and obligations to obey its laws and to fulfill duties as called upon. A citizen is entitled to full civil rights (to political and social freedom and equality), the right to live there, work, vote, pay taxes and receive benefits. A citizen owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection from the government.*

*A **good citizen** is a productive, responsible, caring and contributing member of society.*

A good citizen has three arenas for action:
1. To do things well in the existing system
2. Be innovative in improving the existing system
3. Create a better system

1. To do things well in the existing system

The duties of a good citizen are:
- Stay informed of the issues affecting your community.
- Respect and obey federal, state, and local laws.
- Respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others.
- Pay income and other taxes honestly, and on time, to federal, state, and local authorities.
- To vote in elections
- Defend the nation
- Serve on juries or as a witness in court

*A **right** is a freedom that is protected.*
Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. They are basic rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory.

Examples of the rights of a citizen are:
- Freedom of religion - the right to practice the faith that you choose,
- freedom of speech - the right to express yourself without interference from the government
- freedom of the press,
- the right to assemble,
- the right to petition government
- the right to vote
- the right to trial by jury

- to respect the rights and freedoms of others
- freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures by the government
- We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination.

A good citizen:
- has knowledge about their role in their communities, their country, and their world.
- is actively involved in their community and in the betterment of their fellow citizens.
- helps make their community and neighborhood good places in which to live
- participates in activities that make their world a better place.
- Is a change agent that acts out against social, economic, and environmental injustices.
- Is respectful of others and their property
- demonstrates good character by being honest and dependable
- gives back to the community

*A **responsibility** is a duty or something you should do*

Here's a list of 10 things you can do right now to be a better citizen
Volunteer to be active in your community.
Be honest and trustworthy.
Follow rules and laws.
Respect the rights of others.
Be informed about the world around you.
Respect the property of others.
Be compassionate.
Take responsibility for your actions.
Be a good neighbour
Protect the environment
http://www.sanchezclass.com/goodcitizen.htm
http://www.wikihow.com/Be-a-Good-Citizen
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_citizenship

Actions for active citizens in the ACT (see Appendix 1 for details)
1. Learn how to vote in elections here [link]
2. Learn the rules and laws here [link]
3. Learn how to volunteer in your community here [link]
4. Learn how to protect the environment here [link]
5. Learn how to be a good neighbour here [link]
6. Learn how to give back to the community here [link]
7. Learn how to petition the government here [link]
8. Learn how to be a juror or witness in a court here [link]
9. Learn how to pay your taxes here [link]
10. Learn how to assemble here [link]
11. Learn how to practice your faith here [link]
12. Learn what the issues in your community are here [link]

13. Learn how to defend the nation or your city here [link]
14. Learn how to join a civil society organisation here [link]
15. Learn how to express yourself through the media here [link]

If doing these actions within the existing system doesn't satisfy you and meet all your needs and those of your community you may need to either be innovative inside the existing system or change the system

2. Be innovative in improving the existing system

If you have tried all the above ways of being a good citizen and you are not satisfied and you still have unmet needs the following options are available to you
You can
- Complain or protest
- Make a petition to the government
- Join with others and take action together
- Join an organisation that works to meet your needs
- Become a candidate to stand for election to the government
- Join a political party
- Start a political party
- Be a whistle blower
- Respond to a government hearing
- Respond to a government notice
- ??

3. Create a better system
If you have tried all the above ways of being a good citizen and you are not satisfied and you still have unmet needs the following options are available to you.
You can do all the things in section 2 but with the aim instead of just innovating inside the existing system you can transform the existing system into a new system.
You may find that some of your activities in changing the system could be considered illegal by the existing system you are trying to change so you will have to demonstrate some integrity and morality to seek wider support

What would you put on the Australian bucket list for involved citizens: 76 things you can do to boost civic engagement?

https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/11/12/the-bucket-list-for-involved-citizens-76-things-you-can-do-to-boost-civic-engagement/

THE "DEMOCRACY 76" CHECKLIST

Stay informed

1. Read and subscribe to daily local, regional, or national newspapers. Check out Allsides.com for news from conservative, liberal, and centrist points of view.
2. Facts matter: Is your news source trustworthy? Check out these non-partisan, nonprofits: factcheck.org and University of Virginia's Center for Politics' Youth Leadership Initiative's media literacy tips.
3. Fill your pocket with democracy. Pick up pocket-sized constitutions for as little as $1.
4. Get the facts on any politician or political candidate at the nonpartisan Votesmart.org.
5. Talk with someone who doesn't share your political views. BetterAngels.org is helping people do this all across the country.
6. Attend a discussion or event in your community or school about an issue you want to know more about.
7. Shadow a public servant for the day to learn how our institutions work.
8. Visit a museum. Learn about local, regional, and national history, and about those who have taken civic action in the past.
9. Visit a library. Librarians can point you to important books on our American democracy.
10. Deep dive into the constitution. The National Constitution Center has an interactive line-by-line breakdown.
11. Use a highlighter when reading news articles to note points of interest, subjects that you agree/disagree with, or questions that you would like to know more about.

Vote

12. Vote: Local, state, and national elections matter! Find out when elections are happening from U.S. Vote Foundation.
13. Make sure you're registered to vote at Vote.gov or use Turbovote.org for quick and easy registration.
14. Make a voting pact with your friends or family. Collectively commit to register and vote. Remind each other regularly. Make a plan to go to the polls together!
15. Volunteer to register voters. League of Women Voters in your area is a great resource for running voter registration drives.
16. If you are a boss, give your employees time off to vote. If you are an employee, ask your boss to consider this.
17. Volunteer to work at a polling place. To find out how, go to the Election Assistance Commission's website or contact your local registrar.
18. Offer to drive elderly voters or those without transportation to the polls.
19. If you own a business, offer discounts to people who provide proof of voting on election days. If you work at a business, ask your boss to consider this.
20. Prepare to vote by checking ahead of time what is on the ballot, your polling place, and what you need to bring. Many states require identification such as a license or passport.
21. If you are voting by absentee ballot, pay attention to deadlines and follow all the steps in the instructions.

22. Mark the date when voter registration ends on the calendar along with the dates for each election. Leave time in the day for getting to the polls.

Participate

23. Communicate with your elected officials to share your views on issues you care about. A letter, phone call, or visit are still the best ways to contact them.
24. Write an op-ed or letter to an editor.
25. Attend a city council or community board meeting. The National League of Cities can help describe its function.
26. Advocate for civic education in schools. Not all states require it, and you can join the CivXNow campaign to push for it.
27. Join a political campaign. Volunteer for your preferred candidate.
28. Become an ambassador supporting digital citizenship education by signing up with DigCitConnect.
29. Join the Parent-Teacher Association at your local school.
30. Get involved with the local school board. The National School Boards Association has good tips on how to engage.
31. Join a political party. Here is a list of all the political parties, what they stand for, and how to get involved.
32. Run for office. If you don't like the candidates you are choosing from, put on your shoes and run for office.

Build community

33. Identify a problem in your community and work with your neighbors to fix it. Neighborhood street sweeps and playground refurbishment are just two examples.
34. Plant a tree or garden in your community.
35. Share the #WeThePurple Teacher Toolkit with teachers in your community for good ideas on civic engagement activities for young people.
36. Volunteer to serve as an officer or member of a group in your community. Volunteer Match can help you connect to groups in your area.
37. Visit someone else's place of worship.
38. Keep watch on children who play in your neighborhood.
39. Paint a mural in a public space (with permission).
40. Pick up trash in your or someone else's neighborhood.
41. Start a book club and invite your neighbors to participate.
42. Serve as a juror. If you are called for duty, remember our judicial system can't work without citizen jurors.
43. Collect food for those in need.
44. Visit a nursing home or hospital.
45. Donate blood or plasma.
46. Take a first aid class. The American Red Cross can help prepare you to help those in need.
47. Clean up the local park.

48. Clean up a local river or lake.
49. Start a bowling league or another activity that you enjoy that might bring people together.
50. Help others in an emergency.
51. If you own a gun, participate in a gun safety course.
52. Host or be an exchange student. Rotary Youth Exchange is a good place to begin.
53. Shop local and support small businesses.
54. Contribute financially to a cause, even $5 can help. Charity Watch is a good place to start if you need help identifying organizations to support.
55. Support the teachers at your local school. Ask how you can help and consider starting with supporting classroom projects through DonorsChoose.org.
56. Volunteer at a museum.
57. Volunteer at a public library.
58. Volunteer at a pantry, soup kitchen, or food bank.
59. Volunteer at a community garden.
60. Volunteer to coach a youth sports team.
61. Volunteer to lead a youth group.
62. Volunteer at a community center.
63. Volunteer to help veterans. The USO is a good place to start.
64. Volunteer to help teachers. Chaperone school trips to the local city hall and share your experiences engaging with your community and government.
65. Do a year of service. Serviceyear.org can help you connect to thousands of opportunities to develop real-world skills while giving back to your community.
66. Choose to work at a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping others.
67. Become a substitute teacher.

Get social

68. Host or attend a debate watch party in your community or university.
69. Host a Purple Conversation with family, friends, or in your school or community to discuss ways to foster civic engagement. Use the tips on facilitating open dialogue from Living Room Conversations.
70. Follow and like #WeThePurple across social media.
71. Host a picnic or block party in your neighborhood and (respectfully) talk about your views.
72. Use your consumer power to support companies whose values you believe in.
73. Go out and talk to people, use your hands, and your time.
74. Invite friends and neighbors to watch a documentary on a topic affecting your community.
75. Use your social media accounts to post uplifting information relevant to making our society more civil. The University of Virginia has a helpful guide on civil discourse when talking about politics.
76. Recruit a friend and start checking off items in the "Democracy 76" checklist together!

Appendix 1

Actions for active citizens in the ACT
Learn how to vote in elections

Learn the rules and laws

Learn how to volunteer in your community here

Learn how to protect the environment here

Learn how to be a good neighbour here

Learn how to give back to the community here

Learn how to petition the government here

Learn how to be a juror or witness in a court here

Learn how to pay your taxes here

Learn how to assemble here

Learn how to practice your faith here

Learn what the issues in your community are here

Learn how to defend the nation or your city here

Learn how to join a civil society organisation here

Learn how to express yourself through the media here

Appendix 2

Learn how to:
Complain or protest

Make a petition to the government

Respond to a government hearing

Respond to a government notice

Join with others and take action together

Join an organisation that works to meet your needs

Become a candidate to stand for election to the government

Join a political party

Start a political party
- The reasoning on why protesting is not as effective as creating an 'anti-party' party
  https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/29/why-are-our-protests-failing-and-how-can-we-achieve-social-change-today?

Be a whistle blower