

# PRIMER FOR AMERICANS

**Y**ou live in the United States of America. You are an American.

Real Americans like their country. They are proud of it. They think it is a good place to live. And they want to keep it good—to keep it getting better all the time.

Why is America the way it is? What makes it a good place to live? The answer is simply this:

Throughout our history most Americans have believed that every person has certain rights and duties and responsibilities.

Americans have believed that there are certain things people should do, and things they should not do.

They have also believed in certain things that people are, and are not.

These things that people believe are called principles. This book is an attempt to state the Principles of America in simple, primer fashion so that you can understand them, learn them, and remember them.

This is important. It was because earlier Americans believed in these principles and guided their lives by them, that America has grown to be the good place it is.

If all of us learn and remember these principles—if we also guide our lives by them—then we can help to keep America growing better, and better, and better.

And if we follow these Principles of America, we can help make the world a better place to live in, too.

*The Principles of America are these . . .*

## 1. Each Person is of Importance and Value as an Individual.

This is the cornerstone . . . the foundation of all our other beliefs in a person's right to live his own life, to speak for himself, to choose and change his leaders.

From it comes our hatred of those "isms" under which the individual has no value or importance as a person, but is only one of many unimportant people who have to live the way their leaders tell them to.

Coming directly from that first principle are two others that are also part of the foundation of Americanism.

## 2. We Believe that All Men should Enjoy Personal Freedom.

It is worth noting that the Declaration of Independence expressed the belief that "all men are created equal." It did not state or imply a belief that men develop equally or have equal ability, or that they should ever be forced to an exact equality of thought, speech or material possessions.

That would be equality without freedom. Americans have always believed the two should go together.

In our Constitution, and in other laws of our land, there are set down principles to protect the rights and freedoms and equality of individuals.

## 4. The Right to Freedom of Speech.

This includes freedom of the press, of radio, of motion pictures, of every means by which man may express his thoughts.

## 5. The Right to Freedom of Assembly.

As we believe in the right of individual action, so we believe that individuals should be free to act together.



## 6. The Right to Freedom of Worship.

Not only is the individual free to worship as he will, but religions themselves are free and equal.

## 7. The Right to Security of Person and Property.

Not just one, but three Amendments to the Constitution (4th, 5th and 14th) protect against illegal search and seizure, or loss of life, liberty, or property, without "due process of law."

## 8. The Right to Equal Protection before the Law.

As individuals are equally important, so laws must apply equally to all, without special privileges for any group.

## 9. The Right to Freedom from Slavery.

This includes "the right to quit," for no individual may be forced to work for another.

## 10. The Right to Petition the Government.

The right of the individual to "petition the government for redress of grievances" is evidence of the American belief that government is the servant, not the master, of the people.

## 11. The Right to Vote for people of your choice.

This is the individual's most potent weapon in the protection of his rights and freedoms . . . a weapon that to be effective must be commonly and wisely used.



*Other Principles hold that every man has . . .*

12. The Right to a Good Education.
  13. The Right to Live where he pleases.
  14. The Right to Work where he wants to.
  15. The Right to Belong to an Organization.
  16. The Right to Own Property.
  17. The Right to Start his Own Business.
  18. The Right to Manage his Own Affairs.
  19. The Right to Make a Profit or to Fail, depending on his Own Ability.
- There are other, similar rights of individual action which are Principles of America, but all of these individual rights may be combined in these two broad principles . . .
20. Every Man is entitled to Freedom and Equality of Opportunity.
  21. Every Man may Earn his Living When, Where, and How he wants to.

*There are also Limiting Principles . . .*

Principles of individual freedom sometimes clash with those of individual equality. Therefore our rights as individuals must be limited, and those limitations are themselves principles.

22. The Rights of any Individual shall not Interfere with those of Other Individuals.  
Your right to swing your arms stops where the other fellow's nose starts.
23. The Rights of any Individual shall not Interfere with the Welfare of the People.  
Freedom of speech does not give the individual the right to shout "fire" in a crowded theatre.
24. Every Individual owes Obedience to the Laws under which he Lives.  
The individual has the right to talk against a law, to work and vote to change that law, but NOT to disobey that law.

*Principles that are Patterns of Behavior . . .*

Many of our principles of individual freedom and equality are guaranteed to us by law. But we have other beliefs, other general rules of action and conduct that have grown to the status of principles. And these too, are foundations of Americanism.

25. A Man shall be Judged by his Own Record.  
A man's family background, his race or his religion, is not as important as what that man himself can do, for Americans believe a man must stand on his own feet.
26. A Man is Free to Achieve as much as he can.  
We believe that where any boy may become President, where any man may achieve greatness, there is the greatest incentive for every man to do his best.
27. To Achieve anything, a Man should be Willing to Work.  
Americans have always known that "you don't get something for nothing," that to get anything takes a willingness to work.
28. Achievement also Depends upon the Ability to do a Good Job.  
Add to "willingness to work" the ability to produce results and the combination is the basis for most individual achievement in our country.
29. Every Man has the Right to a Fair Share of the Results of his Work and his Ability.  
Because of this belief, America has not only produced more goods, but they have been more fairly and more widely shared by more people than in any other country.
30. Security is the Ability of a Man to Provide for himself.  
The only true security for any individual is the opportunity, the ability, and the determination to work and plan and save for his own present and future. Self-reliance is vital to individual independence and personal freedom. No man can be "proud and free" who depends on others for his security.

## 31. When an Individual cannot Provide his own Security, the Responsibility should be Assumed by Others.

We believe that no one should starve, or be without adequate clothing and shelter, so those who have more than their basic needs share the responsibility of providing the essentials of security for those who need help.

## 32. Each Individual must Deal Fairly with others.

Honesty, fairness, and personal integrity are virtues that help free and independent individuals get along with each other without losing their independence.

## 33. Fair and Free Competition is a Good Thing.

Americans have always believed that competition among individuals or groups encourages greater effort which in turn brings greater benefits to all.

## 34. Cooperation among Individuals is Vital.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER has said: "The freedom to compete vigorously accompanied by a readiness to cooperate wholeheartedly for the performance of community and national functions, together make our system the most productive on earth."

*Principles of Individual Responsibility . . .*

Freedom for individuals carries with it an equal responsibility to use that freedom wisely. If we wish to remain free, we must faithfully fulfill this responsibility.

## 35. The Individual is Responsible for himself and his Family.

He must protect them and provide for their present and future well-being.

## 36. The Individual has Responsibilities to the Groups of which he is a Part.

He must give of his best to his community, his church, his employer, his union, and to every group in which individuals cooperate for their mutual benefit.

## 37. The Individual has Responsibilities to his Country.

He must be an active citizen, interesting himself in local, state, and national government, voting wisely, thinking and speaking and acting to preserve and strengthen freedom, equality and opportunity for every individual.

## 38. The Individual has Responsibilities to the World.

Man's horizons have expanded. What happens in the world affects him, and his actions can affect the world. Today, therefore, each man has a responsibility to act—and to encourage his country to act—so that freedom and cooperation will be encouraged among the people and the nations of the world.

### For America's Future

Most of us have faith in our country's ability to move forward, to improve, to grow, to provide more and more individuals with more and more of everything they want and need in life . . .

If we, the people of the United States, want to have more material benefits, we must believe in and follow these two principles:

## 39. The only way we can Have More is to Produce More; and

## 40. As we Produce More, we must make it possible for More and More People to Enjoy that which we Produce.

If we, the people of the United States, want to have a better life, spiritually as well as materially . . .

## 41. We must stand firmly for our Beliefs, our Rights, our Principles.

There are those who would chip away our confidence so that their special brand of tyranny might creep into America. They must not succeed. So, let us ask of every plan, or act, or idea . . .

*Is it With or Against the Principles of America?*

Printed as a Public Service by

**Herald and News**

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