

Sincerely Yours

Demonstrating Honesty and Integrity

Objectives

- A** Explain the nature of honesty and integrity.
- B** Demonstrate ways to show honesty and integrity.



1375 King Avenue, P.O. Box 12279, Columbus, Ohio 43212-0279

Ph: (614) 486-6708 Fax: (614) 486-1819

CopyIT!® Details: www.MBAResearch.org Copyright ©2017
by MBA Research and Curriculum Center®

Table of Contents

A Integrity Rings True	2
B Step Into Integrity	11
So What? Why bother learning about demonstrating honesty and integrity?	2
THE GRAY ZONE What would you do?	10

So What

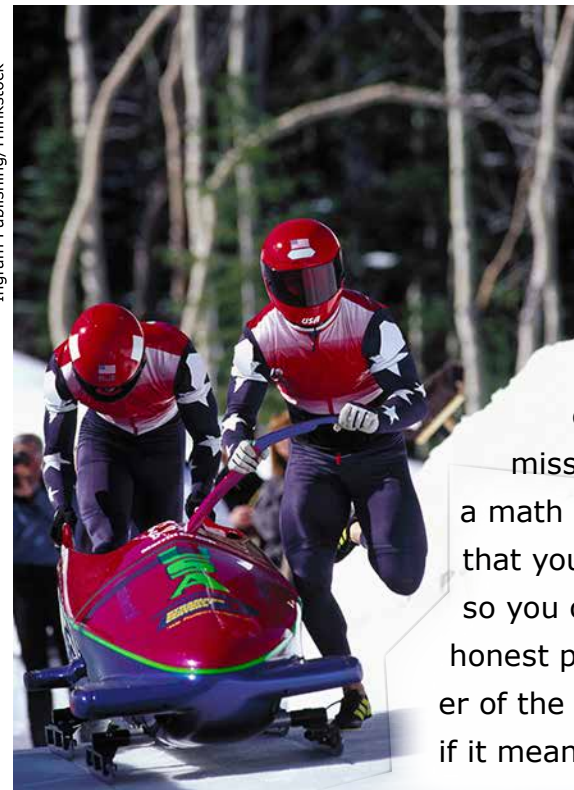
Liam was walking into his office building when he noticed that the woman in front of him had dropped a \$20 bill. For a moment, Liam contemplated keeping it himself, but he knew that would be dishonest. He quickly called after the woman and gave her the money. She was grateful, and Liam felt good knowing that he had done the right thing.

A few weeks later, Liam was interviewing for a promotion. When he walked into the interview room, he was shocked to see that his interviewer was the woman who had dropped the \$20! She instantly remembered him and praised him for doing the right thing. The interview started off on a positive note, and eventually, Liam got the job! His new supervisor told him that one of the reasons he was selected was because he demonstrated integrity when he returned the money. A split-second decision to act honestly helped Liam achieve success.

Every day, you probably encounter many situations in which you can demonstrate integrity and honesty. You may not realize it in the moment, but these everyday actions can have a profound impact on your life. Learn how to demonstrate honesty and integrity so that you, too, can achieve your goals and make the world around you a better place.

Integrity Rings True

In the 2014 Winter Olympics, Russia, the host of the event, won 33 medals, more than any other country. In the years following the competition, however, investigations revealed that dozens of Russian athletes had used banned performance-enhancing substances and cheated on drug tests. Though these Russian athletes may have won their events and taken home medals, they lacked two important traits: honesty and integrity.



Ingram Publishing/Thinkstock

Honesty is truthfulness. Honest people tell the truth at all times, even when it is difficult, and do not withhold information. Honesty means telling the whole truth, without leaving out any facts. For example, your family is going on vacation and you will have to miss school on a day when you have a math quiz. You could tell your teacher that you are sick or have an appointment so you can make up the quiz, but a truly honest person would inform his/her teacher of the real reason for the absence, even if it means receiving a zero on the quiz.

Honesty is an important characteristic that is highly regarded and crucial to personal success. Another important trait that is often associated with honesty is **integrity**. Many people use integrity and honesty interchangeably or may not truly understand what integrity is. While they are not the same, honesty and integrity are interrelated, so it is important to grasp the relationship between the two.

Integrity is adhering to an established set of personal ethics. **Ethics** are the basic principles that govern your behavior. They are standards of right and wrong that help guide your decisions and actions. If you have integrity, therefore, you consistently follow your ethical code in everything that you do. Let's say you value loyalty. In that case, supporting a friend by cheering her on at her volleyball game is an action that demonstrates integrity. A person who lacks integrity might say s/he is loyal but skip the volleyball game to watch television instead.

How does honesty relate to integrity? Can you have one without the other? Honesty is just one part of integrity. Telling the truth is important, but integrity means acting in accordance with that truth. For instance, while at a friend's dinner party, James accidentally broke a plate. To demonstrate honesty, James apologized and told his friend what happened, rather than trying to cover it up or blaming someone else. To demonstrate integrity, James also bought a new plate to replace the broken one. See the difference? A person who is truthful, **trustworthy**, loyal, and does the right thing on a consistent basis has integrity.



Integrity in Action

What do integrity and honesty look like? There are many ways that you can practice integrity, whether in school, at work, or in your personal life.

At school, you are encouraged to show integrity by following the rules, treating teachers and classmates with **respect**, valuing property, being honest in your academic work, and refraining from bullying or gossiping. If you see a group of students vandalizing the bathroom wall, you can demonstrate integrity by telling them to stop or reporting their behavior to a teacher.

In the workplace, integrity means making good use of work time and office supplies, respecting and cooperating with coworkers, following through on responsibilities, practicing **confidentiality**, and being honest in your business dealings. For example, confidential information about your company's latest product developments should not be shared with anyone, even your family and friends.

In your personal life, integrity includes treating others with respect, telling the truth, keeping promises, and accepting responsibility. Every day, you will encounter situations with family, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers in which you can demonstrate integrity. For instance, if a cashier accidentally gives you too much change, you should give the appropriate amount back, rather than keep it for yourself.



omgimages/iStock/Thinkstock

▲ *Gossiping about classmates does not show respect to others and damages your integrity.*



iStock/
Thinkstock

This quick video from Values.com gives a fun example of what integrity and honesty look like in action: <http://www.values.com/inspirational-stories-tv-spots/78-reach>.

Look Out for Dishonesty

Demonstrating integrity isn't always easy. In fact, many situations might tempt you to act dishonestly or go against your ethical standards. One example of dishonest behavior is **cheating**. Cheating means acting fraudulently or deceitfully, and it can occur in many places, including in the workplace, the classroom, or at home. If you're taking a test, you might be tempted to look at your classmate's paper because you really need a good grade. However, cheating does not reflect your own knowledge and abilities and therefore will not help you become more successful.

Another action that demonstrates a lack of integrity is **stealing**. Stealing is taking something that does not belong to you in a way that is wrong or illegal. Stealing isn't just walking into a store and taking merchandise without paying, though. Stealing can also include taking credit for someone else's work or using paid work time to watch music videos on your computer. These types of behaviors lack integrity because they can hurt others. You might think that downloading a couple of songs illegally is harmless, but if everyone did it, musicians would not be able to make enough money to do what they love—or create the music that *you* love!

Resisting the urge to act without integrity will be much more valuable to you in the long run than cheating or stealing. It can take years to build a reputation of integrity and only seconds of dishonesty to ruin it. Making the right choices might not be easy in the moment but will have long-term benefits for years to come.



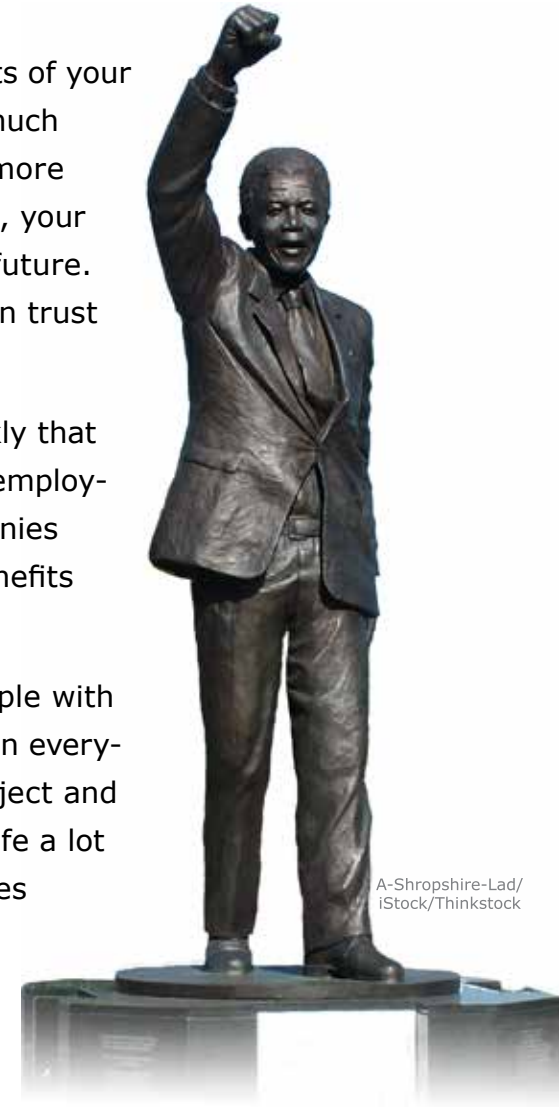
▲ *Recording a movie on your phone is a form of stealing and can lead to serious consequences.*

Integrity Wins

Integrity and honesty are two of the most important traits that can lead to success in many aspects of your life, from the business world to everyday occurrences. In general, people with integrity receive much more respect than those without. They develop strong, trust-filled relationships and are given more responsibility. For example, if you have developed a reputation of honesty and integrity at school, your teachers will be more likely to write you a letter of recommendation for college or a job in the future. Your friends, too, will want to spend more time with you and open up to you if they know they can trust and depend on you.

Integrity and honesty are highly valued in the workplace. When looking for a job, you learn quickly that employers seek integrity above many other traits. Most employers want to make sure that their employees follow a code of ethics that will help their businesses run smoothly and ethically. Also, companies looking to develop employees into leaders will certainly look for those with integrity. Integrity benefits organizations in a number of ways.

Foundation of trust. Those who are honest are trusted. When a workplace is made up of people with integrity, the community will be full of trust and respect. It is much easier to work with people when everyone is honest, open, and willing to depend on each other. If you're working on a project and are overwhelmed, a group of dependable, truthful coworkers would make your life a lot less stressful. On the other hand, if your coworkers are not honest or sometimes act without integrity, you might not want to work with them. Your work will therefore be more stressful, time-consuming, and inefficient, not to mention a lot less fun! A workplace that emphasizes integrity is a pleasant, productive one.



A-Shropshire-Lad/
iStock/Thinkstock

▲ *Nelson Mandela is famous for his integrity, which made him one of the most respected world leaders of all time.*

Customer loyalty. Honesty and integrity help build a base of loyal customers who count on your company. No one wants to work with someone they can't trust or rely upon. Having loyal customers will make your business successful and encourage repeat purchases. If your organization has a reputation for dishonesty, you may struggle to find customers.

Stability and safety. A workplace that exhibits integrity and honesty is one that is stable and safe. Employees do not have to fear that they will be treated unfairly, harmed, or encouraged to make dishonest decisions. They feel comfortable and secure. Furthermore, integrity encourages equality and openness, creating an environment in which everyone feels free to share ideas and contribute to innovation.



▲ *Credit card companies have attempted to show integrity by becoming more secure and preventing fraud. Chip cards are one way they have done so.*

Consequences of Dishonesty and a Lack of Integrity

As much as integrity brings benefits, its absence can cause serious problems. In your personal life, you may find it difficult to maintain relationships with people if they cannot trust you. In school, you can face severe punishments for dishonesty that can affect you for the rest of your life.



iStock/Thinkstock

The video "Academic Integrity" by Alison Denner shows one example of the possible consequences that can occur when you act without integrity in the classroom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCCdmdMYayA>.

The failure to show integrity not only affects people on an individual level but also affects businesses, causing them to suffer in several ways.

Financial loss. Many companies have learned the hard way that dishonesty can bring financial consequences. If they develop a reputation for questionable business practices, they can lose sales because customers no longer trust them. Over time, this reputation might be so harmful that the business can no longer continue operating.

Unpleasant work environment. A workplace without trust and integrity is generally not an enjoyable place to be. It is difficult to form positive relationships when they are not built upon honesty and respect.

If a company's culture does not encourage integrity, employees probably will not want to invest their effort and time in it. The company will lose qualified employees, and its performance will likely suffer.

Legal issues. Sometimes, dishonest behavior crosses over into illegal behavior. When this occurs, those involved may face legal action, including hefty fines and sometimes even prison sentences. Many high-profile business executives have faced legal consequences because their decisions lacked integrity. One example is Martin Shkreli, who was the CEO of a pharmaceutical company. Shkreli raised the price of a drug used to treat and prevent life-threatening diseases from \$13.50 to \$750 per tablet. This price increase made the drug unaffordable for many people and was widely criticized by medical associations and politicians. Not only did Shkreli lose important business relationships due to his lack of integrity, but the attention he received led to an investigation into his other business practices. He was subsequently arrested and charged with securities fraud.

Legal and ethical dilemmas are complicated, so when it comes to business decisions, honesty is definitely the best policy.



iStock/Thinkstock

▲ *A lack of integrity can be devastating for businesses, sometimes causing them to close.*

Summary

Integrity and honesty are important characteristics that go hand in hand. Honesty is truthfulness, and integrity is adhering to an established set of personal ethics. These two traits are connected but are not the same. Honesty is one aspect of several that form integrity. Integrity and honesty can be put into practice in many areas of your life, whether it be school, work, or personal life. Demonstrating integrity is not always easy. Sometimes, you may be tempted to cheat or steal. While these dishonest behaviors might help you get ahead temporarily, integrity always wins out in the end and brings many long-term benefits to individuals and organizations. When honesty and integrity are lacking, consequences usually follow, ranging from damaged relationships to financial and legal punishments. Maintaining a consistent policy of integrity and honesty is important for lifelong success.

TOTAL RECALL

1. What is honesty?
2. What is integrity?
3. What are ethics?
4. Give an example of integrity at school.
5. Give an example of integrity in the workplace.
6. Give an example of integrity in your personal life.
7. Why is demonstrating integrity and honesty beneficial?
8. What are some consequences of dishonesty and a lack of integrity?

THE GRAY ZONE

Hannah is writing a college essay that she hopes will help her to be accepted into her dream school. She knows that she needs to write about something that makes her stand out, and many of her classmates are writing about monumental moments in their lives. However, Hannah can't think of anything important that she could write about that would make her a memorable applicant.

After brainstorming for hours, Hannah finally decides to write an essay about traveling overseas and learning about other cultures. Truthfully, Hannah has never left the country, but she wants to make sure that she has an interesting essay that captures attention. She doesn't think that the college admissions board will find out that her story isn't true. Once she is accepted, she assures herself, she will be an excellent student, and it won't matter whether or not her essay was true.

What do you think? Was Hannah's decision to be dishonest justified? Or should she have found a true topic to write about for her essay, even if it kept her from being accepted to her dream school?

Step Into Integrity

Once you grasp the concepts of integrity and honesty, it's time to put them into action. You can take many steps to enact these two traits in your everyday life.

Know Your Values

To demonstrate integrity, it is important to first develop a comprehensive, thorough sense of ethical values that will be the basis of your decisions. Take some time to self-reflect and discover what is important to you. Examples of values might be truthfulness, respect, determination, gratitude, and many more. Everyone has different values, but in general, these principles are the foundation for determining what is right and wrong.

One way to begin determining your values is to think about someone you admire, and then figure out the reasons why you admire him/her. Maybe you look up to your grandmother because she works hard, treats everyone with kindness, and selflessly gives to others. Those traits could become some of the values that help you form your own understanding of ethical behavior.



▲ Many people adopt the values of their parents and look to them as role models.

Practice What You Preach

Perhaps the most important way to show integrity is to act in accordance with your values in everything you do. A person with integrity can be trusted to do what is right all of the time. For example, if you value honesty, you would never tell a lie, even a small white lie that seems unimportant. The essence of integrity is consistency between your values and your actions.

“One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised.”

—Chinua Achebe



ChinuaAchebe-Buffalo/25Sep2008.jpg/Wikimedia.org

Be Courageous

Staying true to your principles isn't always easy. In fact, sometimes it's downright scary! To show integrity, however, you must stand up for what you believe in, even when it isn't the popular choice or when it might lead to consequences. For example, imagine that your class has a substitute teacher and your classmates are not treating her with respect. They are disrupting her as she speaks, using their phones even when she asks them not to, and not doing their assigned work. You might not want to upset your classmates, but if you value respect, you can demonstrate integrity by telling your classmates to be respectful, put their phones away, and do their work. You might even tell another teacher or the principal.

You should also always be honest, even when the truth might cause problems or put you in an uncomfortable situation. If you forgot to complete a report and your boss asks you why it's late, you should tell the truth, even though you might be reprimanded. Lying may help you out in the short term, but you will lose your boss's trust and respect in the long run.

Take note: When circumstances are risky, challenging, or important, it can be even more tempting to abandon your principles. Pause and think carefully when you're in a sticky situation to make sure you are being honest and that your integrity stays intact.

Remain Loyal

Loyalty is faithfulness and devotion to a person or an ideal. Being loyal means sticking by your coworkers, family, and friends, even when it is challenging to do so. Supporting others includes listening, giving time, and helping them whenever they are in need. You can be a loyal friend by driving your friend to the airport when his car breaks down, even though it's inconvenient for you. Or, if your coworker is scrambling to finish a project before the deadline, offer to help by taking on some of the work. Being loyal builds integrity in your relationships, both personal and professional.

Take Responsibility

Integrity includes being **accountable** for your actions—even when you make a mistake. Admitting when you are wrong is a part of being honest. Let's say you're the treasurer of the Spanish Club at school, and you are in charge of planning an end-of-the-year celebration

at the local Mexican restaurant. You checked the club's finances and informed

your fellow club members that there was enough left in the budget to cover everyone's meal. However, after you all have eaten, you realize that the bill is

\$50 more than the amount of money left in the budget! After double checking, you realize that you made a calculation mistake. You could keep this information to yourself or blame others for spending too much money at the restaurant. But to demonstrate integrity, you should admit your mistake, apologize to everyone, and offer to cover the rest of the bill yourself. Admitting when you make an error shows strength and honesty, which will earn the respect of others.

Taking responsibility also includes being reliable and dependable. Those with integrity follow through on their promises and always do their best to keep their word. Try to refrain from making promises that you cannot keep. Breaking promises will destroy trust and damage your relationships.



iStock/
Thinkstock



iStock/Thinkstock

In his video "Building Integrity—Keeping Promises," Erick Rainey explains the ways that honoring your commitments can positively impact your life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8kQ2beNztw>.



Follow the Golden Rule

“Treat others the way you would like to be treated” is a phrase you’ve probably heard many times in your life. A person with integrity always follows this principle *and* goes one step further by treating others the way *they* would like to be treated. This mentality is known as the Platinum Rule and stresses the importance of respecting others’ feelings and wishes above your own. Both of these ideas are important to keep in mind. If you notice that one of your classmates is being picked on, for instance, put yourself in his/her shoes. You’d probably want someone to stand up for you and tell the bullies to stop. More importantly, your classmate probably wants someone to tell them to stop, too! If you are ever unsure of how to act with integrity in any situation, the Golden Rule and the Platinum Rule can help you maintain your integrity.



iStock/Thinkstock

Looking for more information that will help you develop integrity and honesty? Check out “Preserving Integrity,” a step-by-step guide from MindTools: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/integrity.htm>.



Summary

You can demonstrate integrity and honesty in many ways. First and foremost, develop your own set of ethical values that will help you determine right from wrong. Then, you should follow those values in everything you do. Integrity means never compromising your ethics or wavering from what is right and true. To demonstrate integrity and honesty, you must have courage and be unafraid to do what is right, even when it might bring consequences. Integrity also encompasses loyalty and accountability. If you are ever unsure of how to act with integrity and honesty in any situation, consider treating others the way you (or they) would want to be treated. Demonstrating honesty and integrity will make you an ethical, respected leader.

TOTAL RECALL

What are six ways that you can demonstrate integrity and honesty?