

# Initiative

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

## Vs. Idleness

### I WILL

- Do what is right before being told
- Not put off until tomorrow the things I can do today
- Contribute to the success of the whole team
- Be a part of the solution rather than the problem
- Look for ways to help others

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## Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it

Initiative is our character in action. Without initiative, skills and talent mean nothing. If we aren't motivated to use what we know, there is no value in knowing it. Initiative is what gets things started.

How many times have we moaned about a task that when we finally do it, it doesn't

seem bad at all? If we just take that first step, we can gain momentum and keep on going.

Fitness gurus often tell their students to just pledge to doing five minutes of exercise and often, once you get started you'll exercise much more than the five minutes. All it takes is getting started to stay

engaged.

We can't win a race if we never leave the starting line and we can't finish a task if we don't start it.

This month, get in the habit of getting started and turn initiative into progress.



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# No Matter How You Say It

## Iniciativa

vs. Ocio

Percibir y hacer lo que se necesita antes de que se me ordene hacerlo



↻↻↻ Go to the Root ↻↻↻

The word initiative is derived from the Latin word *initiare* which means “to begin, to originate”.

Can you see how initiative is getting something going?

## Idioms

**take the initiative** to do something

**on (one's) own initiative** Without prompting or direction from others; on one's own.

*Found on [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)*

## Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Initiate-Start and Idle. Can you see how Initiate resembles starting a car and how idle is just going with the flow?

[www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi](http://www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi)

***“People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins***

## Character Quotables

He that waits upon fortune, is never sure of a dinner.

-Benjamin Franklin

Apply yourself. Get all the education you can, but then...do something. Don't just stand there, make it happen.

-Lee Lacocca

For every person who climbs the ladder of success, there are a dozen waiting for the elevator.

-Kathy Griffith

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

-Will Rogers

Well done is better than well said.

-Benjamin Franklin

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

-Confucius

If you want to change your destiny, you have to be active. If you just sit down, life will be imposed on you.

-Madonna, in Le Figaro

Half the things that people do not succeed in are through fear of making the attempt.

-James Northcote

trail.

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Leaders are those who make the most of very moment, of every opportunity, and of every available resource.

-Theodore Roosevelt

A job well begun is half done.

-Proverb

If you think you're too small to make a difference, you haven't been in bed with a mosquito.

-Anita Roddick

Procrastination is the thief of time.

Edward Young

The explanation for triumph is in its first syllable.

-Zig Ziglar

You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.

-Abraham Lincoln

You see, in life, lots of people know what to do, but few people actually do what they know. Knowing is not enough! You must take action.

-Tony Robbins

Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday.

-Don Marquis

There comes a moment when you have to stop revving up the car and shove it into gear."

-David Mahoney

Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought."

- Henry Bergson

### Curriculum Connection



### Social Studies

Initiative and Referendum are forms of direct lawmaking that have been around since the 1600's. Many times, an Initiative is started with a petition by a group of people advocating for the change they seek. When enough signatures are gathered, the petition is then presented to lawmakers to vote on in session or it can be placed on a ballot for the electorate to decide.



## Edward Vernon Rickenbacker: Model of Initiative

Edward Rickenbacker achieved many things in his life, and without his initiative, he would have accomplished none of them. After the death of his father in 1904, 13-year-old Eddie began working any job he could to support his family. As machines became his passion, he taught himself everything he could about engineering, and even enrolled in a correspondence course to learn more. Soon he was racing cars for the machine company for which he worked.

He is credited as the first man to go a mile a minute, and was then nicknamed "Fast Eddie." He raced in the Indy 500 5 times before he joined the Army to fight in World War I. When he returned from the war in 1920, he started his own motor company, the Rickenbacker Motor Company. The cars his company produced were specifically engineered to be racing automobiles. His were the first cars to have four-wheel braking, which is now the standard. Without Eddie Rickenbacker's initiative in following his

passion for engineering, the four wheel brake system would not exist as we know it.

Minutes from downtown Columbus, OH, there is an airfield named after him, Rickenbacker International Airport, which is a joint civil-military public airport.



## Team~Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

### Change the World

This activity can either be done as a group or individually. Give the students drawing paper and any type of colored pencils, markers or crayons. Instruct them to fold the paper in half and draw something on the left hand side that they want to change. On the right hand side they are to draw an invention that would enact this change or what the world would look like once the change took place. For example, the pictures below could explain that the change you want to make is to reduce pollution from cars. The problem doesn't have to be global in nature. It could be something in their community, school or sports team . The solution can be real or imaginative.



## Puzzles

You will need several small puzzles, one for each group. Allow time for each group to assemble the puzzle. When they are done, ask the groups what they did to start the puzzle. Did they set up the lid with the puzzle picture to guide them? What pieces did they assemble first? If they chose the edges or corners - why? Has that worked for them in the past? What did they do with the remaining pieces? Did each piece always fit in the first place they tried? What did they do if it didn't fit?

Working a puzzle can teach us a lot about taking initiative. First, you need to have a goal or guidelines, just like the picture of the puzzle. Sometimes you rely on experience to tell you where to start and other time you just have to try something to get started. Once you get started, it is sometimes hard to stop!



## Jump Rope



Bring in a jump rope and choose 2 volunteers to turn the rope. Now you will need one person who knows how to jump in and jump while the rope is turned for them. Watch how the jumper watches the rope and waits for just the right time to jump in. It may take several turns of the rope for the jumper to judge the speed of the rope to plan just the right timing on jumping in. Sometimes the jumper waits too long and then it seems impossible to jump in. Sometimes the jumper misjudges the rope and doesn't get in correctly. Sometimes a jumper needs the rope to just sway for them to get in and then the overhead turns can begin. Initiative is like jumping rope. You need to assess the situation before you jump and then you just jump in!

**There are three types of people in the world:**

- **those who make things happen,**
- **those who watch things happen,**
- **and those who wonder what happened.**

**We desperately need more people in the first category.**



## W.A.D.

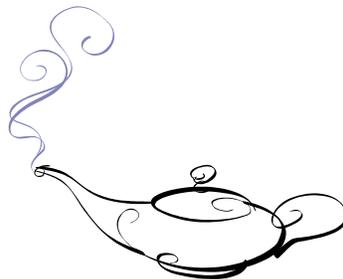
**Well-defined  
Attainable  
Deadline**

These are all qualities that a true goal should have. Have your students come up with a goal to be achieved by the end of the week and write it on its own piece of paper, and then share it with the class or a partner. They then keep this paper in a place that will constantly remind them to work on this goal. If by the end of the week the student has achieved the goal, they can WAD up the paper and throw it at a target. This demonstrates that taking initiative in achieving your goals helps you hit your target. If the student does not achieve the goal that they have written, they then have the opportunity to modify their goal to be more achievable. Do this every week this month. At the end of each week, have your students ask themselves these questions: Was it easier to achieve the goal because you wrote it down and shared it with someone? Why is it important to use initiative when trying to achieve a goal? Next time you have a goal that you want to achieve, will you use this method to help you achieve it?



## Wishes vs. Goals

Divide the board into two columns and label each - one as wishes and one as goals. Have the students write lists on the board of wishes and goals. After the lists are done evaluate each item and whether it truly belongs in the column it is in. For example, wishes are things you want to come true but you have no control over - "I wish that it doesn't rain at recess." Goals are items you have control over - "I want to be doctor." Move each item into the correct category as it is evaluated. Remind your students to evaluate their goals with these same guidelines when they set goals in their lives.



## For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Initiative**: Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it

To practice Initiative I will:

- Do what is right before being told
- Not put off until tomorrow the things I can do today
- Contribute to the success of the whole team
- Be a part of the solution rather than the problem
- Look for ways to help others



### Family Activity:

#### The Domino Game

For this activity you can use dominos or any toy that can be set up like a domino chain. You can even use boxes of pudding or other food products. Set up the chain of items. The family can help. Once all of the items have been arranged. Just sit and look at it. Do nothing. If no one starts the first item to fall, nothing will happen to the rest of the chain. Ask if anyone knows what the word Initiative means. The first person to get the answer correct is the one to start the chain. Discuss how all it took was one push to knock down all of the items. Explain that we all have the responsibility to take the Initiative to complete our jobs. It could be a job outside the home, it could be caring for the home or just your own room. Your job could be paying attention in school and doing homework. Ask each person to think about their areas of responsibility and to think of three things that they could do right now. It could be cleaning, homework or finishing a project. Suggest that these things be small tasks or perhaps it is the first task of a larger project. Set a timer for 15 minutes and send everyone off to do one of the items they thought about. When the timer rings, gather everyone together. Did anyone finish a task completely? Did anyone do more than one or think of another task as they worked? Was getting started easier than you thought? Is anyone going to go finish another task now that they are thinking of it?



Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the “I wills” and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit [www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php](http://www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php)

This month's Character Quality reminds us of one of the strengths of the 49 Character Qualities. There is a real Ying and Yang aspect to the Qualities. Boldness (confidence to say/do what is right) is tempered by Meekness (yielding my rights with a desire to serve). Diligence (investing energy to complete assigned tasks) is balanced by Flexibility (willingness to cheerfully change one's plans). With this month's Character Quality of Initiative (recognizing and doing what needs to be done without being asked) we see a counterpoint to Patience (accepting difficulties without rushing toward deadlines to remove them).

## Croskey's Corner

Walking this Patience/Initiative tightrope in a balanced, Good Character manner can be tough. Should I respond to a problem with "Slow and steady wins the race?" Should I, instead, follow Nike's advice and "Just do it?" Should I wait out a challenge by reminding myself, "This too will pass?" Or should I charge ahead knowing the "The early bird gets the worm?" Maybe I should live my life by some hybrids: "Good things come to him who CHARGES AHEAD!" "Strike while the iron is COLD!" I don't know about you, but I could wear out my brakes or strip some gears following these conflicting adages.

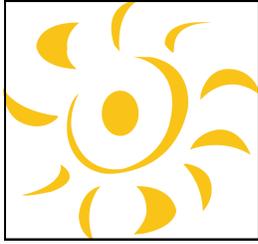
We can look for deeper understanding in this dilemma from the great philosopher Rogers. No, not Carl Rogers, the great therapist and educator. Rather, Kenny Rogers, the memorable singer-story teller. Kenny's classic (actually the words were written by Don Schlitz), "The Gambler," reminds us, "You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em." Isn't the wisdom to know when to act (Initiative) and when to wait (Patience) essential in life? Honestly, what we call luck is really more a matter of timing the Initiative-Patience cycle correctly. The "Gambler" lyrics add that "the secret to survivin' is knowing what to throw away, knowing what to keep." With cards, that may be another way of timing when to bet, when to fold, and when to check. But life may, in addition, actually require us to throw away that which serves us no good purpose and to keep that which preserves our integrity.

When we do decide it is the time to "do what needs to be done," the hard part comes. My mentor, Warren, says that the hardest part of running is putting on your shoes. I tell that to students all the time. Starting homework is harder than doing it. Turning off the TV and the computer, choosing schoolwork over fun, these are difficult Initiatives to undertake. Undertake indeed! Many students FEEL like they are being buried under a pile of schoolwork. But once a young person actually begins the hated job, it's not quite so hateful. If half the problem with distasteful jobs is in the starting, the other half may come from worrying about how we look after we DO take the Initiative. Remember Pete Rose, that star of the Great Eight, the Big Red Machine? He was hated around the National league long before he got caught betting on baseball. In part it was because he always RAN to first base when he drew a walk. He couldn't walk there; he was so eager to be on base that he ran to First. This taking the Initiative to hustle got him the nickname Charlie Hustle, but it also earned him disdain: he was called Hot Dog; He was described as arrogant; he was called much worse. He only knew one way to play and that was HARD. But others took it as rubbing their faces in his success; he out-worked and out-hustled most of the other players. He gained honors and set records in the process. But, because of his Initiative – and because his hustle drew attention to others' lack of hustle – he also alienated many others.

So what's the moral here? Take the Initiative and be resented? Don't take the Initiative, preserve many friendships, but miss opportunities to do what needs to be done? Probably neither. But do we sometimes take the Initiative in order to show others up? Or, on the other hand, do we sometimes not grab the Initiative because we are afraid of being called Hot Dogs? I don't advocate either. Rather, could we quietly do what needs to be done, without fanfare and yet without hesitation? There is a Latin motto for that: Prodesse Quam Conspici. It means, "To make progress while remaining inconspicuous."

If we avoid taking the Initiative for the glory, we will be less likely to make enemies but more likely to help our friends. I know what motto to follow! Just do it...quietly.

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**Character...It Starts With Me!**

## Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.