

Thirteen Virtues



Franklin bust in the [Archives](#) Department of [Columbia University](#) in New York City

Franklin sought to cultivate his character by a plan of 13 virtues, which he developed at age 20 (in 1726) and continued to practice in some form for the rest of his life. His [autobiography](#) lists his 13 virtues as:

1. "Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation."
2. "Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation."
3. "Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time."
4. "Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."
5. "Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing."
6. "Industry. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."
7. "Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly."
8. "Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty."
9. "Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve."
10. "Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation."
11. "Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."
12. "Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."
13. "Humility. Imitate Jesus and [Socrates](#)."

Franklin did not try to work on them all at once. Instead, he would work on one and only one each week "leaving all others to their ordinary chance". While Franklin did not live completely by his virtues and by his own admission, he fell short of them many times, he believed the attempt made him a better man contributing greatly to his success and happiness, which is why in his autobiography, he devoted more pages to this plan than to any other single point; in his autobiography Franklin wrote, "I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit."[[]