

Good Citizenship Scenario Guide

Practice Seeing What You Can Do

Good citizenship becomes real when a choice has to be made. It is easy to say that we should care for others, act responsibly, help the community, and do what is right. The harder question comes when the situation is not clean, when two values pull in different directions, or when you care about a problem but do not have enough authority, money, or influence to solve it.

That is what this guide is for. The scenarios that follow are not tests with one correct answer hidden somewhere at the back. They are practice situations. Your task is to look closely, notice what matters, identify the givens, consider who may be affected, and find a responsible move.

Sometimes the best move will be action. Sometimes it will be a conversation, a partnership, a request for help, a referral to someone with proper authority, or a decision to gather more information first. The goal is not to prove that you already know how to be a good citizen. The goal is to become better at thinking and acting like one.

A Simple Way to Work Through Each Scenario

Before choosing what to do, slow down. Start with reality. What is actually happening? Separate what you know from what you only assume. A situation often looks simpler at first than it really is.

Then identify the givens. These are the conditions you may not be able to change immediately. You may not have money, authority, time, expertise, or complete information. Naming these constraints does not mean giving up. It helps you see the situation as it really is.

Next, think about consequences. If nothing changes, what is likely to happen? Who may be affected now, and who may be affected later?

Then search for possibilities. Do not stop with the first two choices that come to mind. Ask who else cares, what resources already exist, what small move is possible, and what other options may be available.

Finally, choose a responsible move. You should be able to explain why you chose it, what value it protects, and what risk or consequence you are accepting. You may change your mind after hearing someone else's reasoning. That is part of the practice too.

Scenario 1: Your Classmate Is Falling Behind

You have noticed that Mara has been struggling for several weeks. At first, she only looked tired. Then she began arriving late, missed two quizzes, and stopped joining your group discussions. Eventually, she tells you that she works at night to help support her family and is considering dropping the subject because she can no longer keep up.

You want to help. One classmate says, “We can just give her our answers so she can pass.” Another says, “We all have problems. She has to learn how to manage her time.” You are not comfortable with either answer. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

What do you know about Mara's situation, and what are you only assuming? Her work schedule may be a given you cannot change, and you are not the professor, so you cannot change the course requirements either.

If nothing changes, what could happen to Mara? What could happen if your group simply gives her answers instead? Could you form a small study circle, share notes after a missed class, or encourage her to speak with the professor before the situation becomes worse?

A Possible Way to Respond

I would begin by talking with Mara instead of deciding for her. I would ask what is making the subject most difficult and what kind of help she thinks would actually make a difference.

If the main problem is understanding missed lessons, a small study circle may help. If attendance or deadlines are becoming impossible, talking with the professor may be more useful. I would not give her answers to copy because that may help her survive one requirement while creating another problem.

The citizenship question here is not simply, “Should I help?” It is, “What kind of help truly helps?”

Scenario 2: Everyone Is Laughing

A student in your class becomes the target of jokes in a group chat. At first, the jokes seem harmless. Someone makes fun of the student's recitation, and people react with laughing emojis. A few days later, someone posts an edited photo. Then screenshots of private messages begin appearing.

You feel uncomfortable. You do not join the jokes, but you also stay quiet because part of you worries that if you challenge the group, they may turn on you next. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

What has changed between the first joke and what is happening now? Consider not only the student being targeted but also the people in the group who are learning that this behavior is normal.

You cannot control everyone in the group chat, and concern about becoming a target yourself may be real. Still, what moves remain possible? You might speak publicly, privately message the student being targeted, talk with one or two classmates who also seem uncomfortable, or bring the situation to someone who can help.

A Possible Way to Respond

I might begin privately. I could message the student being targeted and ask if they are okay, then talk with one or two classmates who also appear uncomfortable. If several of us agree

that the jokes have gone too far, we may be able to interrupt the behavior together instead of leaving one person to challenge the group alone.

If the situation becomes serious or threatening, I would involve someone with proper authority. The important thing is not to confuse silence with neutrality. Sometimes doing nothing helps harmful behavior continue.

Scenario 3: Your Organization Has No Budget

Your student organization has been hearing more students talk about stress and exhaustion. Some classmates are sleeping only a few hours each night. Others are skipping activities because they feel overwhelmed, and a few have quietly withdrawn from groups they used to enjoy.

Your officers want to do something, but the treasurer says almost all of your budget has already been committed. Someone suggests postponing the idea until next semester. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

First ask what problem you are actually trying to address. Be careful not to jump immediately to “We need a seminar.” You may have very little money, but you still have students, relationships, access to campus, communication channels, and perhaps faculty or alumni connections.

Who else cares about the same problem? Could the guidance office already be working on it? Could another organization collaborate? Are there alumni, professionals, NGOs, or associations with relevant expertise? Could you begin with something smaller than the program you first imagined?

A Possible Way to Respond

I would not begin by asking, “How do we fund an event?” I would first ask, “What do students actually need?” Perhaps they need better access to existing services, peer support, study strategies, or opportunities to talk with someone qualified.

Then I would identify possible partners. The lack of money is real, but it should be treated as a constraint rather than automatically as the final answer. A partner may have what you lack, while you may have what the partner lacks. That is where collaboration begins.

Scenario 4: Your Friend Cheated

A close friend tells you that they submitted an assignment created almost entirely by AI. The professor had clearly said that the work must be done individually and that AI-generated submissions were not allowed.

Your friend is nervous and asks you not to tell anyone. “I was desperate,” they say. “Please. You’re my friend.” You know that your friend has been struggling, but you also know that other students spent hours doing the assignment themselves. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

Friendship, loyalty, compassion, integrity, and fairness are all present in this situation. What could happen if you simply ignore what happened? What could happen if you immediately report your friend without first speaking with them?

Could you talk privately, encourage your friend to redo the work or speak with the professor, or help them understand why the situation needs to be corrected? At what point might the seriousness or repetition of the behavior change your responsibility?

A Possible Way to Respond

I would start by talking with my friend. Being loyal does not always mean protecting someone from the consequences of every decision. Sometimes loyalty means helping a person face something before it becomes worse.

I would ask why they felt desperate enough to cheat and whether they are willing to correct the situation. If possible, I would encourage them to take responsibility rather than waiting to be caught. The important practice is learning to hold friendship and integrity in the same conversation instead of pretending that only one matters.

Scenario 5: A University Rule Seems Unfair

Your university introduces a new rule. The administration says it will improve order and security, but after a few weeks some students report serious difficulties because of the way the rule is being implemented.

People react quickly online. One group calls the administrators insensitive and demands that the policy be removed immediately. Another tells everyone to stop complaining because students should simply follow the rules. You are not sure which side is right. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

Start by asking what problem the university was trying to solve. Then look at what is actually happening after the policy was introduced. Who is being affected, and are these isolated complaints or a pattern?

Do the people who made the rule know about these consequences? You could complain publicly or remain silent, but you could also gather examples, speak with affected students, approach student leaders, request a dialogue, or propose an alternative.

A Possible Way to Respond

I would first gather enough information to understand the issue. If the policy is creating a real problem, specific examples, patterns, and possible alternatives are often more useful than simply saying, "This rule is unfair."

Then I would look for the proper channel for raising the concern. Respect for authority does not mean never questioning a decision. At the same time, disagreement becomes more responsible when we understand what the institution was trying to achieve and can propose a better way of achieving it.

Scenario 6: Nobody Owns the Problem

There is a recurring problem in your student organization. Important announcements are often sent late. People miss deadlines, officers become frustrated, and members complain that they never know what is happening.

Everyone recognizes the problem, but nobody seems responsible for fixing it. During one meeting, someone finally says, “Hindi ko naman trabaho 'yan.” Technically, that person may be right. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

Who currently owns communication? Is the responsibility unclear, or is the assigned person overwhelmed? What happens if everyone continues waiting?

You probably do not need to take over the whole problem. You could raise the issue during a meeting, help clarify ownership, suggest a shared calendar or communication rhythm, or propose that two people share responsibility.

A Possible Way to Respond

I would not immediately volunteer to do everything myself because that can create a new problem. Instead, I would help make the issue visible and ask the group to clarify ownership.

I could help design a simple solution or support the person responsible, but the goal is not to become the permanent rescuer. Sometimes good citizenship means helping a community build a better system. Bayanihan is not one person doing everyone's work; it is people making shared work possible.

Scenario 7: The Problem Is Bigger Than You

You learn that several teenagers in your barangay are no longer attending school. Some are already working. Others stay at home, and a few are becoming involved in risky activities.

People in the community talk about it, but most conversations end in blame: “Walang disiplina.” “Kasalanan ng mga magulang.” “Trabaho ng gobyerno 'yan.” You are a student. You do not have money, professional training, or formal authority. What would you do?

Examine the Situation

Begin by resisting the temptation to explain everything too quickly. Do you actually know why these young people stopped attending school? Their reasons may be different: income, family responsibilities, academic difficulty, transportation, or experiences you do not yet know about.

You cannot personally solve poverty or redesign the school system. But who already works with out-of-school youth? Is there a barangay program, SK council, school, NGO, church group, government agency, or community organization that should know what is happening? Could your first contribution be helping the right people see the problem more clearly?

A Possible Way to Respond

I would begin by learning. If possible, I would listen to the young people themselves instead of starting with assumptions about discipline.

Then I would identify organizations or people who already have responsibility or expertise. My role may be to connect people, help gather information, organize a conversation, or bring the issue to someone who can act. Citizenship does not require pretending that every student is a social worker, counselor, policymaker, or community organizer. Sometimes the responsible move is to connect a problem with people better equipped to address it. That is still agency.

Compare the Reasoning, Not Just the Answer

When you compare your response with the sample responses in this guide, do not ask only, “Did I choose the same answer?” Ask whether your reasoning became stronger.

Did you notice something you missed the first time? Did you confuse an assumption with a fact, stop too quickly because of a constraint, or see only two options when more moves were available? Another person's response may help you see a value or consequence you had not considered.

You may still disagree with the sample response, and that is fine. A responsible choice is not responsible merely because someone else agrees with it. What matters is whether you can examine the situation carefully, consider the people affected, recognize the trade-offs, and explain why your move is defensible.

Create More Moves

Choose one scenario and write down your first response. Do not overthink it. Capture what you instinctively want to do, then challenge yourself to create three more possible moves. They do not all have to be good ideas; the purpose is to train yourself not to stop at the first answer.

For example, if your first response is “report the problem,” additional moves might be to speak privately with the person involved, gather more information first, or ask another person to help you understand the situation. Once you have several possibilities, compare them.

Which move creates the most good? Which could create unintended harm? Which protects people with less power? Which requires help from someone more qualified? Which can realistically be done now?

Many people feel powerless not because they literally have no choices, but because they can see only one or two. Sometimes agency begins when a third option appears: “Pwede pala 'yun.”

Practice Bayanihan

Good citizenship is not only about deciding what you should do. Ask what we can do.

Choose one scenario and imagine that three other people care about the same problem. One may have time, another may know the right person, someone may understand technology, and another may be good at organizing people. You may have access to the

community even if you have no funding, while another group may have funding but need people who understand the community.

This is the practical side of bayanihan. We stop asking one person to carry the whole house. We look at what each person can carry.

Your Own Citizenship Scenario

Think about your life right now—not the Philippines as a whole and not a giant social problem you have only read about. Look at the world you actually belong to: your classroom, course, student organization, neighborhood, barangay, group of friends, or online community.

What is happening there that you wish were better? Describe the situation as clearly as you can. Then ask what is real, what the givens are, who is affected, what happens if nothing changes, what possibilities you can see, who else cares, and what you might do together.

Do not worry if the move seems small. A study circle is small. A conversation can be small. Introducing two people can be small. Asking the right person for help can be small.

Citizenship is not measured only by the size of the problem you solve; it is also practiced in your willingness to care about the bayan you belong to and make a responsible contribution when you can.

From Student to Citizen

The situations will become more complicated as you grow older. At work, you may have to choose between meeting a target and treating a customer fairly. You may discover a mistake nobody wants reported, disagree with a manager whose decision affects other people, or be asked to support something that is legal but does not feel responsible.

Your profession will give you more power, and it will also give your choices greater consequences. That is why the practice begins now.

Every time you examine a situation instead of judging too quickly, search for another move instead of surrendering to “wala tayong magagawa,” or work with others instead of assuming you must solve everything alone, you are practicing. Every time you care enough about your little part of the world to help make it better, you are practicing the kind of citizenship our bayan needs.

You may not change the whole world. But there is a world around you already. Start there.

Share Your Thoughts

These scenarios are meant to start conversations, not end them. If one of them made you think differently, if you disagree with one of my possible responses, or if you have a citizenship situation from your school or community that you think we should examine, I would love to hear from you.

Write to me at leadership@jefmenguin.com. Tell me what you would do, what you have learned, or what situation you think other students should learn to examine. Your perspective may help us see another move that we have not considered yet.