

HIDDEN RULES

In every situation there are hidden rules. **Hidden rules** are rules that you are expected to know, but they are not always written down or taught! The rules are always changing and vary depending on where you are, who is there, what is happening, the timeline, the topic of conversation, etc.

When we are following those rules, we call this doing **expected behaviors** – These keep the people around us feeling comfortable, the consequences are positive, and that keeps us feeling comfortable as well. When we do not follow the hidden rules, we call this doing **unexpected behaviors** – this could be with your words or your actions. When we do unexpected behaviors, people around us feel uncomfortable and have not-so-good thoughts.

This first step to figuring out the hidden rules and expected behaviors is to observe and **think with your eyes**. There are a lot of ways to practice this. One way is to go on a virtual field trip! You can use still pictures, live cams, videos or virtual backgrounds.

Ask yourself the following questions to guide your observation:

1. Where am I?
2. What do I already know about the place?
3. What are people doing? What do people usually do here? You can use information that you already know, or you can think with your eyes to observe others!

For example, at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, I know that people usually walk around and look at the exhibits. They talk together in their groups. When a docent is talking about the animals, people are usually quiet, they look at the docent, and they listen to what the docent is saying.

Practice talking about the hidden rules across different contexts while using virtual backgrounds or while taking virtual field trips. Some fun ideas include “traveling” to Disneyland, the beach, museum, classroom, or the zoo. Discuss the hidden rules across each setting and what expected behaviors would keep others around you feeling comfortable and thinking good thoughts!



PRACTICE

Let's practice figuring out the hidden rules across different places and situations!

- Take a virtual field trip to Disneyworld! What are some of the hidden rules while waiting in line to get on a ride?

- Change your virtual background to the beach. Discuss the hidden rules for going to the beach with your family.

- Go on a virtual tour through the Boston Children's Museum. What are the hidden rules while visiting a museum and looking at the exhibits?

- Swap out your virtual background to a classroom. What hidden rules can you follow during learning time to help other kids and teachers feel comfortable?

- Head over to the San Diego Zoo and check out the pre-recorded exhibit videos. Think with your eyes to observe others who are visiting the exhibits. What hidden rules can you follow to give other people good thoughts?