

12 Canons of Conduct

Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the *Declaration of Independence* and the third president of the United States, often took the opportunity to advise his children, grandchildren and others on matters of their conduct.

Over the years, he developed a list of axioms for personal behavior. Some seem to have been of his own invention; others were derived from classical or literary sources.

Jefferson's most extensive list is the one he sent to Cornelia Jefferson Randolph, his granddaughter, while she was visiting her older sister and brother-in-law. Here they are:

A Dozen Canons of Conduct in Life

1. *Never put off to tomorrow what you can do today.*
2. *Never trouble another with what you can do yourself.*
3. *Never spend your money before you have it.*
4. *Never buy a thing you do not want, because it is cheap, it will be dear to you.*
5. *Take care of your cents; dollars will take care of themselves!*
6. *Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst and cold.*
7. *Never repent of having eaten too little.*
8. *Nothing is troublesome that one does willingly.*
9. *How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.*
10. *Take things always by their smooth handle.*
11. *Think as you please, and so let others, and you will have no disputes.*
12. *When angry, count 10 before you speak; if very angry, 100.*

His principles still have wise application – more than 200 years after he shared them.

– Beecher Hunter