

# PRIVILEGE WALK

## Purpose

A Privilege Walk looks at social privileges that benefit some individuals over others. The Privilege Walk activity helps develop self-awareness and improve the ways participants relate to others — while encouraging them to consider how empathy and inclusivity can create positive changes in their club or district. (The activity calls for participants to take physical steps in response to a moderator’s questions, but it can be adapted for people with limited mobility or for virtual participation. See “Alternate Instructions” on the next page.)

## Please note

- This exercise is not meant to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed of their relation to any social-identity categories. It seeks to highlight the fact that everyone has *some* privilege, even as some have more than others. By illuminating our individual privilege and experiences, we can identify both the obstacles and the benefits experienced in our lives.
- This activity involves responses to statements some people might find sensitive. Upon completion of the activity, it is very important that the facilitator allow people to share reactions, but also watch for those who may need an individual conversation.
- Please consult a member of the Kiwanis International Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion if you are planning to conduct this activity so that we may help you prepare and host a successful experience. Reach out to the committee at [diversity@kiwanis.org](mailto:diversity@kiwanis.org).

## SUPPLIES & SPACE NEEDED

- List of statements related to privilege or obstacles, adapted to your circumstances.
- Presentation slide with instructions for the Privilege Walk.
- If conducted in person, a space large enough for participants to form a straight line with an arm’s length between them and the person on either side of them, enough space in front of the line to move forward 10 steps and enough space behind to move back 10 steps.



## Directions for the activity

- 1 Have participants form a straight line across the room about an arm's length apart, leaving enough space in front of the line to move forward 10 steps and enough space behind to move back 10 steps.
- 2 Read "Purpose" out loud to provide context for the exercise:  
***A Privilege Walk helps Kiwanis members develop an awareness of themselves and improve the way they relate to others. It encourages Kiwanis members to think about ways that empathy and inclusivity can create positive changes in their club or district.***
- 3 Here is a basic script to address participants: Listen to the following statements I make, and follow the instructions given. For example, when I read "If you have someone to your right, please take one step forward or move forward," everyone else should stand still. Each step/move forward should be an average length step. This activity should be done in silence, and if anyone feels uncomfortable stepping or moving forward or backward on any statement I read, please stay where you are — but remember the statement that was read. This is an introspective exercise, and it is important for you to understand how privilege affects your life, but it is not designed to make you share things that you don't wish to share.
- 4 Read the statements one at a time, allowing time for participants to take a step.
- 5 When all the statements have been read, ask each participant to share one word that captures how they are feeling. If they do not want to share, allow them to say, "pass."
- 6 Ask the group the following questions:
  - Would anyone like to share more about their feelings?
  - Were certain sentences more impactful than others?
  - How did it feel to be one of the people on the "back" side of the line?
  - How did it feel to be one of the people on the "front" side of the line?
  - If anyone was alone on one side, how did that feel?
  - Was anyone always on one side of the line? (If yes: How did that feel?)
  - Did anyone think they had experienced an average amount of privilege, but it turned out to be either more or less than they thought?
  - Did anyone have the thought that their infancy, childhood or adolescence had a deeper impact on their life trajectory than they had previously considered?



### ALTERNATE INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIRTUAL (or in-person where movement is not possible or restricted)

Ask participants to raise their hand when they would normally step forward or backward. When you are on a video call, ask all participants to turn on their camera if they can. For those unable to physically raise their hand, ask them to move any part of their body if they can. If that is not an option and participants can be online for the activity, ask them to use the digital hand in the conference call program that is available to them. Additionally, if you know your group may include someone who needs a sign language interpreter for this activity, please let the Kiwanis International Office or the district secretary know at least three weeks before the event, along with the type of sign language needed. Once alternative participation instructions are established, read the statements one at a time, allowing participants time to raise their hand or show movement. Follow the other steps as shown above. For participants who are virtual or have restricted movement, they will not keep score of their intended forward or backward movement. They can answer the questions out loud or think to themselves about how the activity made them feel.

## PRIVILEGE WALK STATEMENTS

*Feel free to adapt to your circumstances, leaving some statements out or adding new ones. For virtual sessions, replace “take one step forward or backward” with “raise your hand” in each statement.*

- If one or both of your parents graduated from university, take one step forward.
- If you have been divorced or impacted by divorce, take one step backward.
- If there have been times in your life when you needed to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food, take one step backward.
- If you have visible or invisible disabilities, such as difficulty hearing, take one step backward.
- If your household employs helpers, such as gardeners, cooks, nannies, etc., take one step forward.
- If you have access to transportation, take one step forward.
- If you have felt included among your peers at work, take one step forward.
- If you constantly feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step backward.
- If you are able to move through life without fear of sexual assault, take one step forward.
- If your family ever fled its homeland, take one step backward.
- If you studied your ancestors and their history in elementary school, take one step forward.
- If your family had health insurance, take one step forward.
- If you have been bullied or made fun of based on something you cannot change (such as your gender, ethnicity, physical features, age or sexual orientation), take one step backward.
- If your work and school holidays coincide with religious or cultural holidays that you celebrate, take one step forward.
- If you were ever offered a job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
- If you were ever stopped and questioned by the police because they felt you were suspicious, take one step backward.
- If you or your family ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
- If you came from a supportive family environment, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents was ever laid off, or unemployed not by choice, take one step backward.
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke or statement you overheard related to your race, ethnicity, gender, appearance or sexual orientation, take one step backward.
- If your ancestors were forced to move to another country, take one step backward.
- If you would never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, take one step forward.
- If you took out loans for your education, take one step backward.
- If you and your romantic partner can appear as a couple in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take one step forward.
- If there was ever substance abuse in your household, take one step backward.
- If your parents told you that you can be anything you want to be, take one step forward.

### SOURCES

[https://opensource.com/open-organization/17/11/privilege-walk-exercise.uh.edu/cdi/diversity\\_education/resources/\\_files/\\_activities/privilege-walk.pdf](https://opensource.com/open-organization/17/11/privilege-walk-exercise.uh.edu/cdi/diversity_education/resources/_files/_activities/privilege-walk.pdf)



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