



## "Alertness" vs. Carelessness

"Being aware of what is taking place around me so I can have the right responses."

**I will:**

- Keep my eyes and ears open.
- Recognize and heed warning signals.
- Choose to do right before I'm tempted.
- Tell others of danger.
- Stay away from unsafe places.

—permission to use  
granted by [Character First](#)

## Wisdom in Nature

### The Ring-Tailed Pheasant



The day was crispy cold and the wind had died down after blowing hard all night. The hunter and his son thought, "This just might be the morning!" The son had hoped to bag a few more pheasants before the season ended and he had to go back to work. They walked as quietly as they could through the hay stubble, wondering if that crafty ol' pheasant they had seen last week was watching them. They sure hadn't spotted him yet today.

Whoosh! They gasped as a beautiful pheasant shot straight up in the air only six feet away. They were so stunned that they had no thought of raising their guns. The pheasant by now was high in the air, out of range for their guns. "Well, son," lamented the dad, "I guess he out-foxed us again! Maybe next year...."

Did you notice how alert the pheasant was? He stayed very quiet, **watching the two men approach**. He had decided it wasn't safe to run on the ground because he had little cover in the short hay stubble. When the hunters got too close, he used his powerful, short but broad wings to escape quickly. It was as if he had **planned ahead a way to avoid dangerous situations**.

Pheasants are alert because they have strong eyesight, sharp hearing, and an unusual sensitivity to vibrations. During World War I, pheasants were useful to the armies because of their alertness. They could feel the vibrations of distant armies marching or the boom of artillery and would shriek loudly, **giving the soldiers an early warning**.

The male pheasant watches over his boundaries and **responds when he hears an alarming cry** from any on the hens in his territory. Pheasants take care for the health of their feathers, **avoiding possible problems**. Regular dust baths help control the parasites that try to cling to them and harm their feathers.

Because pheasants were able to escape their predators, they multiplied rapidly when they were imported to North America from China. Because they are so alert and sly, they give hunters a real challenge and are highly valued as a game bird in America!

story by Kelly Sorge

Concept by: [Character First](#)

### Memory Work

"I will keep my eyes wide open,  
I will listen as I play,  
I will know the sounds of warning  
And from dangers run away.

I will heed the words of those  
who care  
And plan the safest way,  
I will not go where it's not safe,  
I'll warn my friends without  
delay.

To be a character builder,  
I will choose to do what's best.  
I will build a habit that is wise  
So I can pass the test."



### What Does Alertness Look Like?

- ~Hearing my mom call when I am having fun playing with my friends.
- ~watching and listening to the guard at the school crossing, even though I am talking with a friend.
- ~learning the safety rules before I ride my bike on the street.
- ~noticing the feelings of my little brother when he seems to be upset.
- ~choosing not to play with friends who are doing wrong things.
- ~telling my friends when I see lightening that it is going to storm and suggesting that we play inside.
- ~learning how to be prepared to clean and bandage a wound.
- ~learning how to call 911 for emergencies.

### What is Alertness?

Alertness means watching and being aware of possible warning signals. Even though it is good to concentrate on a task, it is important to be aware of sounds and possible warnings around you also.

To be really alert, a person needs to be aware of situations that are dangerous in advance and to know of ways to avoid or escape possible harm. Preparing to be alert means learning about warning signs and sounds and about ways to respond to emergencies. Alertness is deciding in advance to take the right and safe way when dangers come.

An alert person will also take responsibility to warn others of dangers and even take some risks to do so. He will recognize unsafe situations and will stay away from them.