# When Norms Break

How responses to deviance shape a community

**S.10.1** "Define deviance and explore the functions deviance serves as identified by Emile Durkheim."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline the definition of deviance, circle Durkheim's three functions, and number the examples that show each function.

### A Line, a Lawn, and a Rule

1. At the neighborhood movie theater, a person steps ahead of everyone waiting to buy a ticket. Several people protest, and the person moves to the back. No law may have been broken, but the act still counts as deviance: behavior that violates a group's social norms, or shared expectations about how people should act. Deviance depends on the group and situation. Stepping forward when a worker calls your ticket number is ordinary; pushing past the line without permission breaks the line's norm. Sociologist Emile Durkheim argued that deviance exists in every society because people do not all follow every norm.

2. Durkheim also argued that reactions to deviance do social work. At the theater, someone says, "We wait our turn here." The comment makes an unwritten rule visible to a visitor who might not have known it. This is one function of deviance: it clarifies the boundaries of acceptable behavior. When others in line speak up together and support the person who was skipped, they express a shared commitment to fairness. That response can strengthen social bonds, another function Durkheim identified. The line cutter's act does not make the group fair by itself; people's response reveals and reinforces a value they share.

3. Not every broken norm leads only to disapproval. In a town where tidy grass lawns are expected, a resident plants wildflowers across a front yard. Some neighbors object to the unfamiliar look. The resident explains that the flowers support pollinators, and neighbors begin discussing whether their usual idea of a proper yard should change. Eventually, several neighbors plant wildflowers too. Durkheim saw the possibility of social change as a third function of deviance: challenging a norm can open debate about a different way to live. The first yard remains deviant while it violates the local expectation, even if opinions later shift.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is cutting the ticket line deviant, while stepping forward when a worker calls your number is not?

2. How does the comment “We wait our turn here” show one function of deviance?

3. How does the group's response to the line cutter strengthen social bonds? Why is the line cutter's act alone not enough?

4. How does the wildflower yard illustrate social change, and what would have to change for similar yards to stop being deviant in that town?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school or community situation not in the passage where someone breaks an unwritten norm. In four or five sentences, explain why the act is deviant and show how people's responses could serve two of Durkheim's functions.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · S.10.1

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the definition of deviance, circle Durkheim's three functions, and number the examples that show each function. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Why is cutting the ticket line deviant, while stepping forward when a worker calls your number is not? | **Cutting violates the shared expectation that people wait their turn. Stepping forward when called follows the line's norm.** |
| 2 | How does the comment "We wait our turn here" show one function of deviance? | **The response clarifies a boundary of acceptable behavior by making the line's unwritten rule visible.** |
| 3 | How does the group's response to the line cutter strengthen social bonds? Why is the line cutter's act alone not enough? | **People speak up together for the person who was skipped, expressing their shared commitment to fairness. Their response, not the act alone, reinforces that value.** |
| 4 | How does the wildflower yard illustrate social change, and what would have to change for similar yards to stop being deviant in that town? | **The yard prompts debate, and other neighbors begin planting wildflowers. Similar yards would stop being deviant if local expectations changed to accept them.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a club where members rarely question the president during meetings, a new member openly challenges a plan. That breaks the club's unwritten rule about who may speak critically. When others object, they make the rule visible to new members, clarifying the norm. Later, several members support the question and vote to allow open discussion, showing how deviance can spark social change.

Accept different plausible unwritten norms. Look for a clear explanation of the norm violation and concrete responses that demonstrate two distinct functions.