Jehovah’s Witnesses love their God Jehovah and want to please him. That's why they obey all his rules as explained by their religious leaders.

Right or wrong, the rules must be followed because they obey the teachings of the Apostle Paul who said, 'I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.' 1 Cor 1:10 NIV

Jehovah's Witnesses may have nagging doubts about their beliefs, but if they want to avoid excommunication (disfellowshipping), they must completely trust the guidance given by their organization. They avoid independent thinking because speaking in agreement and being like minded indicates to them they are God's organization and the truth.

The following list of 141 rules was written for people who want to quickly know what JW's can't do. The rules were compiled by former members who lived by these rules at one time.

The religion has many rules but these are learnt by Jehovah’s Witnesses over a long period of time instead of all at once. Even though the rules can seem overly restrictive, Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's) don't see it that way.

1. Belong to another organization or club for the purpose of socializing with nonbelievers. See Religion First
2. Have best friends and activity buddies who are not Jehovah's Witnesses. See Friendship with Non-believers
3. Associate with people outside their organization when it is not necessary. See Friendship With A Jehovah's Witness
4. Attend social functions sponsored by their employer unless attendance is required
5. Associate with coworkers after business hours in a social settings
6. Disagree with their organization's rules and code of conduct. See Can Jehovah's Witnesses Disagree?
7. Disagree with their organization's doctrines. See Can Jehovah's Witnesses Disagree?
8. Contribute to the Presidential Campaign Fund on their tax return
9. Join the armed forces and defend their country
10. Say the Pledge of Allegiance
11. Salute the flag
12. Vote
13. Run for leadership in their organization. (JW's are 'appointed' and invited to be leaders.)
14. Run for leadership in any organization
15. Take a stand for any political issue inside their organization
16. Take a stand on any political or 'worldly' issue outside of their organization
17. Campaign for a political candidate
18. Hold political office
19. Discuss politics
20. Be a union steward or shop steward
21. Actively be involved in a union strike
22. Use a gun for protection against humans
23. Become a police officer if a gun is required
24. Wear military uniforms or clothing associated with war
25. Take yoga classes and practice the discipline of yoga. See Is Yoga For Christians?
26. Smoke tobacco and cigars
27. Work full time selling tobacco and cigars
28. Attend Alcoholics Anonymous
29. Donate blood
30. Have blood transfusions
31. Read books, magazines, publications, and literature from other religions.
32. Buy anything from a church store
33. Buy something at a church garage sale
34. Donate items to a church run store
35. Shop at the Salvation Army
36. Work for the Salvation Army
37. Work for another church
38. Play competitive sports on a school team
39. Play competitive sports professionally
40. Run for class president
41. Become a cheerleader
42. Go to the school prom or school dance.
43. Attend class reunions
44. Be hypnotized
45. Accept Jesus as their mediator, 1 Timothy 2:5. See Mediator
46. Join the Boy Scouts
47. Join the Girl Guides
48. Join the YMCA
49. Serve on jury duty
50. Study psychology, philosophy, sociology, and viewpoints that might shake their faith
51. Attend other Christian churches
52. Attend nondenominational churches
53. Attend non Christian churches
54. Get married in another church
55. Dating non believers is discouraged
56. Casual dating is discouraged
57. Dating someone without the intent of getting married
58. Having sex before marriage
59. Breaking an engagement, separation, and 'unscriptural' divorce may result in disciplinary action
60. Marriage to non believers is not recommended
61. Be gay or lesbian. Homosexuality is not acceptable.
62. Throw rice at a wedding
63. Get divorced unless the reason is adultery
64. Can't remarry unless their ex commits fornication first
65. Toast drinks
66. Buy a raffle ticket
67. Play bingo
68. Gamble
69. Sing any holiday songs
70. Sing the National Anthem.
71. Celebrate Christmas - Why?
72. Celebrate New Years Eve - Why?
73. Celebrate Easter - Why?
74. Celebrate Mother's Day - Why?
75. Celebrate Father's Day
76. Celebrate birthdays - Why?
77. Celebrate Thanksgiving
78. Celebrate Flag Day
79. Celebrate Veteran's Day
80. Celebrate Independence Day. Why?
81. Celebrate Saint Patrick's Day
82. Celebrate Valentine's Day
83. Celebrate Halloween - Why?
84. Celebrate Hanukkah
85. Accept holiday gifts - Why?
86. Celebrate any holiday except the death of Jesus - Why?
87. Partake in the bread and wine that represents Christ unless they are part of the 144,000
88. Make holiday artwork for school
89. Engage in holiday parties at school
90. Take on a leadership role in school
91. **Porneia**
92. Do suggestive and immodest dancing in a public place
93. Attend a class, workshop, or seminar, sponsored by another church
94. Attend events or fund raisers sponsored by another church
95. Use of bad language (curse words) is discouraged
96. Wear blue jeans, shorts, and overly casual clothing at the Kingdom Hall. See [Dress Code](#)
97. Wear pants at a Kingdom Hall if you're a woman
98. Wear revealing clothes or skirts that are too short (looked down upon)
99. Wear long hair or facial hair if you're a man (depends on the local customs of the country you live in)
100. Body piercings are discouraged
101. Tattoos are discouraged
102. State or imply that the Watchtower is not run by Jehovah God.
103. Have discussions and express Bible based viewpoints that contradict the [organization's beliefs](#)
104. Say anything negative about their organization. JW's must 'speak in agreement' and be 'like-minded'.
105. Consider other religious beliefs as valid and truthful.
106. Acknowledge any prayer spoken by a non believer as valid
107. Take another Jehovah's Witness to court (with exceptions)
108. Wear or own a cross
109. Own any religious picture
110. Own any religious statue
111. Engage in idolatry
112. Believe in miracles (except those found in the Bible) See [Miracles](#)
113. Believe in ghosts
114. Witchcraft
115. Black magic
116. White magic
117. Consult with a psychic or become one
118. Study tarot cards, get a reading or give a reading
119. Study numerology or get a reading
120. Dabble in ESP (extrasensory perception), dowsing, or divination
121. Use a tool such as a pendulum to access information from the spiritual realm
122. Attempt to communicate with departed spirits. See [What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe About Death?](#)
123. Attend a seance
124. Believe in good luck or say things such as 'Good luck to you'. [Why?](#)
125. Believe or say anything superstitious
126. Prophecy
127. Speaking in tongues
128. Laying on of hands
129. Energy healing such as Reiki
130. Read their horoscope
131. Study astrology or zodiac signs
132. Combat training, boxing, or martial arts
133. Go to heaven unless they are part of the 144,000 (144000)
134. Worship Jesus as God
135. Idolize any celebrity or love and admire them to excess
136. Women can't be elders
137. Women can't be ministerial servants (assistants to the elders)
138. Divulge secret information to enemies and those not entitled to know. See [Theocratic Warfare](#)
139. Greet or talk with disfellowshipped persons (with some exceptions)
140. Associate with disfellowshipped persons except for immediate family living in the same house
141. Keep secrets from the organization. Jehovah's Witnesses report friends and family members who are breaking the rules

### Three More Things Jehovah's Witnesses Can't Do.

1. Women cannot assume the role of a male and instruct the congregation. See [Women Keep Silent](#)
2. A woman should not pray in the presence of a baptized male JW. WT July 15, 2002, Questions from Readers
3. Jehovah's Witnesses can't be part of this world. They must be [separate from the world](#)
4. They can't believe anything former Jehovah's Witnesses say, - even if it's factual. See Apostate Lies
5. Unless they're an Elder, Jehovah's Witnesses can't read this book, - 'Shepherd the Flock of God' - 1 Peter 5:2

Criticism Of The 141 Rules.

Jehovah's Witnesses may object and say they have gotten away with doing some of the things on this list. This is very true. The rules are not quite as important as loyalty to the organization.

Here's what our experience was when we were Jehovah's Witnesses.

If a Jehovah's Witness wants to be loved and accepted by their family and the only friends they are allowed to have, they instinctively know it's best to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of the Watchtower Society.

The last thing a Jehovah's Witness wants to do is to get in trouble with the organization or be called in for a 'judicial committee hearing'. In an effort to stay out of trouble, some Jehovah's Witness like to blend in and not be noticed. Others prefer to take the lime light as a leader, doing far more than is required.

141 Rules.

The rules were compiled by former Jehovah's Witnesses who were happy to live by these rules when they were active in the organization.

That being said, the rules can be very restrictive for young children who are singled out because they can't do many things fellow students do. Many adult JW's don't have a problem following the rules. The ones that do, are free to leave. However leaving is very difficult.

- Some rules could be condensed to make the list shorter and some rules could be expanded to make the list longer.
- The rules are not organized in order of importance.

- Why do some JW's say this list is incorrect and that '141 rules' don't exist? Are The 141 Rules Correct?

Fear.

Everyone is afraid of challenging the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even some highly inactive Jehovah's Witnesses who rarely go to meetings, are afraid to speak out against the organization. Secretly they break the rules when no one is watching. But they will not publicly voice their viewpoints or disagree.

Saying anything negative about their religion could result in disfellowshipping and being shunned. If this were to happen, they would lose relationships with family and friends inside the organization.

If caught, some things Jehovah's Witnesses can't do are very serious and can result in disfellowshipping or disassociation. Other things are looked down upon or judged negatively by individuals within the organization. Some things are a matter conscience. Not every rule is given equal weight. In serious matters there needs to be two or more witnesses to the 'wrong doing' unless the accused admits guilt. Matthew 18:15-17
Conscience.

For some items on this list, there are no formal rules that say you must not do these things. No one forbids them from being a cheerleader, buying girl scout cookies, reading literature from other religions, playing competitive sports, etc. ... Jehovah's Witnesses 'can' technically do some of the things on this list, but they don't. Zealous JW's choose to follow stricter guidelines. They don't participate because most are overwhelmed by fear and guilt at the mere thought of displeasing Jehovah.

For example, Jehovah's Witnesses must not celebrate Halloween. Does that mean they can't give out candies when children come to their door? No. However many Jehovah's Witnesses will not participate in giving out candies, because to them it's part of the Halloween celebration. [5]

Questions.

When deciding what's right and wrong, here are some questions Jehovah's Witnesses ask:

- How will believers and non believers view my actions?
- Will I be exposed to people on a regular basis who don't share my beliefs and moral values?
- Will involvement in an activity mean missing meetings, Bible study, going door to door, etc.?
- Will an action in some way compromise my position on political neutrality?
- Will I be supporting the churches of Christendom and other 'false' religions?

Guilt Trips and Fear.

Why do Jehovah's Witnesses feel guilty about doing so many things? Because their God Jehovah has many attributes. He is a God of love, but he is also a God of righteousness and judgment. Obedience is required. When angered, Jehovah is capable of wiping out entire nations in a fit of rage. Deut 9:6-8; Zechariah 8:14; 2 Kings 22:13; Isaiah 13:9-16; Nahum 1:2.

Jehovah is a tribal God. He demands sacrifice and obedience to tribal rules and regulations. For ancient tribes, group survival was far more important than individual rights and freedoms. Because strict rules are easy to break, worshipers of Jehovah are never certain of salvation. See Jehovah vs Jesus

Jesus brought with him a new, more accurate understanding in which individuals answer directly to God. They do not worship God by being faithful to a tribe, religion, or visible organization. Their personal relationship with God is symbolized by baptism. Followers of Jesus are not saved by keeping rules. Eternal life is a free gift.

Christians are free from strict laws, rules, and regulations. They don't have as much guilt or fear because they have a personal relationship with Jesus. Christians are saved by God's grace. There is nothing they can do to earn salvation. The God of Christians is kind, loving, humble, and gentle. Matthew 11:29; 1 John 4:8-21; Luke 6:27,35; He is forgiving and understanding. Matthew 6:14; Mark 11:25; See Law of the Christ

The Jehovah's Witnesses recognize the teachings of Jesus, but they choose to put Jehovah first. Even though Jesus came to do the will of his Father, there is evidence that Jehovah is a very different God. Of course God has not changed. However our understanding of God has evolved. There is only one Creator. Jesus explained the true nature of God and disagreed with the Pharisees who focused on rules instead of God's love.
Since Jehovah's Witnesses serve Jehovah, they must earn God's love just like the ancient Israelites did. There is guilt because whatever they do for Jehovah, it may not be enough. Oftentimes Jehovah's Witnesses believe they could have done more, and because they didn't, there is worry that Jehovah may not save them. What if they have angered Jehovah in some way that they are not aware of? What if Jehovah punishes them for not doing enough in these last days before armageddon? What if they could have attended more meetings, spent more time going from door to door, etc. ... ?

Ironically, in their fear of displeasing Jehovah (and the Apostle Paul who was a self-proclaimed Christian Pharisee, Acts 23:6), they have not fully accepted the teachings of Jesus. e.g. See Apostate Jehovah's Witnesses. It's important for Christians to follow Jesus because the Bible says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Matthew 28:18.

By enforcing strict rules and regulations Jesus didn't teach, critics say they have run ahead of Jesus and their salvation may be in jeopardy. 2 John 1: 9 - 11. See Salvation. Best Religion. Can It Save You?

New Beliefs.

The 141 rules listed on this page are based on our personal experiences when we were Jehovah's Witnesses. This is the way we thought. We observed fellow Jehovah's Witnesses dealing with guilt, what's right, and what's wrong.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jehovah's light gets brighter and brighter. That's why there is nothing wrong with changing beliefs as needed. Old understandings of what God requires are quickly forgotten and new doctrines are eagerly adopted as new truths from Jehovah.

- See Changing the Truth

When talking about things they can't do or are not allowed to do, there are 'gray' areas. Some things, they 'must' not do. Other things they shouldn't do. Some things are not recommended. And some things are a matter conscience. Faithful Jehovah's Witnesses often feel guilty that they might be doing something to displease God. Some consult with elders or write the Society's headquarters for guidance to make sure they haven't displeased Jehovah.

Double Standards.

It is interesting that some people get disfellowshipped for the smallest of infractions. While others get away with a lot and no one ever says anything. It all depends on how much you're liked in your congregation, how much time you spend going door to door, and how loyal you are to the organization.

If you really want to understand the truth about what Jehovah's Witnesses believe is wrong, search the internet for the secret document for Elders only. This recent 2010 organizational document guides Elders on how they are to enforce the rules. If you're not an Elder, you are not allowed to read this information. Thus ordinary JW's do not totally understand the rules or what will happen to them if they do something wrong.
We certainly love and respect the desire Jehovah's Witnesses have to please God. It is commendable. However in their efforts to be the most righteous and best religion on the planet, they have added rules and regulations that Jesus did not teach. This is unfortunate because the Bible says that Jesus is the path to eternal life. John 6:40-68; Jude 1:21; John 17:2; John 10:25-30; John 3:14-16.

In addition, the Apostle John said, 'Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; ... If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.' 2 John 1: 9 - 11 NIV

Does this mean that the Apostle John supported the doctrine of disfellowshipping. No he did not. See Do Not Say A Greeting and find out what this scripture means.

- Jehovah's rules can change at anytime and sometimes there are no clear guidelines. When this happens, Elders decide what to do or they call their corporate headquarters for instructions.
- Here is a summary of rules someone sent us. They are based on the 2010 handbook for Elders, called "Shepherd The Flock Of God."

1. Wikipedia says a theocracy is 'a form of government in which a state is governed by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided.'

2. Mind Control. Jehovah's Witnesses have a unique language that they are proud of. It reinforces their belief that they are the only ones with the truth and living is a spiritual paradise. However no one has told them the true purpose of their unique wordology. Words like 'in the truth', 'God's organization', 'paradise earth', 'doomed system of things', etc, are repeated within the organization over and over again in literature, conversations, and meetings. Powerful words keep Jehovah's witnesses in a hypnotic state, afraid to question the authority of their religious leaders.

Some JW's try to reclaim their freedom by leaving the organization. However even then most are afraid to say what they really want to say especially if they have family and friends inside the church. Long after Jehovah's Witness leave their religion, they remain firmly attached to the beliefs of the Watchtower, until they understand how mind control works.

3. Obedience. Jehovah's Witnesses are required to 'speak in agreement' and defend all doctrines even when they have doubts. They are afraid to question Jehovah's wisdom as explained by the WT because they are told they belong to Jehovah's organization. Thus, the good of the organization is thought to be far more important than individual rights, beliefs, and freedom of speech. Are Jehovah's Witnesses A Cult?

Independent thinking is discouraged because unity of beliefs is a requirement. Speaking out against the church's doctrines is thought to be a dangerous path leading to 'apostasy' and termination of one's membership in Jehovah's organization. A JW's salvation as a Christian and making it through armageddon alive depends on their dedication and obedience to Jehovah's spirit guided organization, the WT. See Baptism

4. Equality. Importance of women in the JW religion based on the publication for Elders, "Shepherd The Flock Of God".

5. Halloween. If you want to meet a lot of JW's, without going to a Kingdom Hall service, go to stores, restaurants, and public places after dark on Halloween. They don't want to be home when
children go trick or treating. Many of them leave their homes, turn out the lights, and go to out for the evening. Or they stay home in the dark. Whatever, ... It's just a really uncomfortable time of year for Jehovah's Witnesses.

6. Jehovah's Witnesses fear and obey their religious leaders based on the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:45-51

It is believed that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is God's only channel of communication in the world today. WT June 15, 2009 edition, entitled, "The Faithful Steward and It's Governing Body".