

Put yourself on a line and fold the line

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



LEARNING INTENTIONS:

- To explore the contested meaning of concepts
- To explore ethical decision making
- To practice developing and reflecting on reasoning and justification (see *Critical and Creative Thinking capability – Reasoning Strand to explore the spectrum of reasoning skills*)

LEVELS: F-10

PREPARATION/MATERIALS:

To assist students in ethical decision-making and understanding concepts ask the class to stand in the middle of the room. Allocate space for them to form a line. The line represents a continuum of beliefs or points of view.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES/TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make and commit to a decision

Read students a statement (some suggestions are provided below). Each student must put themselves on the line depending on how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement, or to the extent they think the statement contains an idea or action that is right or wrong, or harmful or beneficial, more acceptable to less acceptable.



2. Justify/Reasoning

Students must each prepare a reason or reasons for their position. They must be able to justify their decision.

3. Airing of positions

This can happen in a variety of ways.

- If time permits listen to every students' justification.
- Select students randomly to share.
- Select students at each end of the spectrum to share.
- FOLD THE LINE – Get one end of the line to join the other end so that each member of the line has a partner, they then share their justifications.
- Each member of the paired line must share the other person's reasoning



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4. Reflection

After all students have aired their reasoning, ask if other students would like to move where they are on the line. Ensure that if students move they are asked why and this is teased out. Also ask some students who didn't move, why not. This will highlight the strength of some of the arguments and give students an opportunity to reflect upon their decisions.

List of suggested statements

The concepts could be used at each end of the spectrum for Understanding Concepts, but for ethical decision-making others (as above), which include some of the concepts, should be used.

Level and Concept	Suggested statements (create your own with respect to your curriculum)
Level F-2: Right – Wrong; Good – Bad.	Telling a lie is ok. Borrowing a pen and not returning it. Sharing your lunch is the right thing to do. You shouldn't give money to beggars. Cheating is always wrong.
Level 3-4: Fair – Unfair; Harmful – Unharmful/beneficial; Right – Wrong; Good – Bad; Better – Worse.	Lying to someone so as not to hurt their feelings. Having long showers is unfair. Animals don't belong in zoos. Winning is better than losing. It is never ok to break a rule. Driving cars is harmful to the environment.
Level 5-6: True/Truthful – Untrue/Untruthful; Happy – Unhappy.	Telling a lie. Lying to someone so as not to hurt their feelings. If the truth hurts then it shouldn't be shared. Happiness is having material possessions. Having a family and friends is the most important factor for being happy.
Level 7-8: Free – Unfree; Just – Unjust; Right or Responsibility (this is not necessarily a spectrum but an either/or category).	Showing and receiving mutual respect. You must always follow school rules. Euthanasia is only for those with terminal illnesses. People should have the right to say whatever they think. Young people have a responsibility to look after the elderly.
Level 9-10: Fair – Unfair; Respectful – Disrespectful; Tolerance – Intolerance/Not tolerance.	Marriage equality is disrespectful to those who believe marriage is between a man and a woman. Being able to say anything you want is not intolerance. Being sentenced to death for murder is fair. Changing your unborn child's genetics to ensure they are successful/they are disease free/they have blue eyes.

Cam, Phil, Teaching Ethics in Primary Schools, Pg. 123.

Also see – *Put yourself on a triangle* for another version of this activity

