

VAPS

# Ethical Decision Making Toolkit

ETHICAL CAPABILITY RESOURCES



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# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



This document by no means covers, and cannot possibly cover all aspects of ethical decision-making in the world. However, it will attempt to describe the Victorian Curriculum across the levels; provide an explanation of the different ethical positions students are being asked to explore; and consider, evaluate and provide some conceptual guidance and instructions for the activities included in this toolkit to help explicitly teach the ethical capabilities decision-making strand within the context of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) pedagogy.

Although treated separately here (and in the curriculum), ethical decision-making cannot be separated from conceptual understanding, as one's understanding of concepts are the reference point for ethical decision-making.

For example, when exploring concepts, the question "Is action X fair?" is not so much about the ethical decisions behind action X, but about how we define 'fairness'. Once (through the CoI) students have developed a shared working definition of 'fairness', ethical decision-making can be explored.

This is what is covered through the Understanding Concepts strand. Students are asked to construct criteria to judge and evaluate concepts. In the Ethical Decision-making strand students are asked to explore 'Action X' in light of their criteria, and evaluate whether 'Action X' is appropriate in the situation, when considered against students' shared definition of 'fairness'.

The aim of this strand of the curriculum is for students to identify, consider and evaluate their own, and others, reasoning behind ethical decision-making through reflecting and organising their own experiences, assumptions and ways of making meaning in the world.

The following materials set out to support educators to facilitate this to happen in Victorian classrooms.

The Ethical Decision-making strand, like Understanding Concepts, is developmental through the levels, though students may function across the spectrum depending on their experiences and the maturity of the Community of Inquiry that has been established. The tools outlined in this document have also been considered in light of the developmental stages of thinking, understanding concepts and especially the Ethical Decision-making strand.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL F-2

### EXPLICIT ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING CONTENT

At Foundation to Level 2 students explore types of acts that may be considered right or wrong. At this level, students also start to provide their own reasons for why certain acts may be considered right or wrong. Students further explore the effects that personal feelings can have on how individuals think about and act on ethical issues.

#### Activities/Tools\*

- Put yourself on the Line, p.20
- Fold the line, the Sun Shines upon (Fruit Salad),
- Mini Col – follow the pattern of inquiry.

## LEVEL F-2

### ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING\*

Students have achieved Level 2 standard when they can identify and explain acts and situations that have ethical dimensions and can use examples to illustrate ethical dilemmas.

**For example:** if students can describe the act of lying and then make claims that rationalise the right or wrongness of lying in given situations, for examples, they may decide that white lies are ok if they don't hurt anyone, this demonstrates a Level 2 standard.

Students also demonstrate achievement in this strand by explaining how personal feelings may influence the way they or other people behave when ethical issues and concerns are involved.

**For example:** You can use the “Put yourself on the Line” activity to ascertain student preferences and encourage students to generate reasons for their decisions, such as in the example above they may prefer the truth over white lies.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 3-4

### EXPLICIT ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING CONTENT

At Level 3 and 4 students start to think about consequences and outcomes of certain ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ actions, and are therefore starting to explore the theory of *consequentialism* (see the VAPS Compendium of terms and resources). This requires students to weigh up competing outcomes or consequences of actions and decide which consequence or outcome is preferable and provide an explanation for why. Students also discuss how personal values and dispositions, or character traits, influence ethical decision-making. At this level, students are asked to make decisions about how they would act in given situations.

#### Activities/Tools

- Put yourself on the Line, p.20
- Three heads are better than one, p.14
- Fold the line, the Sun Shines upon (Fruit Salad),
- Mini Col – follow the pattern of inquiry

These activities and tools can be adapted to focus responses towards consequences. For example if you use the “Put yourself on the line” activity ensure that the options on the spectrum are related to consequences. This might include: “Would you rather tell a lie now to not upset a friend or would you rather never lie to ensure that you have their trust into the future?”. The ‘Three heads are better than one’ activity also helps students to consider the outcomes of an act by considering if the act is harmful or not.

## LEVEL 3-4

### ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

At the conclusion of Level 4 students can demonstrate the ability to explain and identify different ethical considerations within a problem. In doing so they are exploring their own and others reasoning behind ethical decisions as well as the process of ethical decision-making.

**For example:** Through weighing up different outcomes and/or intentions behind acting students consider consequences and intentions. Use the “Three heads are better than one” activity here.

Students also use examples, either self-generated or provided by the teacher, to evaluate ethical actions in relation to their outcomes. For example, students may show how two examples produce two different types of outcomes depending on who is in the situation, the relationship of participants, context, circumstance, etc.

**For example,** two people sharing a pizza. If the two people in example one are two adults and in the second example one person is an infant and the other is a growing teenager, the idea of sharing (and fairness) may change depending on the needs of the individuals concerned.

Or perhaps a friend tells a secret and asks the other friend not to tell, however, the secret may be something ethically compromising. Students may like to come up with secrets that would make them feel compromised.

Students are required to demonstrate that they can explain the role of personal values and dispositions in ethical decision-making and actions, recognising areas of contestability.

**For example:** students consider to what extent they value honesty or being considered an honest person by others and how this may influence decision-making. Recognising that this may prove problematic (contestable) in certain situations when acting dishonestly may produce a better outcome such as telling white lies to keep the peace.

If a student can acknowledge their own values and/or dispositions as well as locate and describe times or examples when this is problematic then they have achieved this level.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 5-6

### EXPLICIT ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING CONTENT

Throughout Level 5 and 6 students explore the distinction between means and ends, asking questions such as “Does the means (how we act) justify the ends (the outcome of our actions)?” Students are asked to explicitly explore this through contrasting problems that privilege one over the other.

**For example:** it may be considered okay to steal (the means) when you are starving because it will prevent starvation (the end), in contrast to the view that it is never ok to steal.

Students discuss the role and significance of conscience and reasoning in ethical decision-making. They weigh up their own and others feelings (conscience) such as guilt, versus evidence or data related to making an ethical decision.

**For example,** stealing lollies from your little brother may prevent them from getting rotten teeth (evidence), which produces what may be considered an objectively good outcome versus feeling guilty about stealing her little brother’s lollies.

It is also important to note that at Level 5-6 students should be introduced to the concept of ethical principles (see ‘*List of Ethical Principles*’, VCAA document). One such principle that may have been explored is never use others as a means to an end i.e. making friends with someone because they have a pool (the friendship is a means to getting access to a pool, the end). So students should explore the merits of such principles using conscience and reasoning as tools for evaluation.

#### Activities/Tools

- Would you rather,
- Put yourself on the line, p.20,
- Fold the line, the Sun Shines upon (Fruit Salad),
- Mini Col – follow the pattern of inquiry,
- Three Heads are better than one (this activity introduces the idea of evidence/truthfulness to help evaluate decisions based on conscience or evidence, p.14.

These activities and tools can be adapted to focus responses towards consequences and/or certain ethical principles.

**For example:** if teachers use the “Would your rather” activity ensure that the options on either side are related to consequences, competing consequences or consequences that may come into conflict with values or dispositions. This might include statements such as: “Would you rather cheat on a test now so that you don’t get in trouble at home/avoid embarrassment over your lack of understanding of the test content, or would you rather know that you acted honesty or with integrity?”



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools

## LEVEL 5-6

### ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Students have achieved Level 6 in Ethical Decision-making when they can explain different ways to respond to ethical problems and identify issues related to these, explaining how different ethical positions are contestable. Students can identify different ethical issues associated with a particular problem through presenting competing positions and evaluating the merits of each, or by providing examples and counter-examples to demonstrate the problems faced by differing positions in different circumstances.

To achieve Level 6 students demonstrate that they can identify the basis of a range of ethical principles (see 'List of ethical principle', [VCAA Document hyperlink](#)) and can explain, verbally or in writing, the role and significance of conscience and reasoning in ethical decision-making.

**For example:** by using the 'Three heads are better than one' activity to explore the 'truthfulness' of moral and ethical claims, evaluate the harm certain actions create, or consider competing intentions or motives, as well as explore and describe the range of ethical principles or ethical responses to a problem then they have achieved level 6 in Ethical Decision-making.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 7-8

### EXPLICIT ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING CONTENT

In Level 7 and 8 students explore ethical obligations and the implications of these on our thinking about consequences and duties.

**For example:** obligations to family may be prioritised over other people; or if we see someone in danger we have a duty to help them; or we may even have obligations to a faith-based set of beliefs. These obligations may produce implications for our ethical decision-making and students should consider diverse concepts of 'family', 'faith', 'danger' and what obligations and implications these concepts bring in different circumstances.

Teachers should facilitate discussions and opportunities for students to explore the role that context and experience plays in ethical decision-making. This may be done through exploring personal lived experiences or the lives of characters in texts (novels or films) being studied.

#### Questions such as:

- *To what extent does the situation influence the ethical decision made by this person?*
- *If I were in the same situation would I make the same decision or do something differently? and*
- *What previous experiences shaped this decision?*

#### Activities/Tools\*

- Would you rather,
- Put yourself on the line, p.20,
- Fold the line, the Sun Shines upon (Fruit Salad),
- Mini Col – follow the pattern of inquiry,
- Three Heads are better than one (this activity introduces the idea of evidence/truthfulness to help evaluate decisions based on conscience or evidence, p.14,
- Four ways of thinking about ethics, p.24,
- Argument Analysis tool, p.26.

As with previous levels the examples and statements for these activities should be adapted to reflect the focus level. This should include how experiences and contexts inform decision-making. Activities such as 'Put yourself on a line' could use statements like:

- *My ethical decisions are informed by my family/friends/community/society, or*
- *Emotions are more important when making ethical decisions; or more concrete examples,*
- *Giving to others makes me feel happy, or*
- *The majority of my family believes 'X' so it would be disrespectful to not also believe 'X'.*



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 7-8

### ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

At the conclusion of Level 8 students can explain different ways that ethical concepts are represented, such as the distinct way different groups of people may define social concepts such as ‘freedom’ and how this is represented in media, advertising or by the government.

Students demonstrate an ability to analyse the value these representations have to society, asking and answering questions such as:

- *Does the freedom offered by consuming certain products really exist?*
- *Do Australian’s value freedom of speech or freedom from bigotry?*

Through this kind of questioning and analysis of responses, students identify areas of contestability of concepts (Understanding Concepts). Students should also be able to articulate how criteria (the reasoning people use to justify an ethical position) can be applied to determining the importance they or groups of individuals place on ethical concerns.

**For example:** if a group or individual is opposed to freedom of speech students should be able to identify the reasoning, such as the group believes that some kinds of speech i.e. hate speech, are harmful to society. The criteria of harm has been used to justify the position.

The analysis of criteria above should also support students to demonstrate that they can further analyse the differences in principles between individuals and groups. As the above example demonstrates, some groups believe that free speech can be harmful (applying the harm principle, that authorities have the ability to exercise their power over individuals if it prevents harm, or perhaps a consequentialist view – see Compendium of ethical terms, or libertarians who believe that the government should intervene as little as possible and hence believe in total freedom of speech. At Level 7-8 students demonstrate that they can analyse and evaluate the merits of each claim (Argument Analysis Tool - p.26, Three heads are better than one tool - p.14.

Students explain how ethical decisions and actions are influenced by different points of view. They can explain how ethical obligations are supported by different views and to what extent the implications of such obligations have consequences on ethical decision-making.

**For example:** as in the above case on freedom of speech, students may consider to what extent being a member of a group that experiences, and may even suffer from, hate speech influence a person’s views on freedom of speech, and should it. Through examples like this students should be able to further demonstrate their ability to analyse the role that context and experience play in ethical decision-making and action.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 9-10

### EXPLICIT ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING CONTENT

Throughout this level students are explicitly introduced to the distinction between consequences and duties. They discuss issues raised by thinking about consequences and duties when evaluating different ethical decisions. At this level students discuss the arguments for and against using consequences and duties to evaluate and make decisions.

**For example:** is it more important to consider the consequences of actions over personal duty or obligation? An example of this may include weighing up the consequences of euthanasia (consequences may be the reduction of suffering) versus a duty to protect all life.

At this level, students investigate how various people and groups can manage competing positions in ethical decision-making.

**For example:** students may consider the ways religious groups evaluate ethical considerations in contrast to governments, to identify and evaluate different priorities.

#### Activities/Tools

- Would you rather,
- Put yourself on the line, p.20,
- Fold the line, the Sun Shines upon (Fruit Salad),
- Put yourself on a Triangle, p.22,
- Mini Col – follow the pattern of inquiry,
- Three Heads are better than one (this activity introduces the idea of evidence/truthfulness to help evaluate decisions based on conscience or evidence, p.14,
- Four ways of thinking about ethics, p.24,
- Argument Analysis tool, p.26.

As with previous levels the examples and statements for these tools and activities should be adapted to reflect the focus level. In exploring consequences and duties, activities like ‘Put yourself on a triangle’ allow for students to link their justifications to consequences, duties or character/virtue; this activity is designed for students to reflect upon their reasoning and connect it to principles or values that inform their own ethical decision-making.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## LEVEL 9-10

### ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Students have achieved Level 10 in Ethical Decision-making when they can demonstrate an ability to analyse and evaluate the contested approaches to ethical decision-making, and describe the thinking that influences those who value the consequences and outcomes of actions over those that place greater value on our duties and obligations. Students justify their own preferences by making evaluations of these schools of thought.

Students demonstrate their knowledge of complex issues, such as euthanasia, same-sex marriage, property/land rights, and freedom of speech by identifying the ethical dimensions of these. They further analyse different positions held ([Argument Analysis tool -hyperlink](#)), identifying the similarities and differences between positions and why these differences may exist.

**For example:** advocates and opponents of euthanasia agree that people shouldn't suffer, however, they differ on how this suffering should be mediated.

In addition, students can explain the various factors involved in managing ethical decision-making. An example of this may include a student inquiry into how their school manages big ethical decisions, identifying who the stake-holders are, to what extent stake-holders are involved in the decision-making process, to what extent duty, obligation, consequence and outcome are influential, and how the school gathers evidence.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



These tools support teachers to collect a variety of types of evidence of student progress and achievement for the purposes of formative and summative assessment. They can have a variety of purposes and can occur at various stages of the CoI, from conversation starters, to kinaesthetic experiences, to simple getting students thinking and talking.

## Put yourself on the line, p.20

Students are asked to respond to an ethical statement (start with any statement to warm up) and put themselves on a line (a spectrum). One end of the line represents total agreement, the other total disagreement.

## Fold the line

Using the above example, once students have decided where on the line they think they belong, students from each end join up to share their response and reasoning.

## The Sun Shines upon, sometimes call fruit salad

Students sit in a circle of chairs, one chair is removed so one student starts in the middle. The student in the middle says: “The sun shines upon anyone who...has long hair / has a pet dog”. Anyone who this statement applies to must get up and find another chair (it can’t be the one next to them). After a few rounds with any kind of general statements students are asked to find out the views of their classmates on ethical issues. The person in the middle says: “The sun shines upon anyone who...believes we should never steal / believes euthanasia is wrong”. This activity not only asks students to start thinking about an issue, it can also be used to shift students in the CoI who are distracted by the other students around them (usually their friends), see Community Building for more suggestions.

## Would you rather

Students are asked to stand in the middle of the room. They are asked to respond to a set of statements starting with “Would you rather...”. Two options are presented and students are asked to move to either side of the room that corresponds to the statement, i.e. “Would you rather your school purchase new sports equipment or purchase recycling bins?” An additional aspect is to ask students on either side to provide a reason for going to that side. However, this task can be used as formative assessment to gauge if students are in agreement, in which case it would be prudent to provide some counter-examples to demonstrate the contestable nature of an ethical problem. If the group are not in agreement then teachers can use the students themselves to highlight the contestable nature of the problem.

## Put yourself on a triangle, p.22

This activity is an advanced version of ‘Would you rather’ or ‘Put yourself on a line’. Instead of having two options, there are three. Each option corresponds with an ethical position that aligns with those explored in the Ethical Capabilities curriculum. The three main theories presented are: consequentialism, duty ethics or virtue ethics (see glossary for further explanation of their theories -[hyperlink to glossary](#)). Students are asked to move to the corner that corresponds with their point of view or set of values, and then provide reasoning for their decision. Students are free to change where they sit in the triangle throughout the discussion and provide a justification for changing their mind.



# Ethical Decision-Making Tools



## Three heads are better than one, p.14

This activity asks students to consider and record their thinking about the ethical problem under consideration through three different lenses – truth, harm and intention. Particular actions can be considered ethical or unethical based on the extent to which students consider these tools for decision-making helpful and/or accurate. Students complete the think sheet.

## Four ways of exploring ethical decisions, p.24

This activity asks students to consider and record their thinking about the ethical problem under consideration through four different lenses – outcomes/consequences, principles, agreements, and character/virtue. Actions can be considered ethical or unethical based on the extent to which students consider these tools for decision-making helpful and/or accurate. Students complete the think sheet.

## Argument Analysis Tool, p.26

This tool helps students to differentiate reasons, evidence or claims that support or deny a position. It also helps students to identify the kind of issue under exploration (economic / environmental / social, etc).

\*These sets of tools will be added to in coming months. To get access to additional tools you will need to be a member of VAPS. <http://vaps.vic.edu.au/>

\*\*It must be noted that while this achievement standard describes the ethical decision-making aspects as separated from the Understanding Concepts strand they cannot be separated when taught.

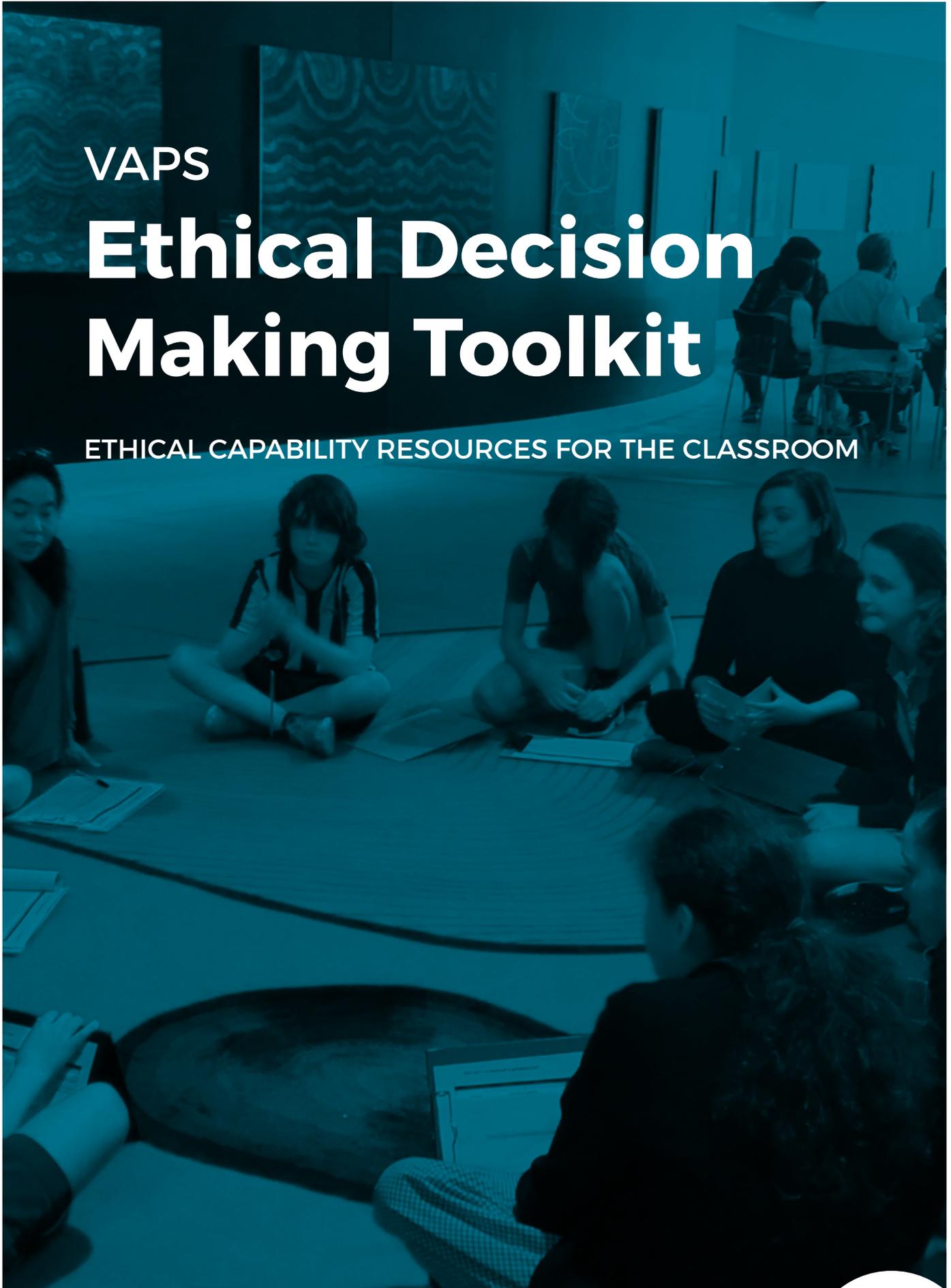
\*\*\*This document is an elaboration of the Victorian Curriculum. To see the whole curriculum and other supporting documentation to go: <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/ethical-capability/curriculum/>



VAPS

# Ethical Decision Making Toolkit

ETHICAL CAPABILITY RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM



# 'Three heads are better than one'

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



## LEARNING INTENTIONS:

- To explore ethical decision-making frameworks and principles such as intention, truth and/or harm.
- To develop skills to analyse different ethical decision-making frameworks and/or principles.

**“** *With a difficult problem/decision to make, one head may not be enough*

– Matthew Lipman, Philosophy For Children.

LEVELS: 5-10

## PREPARATION/MATERIALS:

6 flash cards with these terms on them placed face down in the centre of the discussion space (flash cards available in Ethical Decision-making tools).

<b>TRUE</b> TRUTH / EVIDENCE	<b>FALSE</b> FALSEHOOD / NO EVIDENCE
<b>NOT MALICIOUS*</b> GOOD INTENTIONS	<b>MALICIOUS</b> BAD/MEAN INTENTIONS
<b>NOT HARMFUL*</b> BENEFICIAL CONSEQUENCES	<b>HARMFUL</b> HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES

Or students can use the handout which follows after these instructions.

\*Please note that not being malicious does not necessarily mean that someone is acting with good intentions; it is possible that no intentions were present. It is also possible that even if no harm was caused there may not have been any beneficial consequences either.



# 'Three heads are better than one'



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES/TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

1. If using the flash cards. Turn sets of flash cards over and check for understanding. To check for understanding ask students to give an example of one of the terms written on the flash cards.
2. Read and explain 'Three heads are better than one' decision making framework.

There are three considerations that one can\* take into account when making an ethical decision.

HEAD ONE	HEAD TWO	HEAD THREE
<p><b>The Truth head</b></p> <p>This head considers whether what you are going to say is true or false.</p>	<p><b>The Intention head</b></p> <p>This head considers whether your intentions are malicious (bad/mean) or not. It asks you to consider the motivations behind your ethical decision.</p>	<p><b>The Harmful head</b></p> <p>This third head asks you to consider the outcomes, the consequences of your decision, in particular if there is evidence to suggest that the decision will cause harm or not. Ensure to distinguish who or what is harmed and how.</p>

These three considerations are called the 'Three heads are better than one' and it is suggested that each 'head' may be beautiful or ugly. In other words, each criteria has a positive and a negative aspect.

Therefore, if you think a statement is false, malicious and harmful (all red), it is clearly wrong for one to say (or do) it. On the other hand, if a statement is true, not malicious and not harmful (all green), it is permissible to say (or do) it.

**However, if any action under consideration has a combination of green and red then the action or decision may require further thinking. One could not definitely say that it is absolutely the right or wrong thing to say or do.**

3. Provide students with the ethical decision/problem under consideration.
4. Using the flash cards students can either vote, or complete the handout, considering if they think the decision is true, malicious, and harmful or not.
5. Depending on the level you complete this activity with you can ask students to complete the think sheet.
6. This activity can then be followed by a class discussion, further research (perhaps the class needs more evidence for the truthfulness or if the decision or act will cause harm before they can go further), or the application of the ethical decision (it may be that it was a problem that the class or the school was dealing with).

\* Note the use of the word 'can' here. Ethical decision-making is not limited to these three factors for consideration, however, they are some of the factors that the Victorian Curriculum's Ethical Capability is asking students to consider, particularly from Level 5 onwards.

The following page is the student handout.



# 'Three heads are better than one'

## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



*With a difficult problem/decision to make, one head may not be enough*  
 –Matthew Lipman, Philosophy For Children.

Action or Decision under consideration:

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Tick, highlight or circle which of the following you think applies to the action or decision under consideration.

<p><b>Truth head?</b> i.e. Is it true that we shouldn't lie?</p>	<p><b>TRUE</b> Truth / Evidence</p>	<p><b>FALSE</b> Falsehood / No Evidence</p>
<p><b>Intention head?</b> i.e. Am I lying to hurt someone?</p>	<p><b>NOT MALICIOUS</b> Good Intentions</p>	<p><b>MALICIOUS</b> Bad/Mean Intentions</p>
<p><b>Harm head?</b> i.e. If I lie will someone be hurt or injured?</p>	<p><b>NOT HARMFUL</b> Beneficial Consequences</p>	<p><b>HARMFUL</b> Harmful Consequences</p>

Is the act permissible? Why or why not?

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Is the act (saying or doing) 'in between'? What factor makes it in between? How might you resolve this?

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# 'Three heads are better than one'

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



# TRUE

Truth / Evidence

# FALSE

Falsehood / No

# NOT MALICIOUS

Good intentions



# 'Three heads are better than one'

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



# HARMFUL

## Harmful

# MALICIOUS

## Bad intentions

# NOT HARMFUL

## Beneficial



# Always, Sometimes, Never Labels

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL



**ALWAYS OK**

**SOMETIMES OK**

**NEVER OK**



# 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



# Put yourself on a line and fold the line



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

### 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)
<b>Level F-2:</b> 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.
<b>Level 3-4:</b> 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.
<b>Level 5-6:</b> 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.
<b>Level 7-8:</b> 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.
<b>Level 9-10:</b> 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



# Put Yourself on the Triangle

## Decide Commit Justify/Reason Reflect

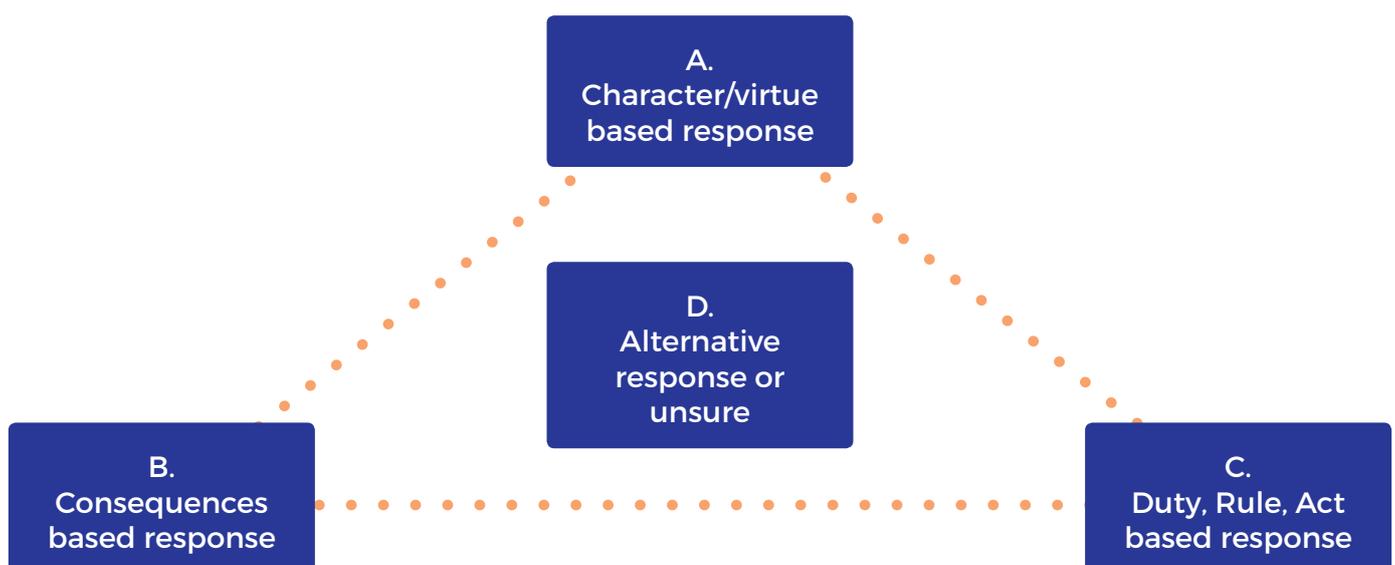


### THINKING ETHICALLY TOOL/ACTIVITY

#### ACTIVITY:

Students put themselves on the triangle depending on their responses to the prompt statements. This activity could be used as a warm up, quick assessment of the kinds of ethical positions within the group, stimulus/prompt for further discussion or reflection at the end of a theme/topic/concept.

1. Ethical problem is identified, i.e. lying
2. Students gather in the centre of the room.
3. Teacher/student leader asks students to make a decision (**decide**) and commit to a location in the triangle.
4. Three options are provided (a fourth if you want to open it up to other options, or you feel you have students who aren't confident enough, but the idea is that you want them to commit).
  - a. It is important to be an honest person (**character**)
  - b. Lying can get you into trouble or people will like you if you are honest (**consequence**)
  - c. Lying is wrong and you have a duty to tell the truth (**duty/rule**)
  - d. Other or unsure.
5. Students (depending on numbers and time all students to a handful could be selected) offer justifications/reasons (**justify/reason**) for their selection.
6. There is an opportunity here for a Col discussion to deepen the understanding of all the perspectives and develop rich criteria for ethical decision making.
7. Students are asked to reflect on the responses provided by other students can change their position if they are convinced by something they hear.
8. Depending on the intention of the activity students could be asked to **justify** their change or non-change of position.



# Put Yourself on the Triangle

## Decide Commit Justify/Reason Reflect



### THINKING ETHICALLY TOOL/ACTIVITY

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#### OTHER PROMPT STATEMENTS:

You should never lie/ always tell the truth because ...

- f. It is important to be an honest person.
- g. Lying can get you into trouble or people will like you if you are honest.
- h. Lying is wrong and you have a duty to tell the truth.
- i. Other or unsure.

You should never steal because ...

- a. If you steal you are a dishonest and / or greedy person.
- b. If you get caught then you may face consequences like going to jail.
- c. It is bad to steal and no one has a right to take another person's property.
- d. Other or unsure.

Sharing is good because ...

- a. If you share then you are a generous person and being generous is a good quality.
- b. If you share others will share with you.
- c. Sharing means you are a generous and kind person and these are qualities worth having.
- d. Other or unsure.

#### Additional prompt statements

Killing is wrong because ...

Saying please and thank you is the right thing to do because ...

Eating meat is wrong because ...

The death penalty is wrong because ...

You should always do what you say you will do because ...

Treating others as if you are better than them is wrong because ...

It is bad to cheat because ...

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\*Please be mindful that when constructing your own prompt statements that there are multiple kinds of ethical positions even within a framework (consequences, duties/rules, virtue/character), i.e. Stealing and consequences – you may think that the consequences of stealing is that you will feel guilty or you are creating unhappiness for the person you stole from. The motivations behind a particular position may not be reflected in the prompt, hence the need for a fourth option (Unsure or other).



# Four ways to explore Ethical Decision-making



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

Students can develop an understanding of these four concepts and schools of thought, Principles/Rules, Consequences/Outcomes, Agreements/Group decisions, and Virtues/Character traits, to help make ethical decisions.

<p><b>Principles/Rules</b></p> <p>Principles are like duties or rules that apply to any set of circumstances. So, for example, when we argue that it is never right to tell a lie, we are thinking about principles. Principles are useful for dealing with large groups of people. Many laws are based on principles. Some common principles are: Always tell the truth. Keep your promises. Be fair. Respect others' rights.</p>	<p><b>Consequences/Outcomes</b></p> <p>What makes an action right is whether it has good consequences. That is, whether it increases the welfare of those affected by it. If large numbers of people are affected, we might try to consider the greatest good for the greatest number. By 'good', we might mean happiness, well-being, pleasure, interest or satisfaction</p>
<p><b>Agreements/Group decisions</b></p> <p>A good way to decide the best way to treat people is to ask them how they want to be treated. People can then come to agreements about how to treat each other. A group of friends might agree to play sport on Saturdays, or a community might make laws.</p>	<p><b>Virtues/Character traits</b></p> <p>Virtues are character traits. A virtuous person does the right thing out of habit. To put it the other way around, the right thing to do is what a virtuous person would do. Some commonly recognised virtues are integrity, courage and compassion.</p>

Teachers can decide for themselves how they provide the above descriptions to their students.

Reference: Jewell, P, et al, Care, Think and Choose, Hawker Brownlow Education, Melbourne, 2011, p. 11.



# Four ways to explore Ethical Decision-making



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

Describe the action or decision which is under consideration:

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Does the action or decision involve any of the following?

<p>Principles/Rules</p>	<p>Consequences/Outcomes</p>
<p>Agreements/Group decisions</p>	<p>Virtues/Character traits</p>

Which of the above is more important in making the 'right' decision in this case? Why?

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# Argument Analysis Tool



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

*\*This is not a reproducible handout as it is designed for students to replicate as a process since they may write extensively at each stage.*

Ethical problems require critical and creative thinking, ethical capabilities (Understanding Concepts and Ethical Decision-making knowledge and skills) as well as extensive knowledge of an issue to be able to argue with ‘intellectual honesty’.

### Argument Analysis presents a rigorous process of:

- Providing reasons and suggestions (may require further research)
- Producing a table that considers the truth of an issue, as well as the appropriateness and controversiality of possible solutions/decisions/actions
- Synthesis to come to a conclusion and/or make a concluding, even if temporary, decision

## DECISION MAKING TOOL

Statement outlining ethical issue (posed as a statement) under consideration:

### 1. PROVIDING REASONS AND SUGGESTIONS (MAY REQUIRE FURTHER RESEARCH)

For	Against
1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.



# Argument Analysis Tool



## ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOL

### 2. ARGUMENT ANALYSIS (REASONS ABOVE EXPANDED FURTHER HERE).

Students are asked to replicate this stage for each reason/suggestion (for and against).

Reason # \_\_\_\_ :

<b>Controversial?</b> Is this reason controversial? Why?	<b>True, relevant or appropriate?</b>	<b>Kind of issue</b> What kind of issue is it? Provide an explanation	<b>Premises/Reasons</b> What further reasons do we have to support this premise/reason? Are there any assumptions present?
Yes/No/Maybe	Yes/No/Not clear Require more information or research etc	Social/Cultural Ecological Economic/Business Legal/Political Scientific	

### 3. SYNTHESIS

**Conclusion/Decision:**

Adapted from – Handbook of Conservation and Sustainability Ethics. 2012. [www.conservationethics.org](http://www.conservationethics.org)

