



Ethics

At a Glance

What is Ethics?

Though similar to fields like morality and law, **ethics** is separate from both. While morals are more general and universal rules and codes of conduct, ethics are **intensely personal: they are how individuals handle and prioritize morals**. As such, it is the instructor's job to arm learners with the tools to navigate the murky waters of ethical situations and decision-making, rather than to enforce a particular code or framework of ethics.

Ethics are complex, especially in the classroom, as they can sometimes contradict rules or procedures (which classrooms often are full of). However, a learner who figures out even a small first step—like verbalizing an ethical concept, or grasping that an ethical decision can be complex—establishes a firm foundation for future growth.

In the age of AI, which aspect of Ethics should be emphasized?

For each competency, a modern emphasis is determined based on the relative importance of the competencies in an AI landscape, as well as the potential for the competency (and its subcompetencies) to be automated in an age of AI. While AI can assist in decision-making processes and offer ethical guidance based on programmed principles, human ethics—encompassing complex moral reasoning, empathy, and contextual understanding—cannot be fully automated or replaced by AI.

In the age of AI, **emphasize fairness** due to the increasing potential for algorithmic bias and unequal access to opportunities. AI can inadvertently perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities if not designed and implemented with fairness in mind. By prioritizing fairness, institutions can strive to mitigate these biases and ensure equitable access to resources, learning opportunities, and outcomes for all learners, regardless of background or identity. This approach fosters an inclusive learning environment to prepare learners to navigate an increasingly digital and AI-driven world.

What other words and concepts are associated with Ethics?

Integrity, Virtue, Decency, Benevolence, Humaneness, Conscientiousness, Respect, Justice, Equity, Morality, Fairness, Kindness, Altruism, Inclusiveness, Acceptance, Honesty, Helpfulness, Generosity, Charity, Forgiveness, Civic-Mindedness, Citizenship



How can I best teach Ethics?



Tips to follow...	Pitfalls to stay aware of...
<p>It is beneficial to expose learners to different values and then express your own values so learners know where you stand.</p>	<p>Teachers can fear imposing their values on learners, especially when they don't have ethics training. Express your opinion, but don't stress it or frame it as the "right" answer, merely your personal conclusion.</p>
<p>The best way to gain an ethics education is through experience, making service learning a natural platform for it. In lieu of actual experience, realistic and relevant case studies can also be effective.</p>	<p>Learners are often uncomfortable discussing ethics, as they fear appearing unethical. Set up scaffolds to create conditions of safety to help learners extend their comfort zones into personal discussions that often don't have a right answer.</p>
<p>Learners can struggle to fully engage in ethics conversations when the situation isn't real. Still, practicing verbalizing ethical decisions helps learners take actual ethical actions later. By practicing and pre-scripting, learners are better prepared to think ethically when a situation does inevitably arise.</p>	<p>Intuition and instinct are notoriously inconsistent when it comes to ethical decisions, yet people often still wish to "rely on the gut" in ethical dilemmas. To help learners avoid this error, instead develop and apply a set of criteria, or a formalized process, to ground ethical thinking.</p>

To foster Ethics, use language such as:

- **"Let's consider the ethical implications."** Prompt learners to consider how actions affect a variety of stakeholders, and ask what values are at stake in a decision.
- **"How would the creator want to be credited?"** In the age of AI and remixing, citing sources and plagiarism is messier than ever. Push students to empathize with creators, rather than simply adhering to strict rules that minimize the fuzziness.
- **"How can we be authentic?"** From data manipulation to cherry-picking evidence, remind students that valid results stem from authentic values and inputs.

And when focusing on Ethics, avoid the following approaches:

- **"It's a dog-eat-dog world."** Recognize that collaboration can be as powerful a motivator as competition.
- **"It's not our problem."** Push learners to notice if they currently have enough resources or bandwidth to tackle the problem. If they don't, help them be intentional in choosing to focus on other priorities.



Subcompetencies

To create more targeted learning experiences for ethics, teachers can use the following subcompetencies as specific learning objectives. Classroom exercises and activities then can infuse subcompetencies into student learning to create deliberate, explicit, comprehensive, systematic, and demonstrable areas for growth. All subcompetencies in the CCR Framework are identified by a brief code for shorthand (i.e., ETH1).

Subcompetency	Description
ETH1: Identifying and describing ethical concepts, rights, and responsibilities	To act ethically, one must first be able to identify situations that call for acting ethically . This can be an intellectual exercise, which on its own does not guarantee ethical actions, but is a necessary foundational step.
ETH2: Making ethical decisions and standing up for the rights of others	In difficult situations, it is important to consider options through an ethical lens and make decisions with those values in mind. However, knowing the right thing to do is also not the same as doing it, which requires willpower and dedication.
ETH3: Understanding and showing compassion for the perspectives of others	A large part of ethics is being able to think outside of one's own perspective and realize how situations seem and work for other people. Most ethical decisions involve others, and thus involve a degree of awareness and an openness to a variety of views.
ETH4: Recognizing and implementing one's moral code	It takes regular effort and reflection to understand one's values and update them when appropriate . Choosing what is "right" can be based on a mix of societal values and personal convictions, but either way, following one's values requires integrity.
ETH5: Contributing to the broader group or community	Individuals must consider the effect actions have on their broader community , and design and implement projects that positively impact it. Be aware that sometimes one group's goals conflict with another's. Ethical individuals work to address and compassionately negotiate between those differences.

Growth Rubrics

The growth rubrics on the following page are a synthesis of the global research body on ethics and are designed to provide an opportunity for formative reflection on a competency based on a performance in a specific context. They are not meant to be holistic or measure the worth of a person in a high-stakes way, but rather to enable dialogues between educators and learners, creating space for feedback and opportunities for future improvement. **The rubrics are not age-specific, and progress through the levels may be slow and vary greatly depending on the context of the task.**



ETH1: Identifying and describing ethical concepts, rights, and responsibilities

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I see ethical issues as having clear rights and wrongs and defer to authority on what is "right."	I don't think about ethical scenarios until I'm in them but can sense if a situation might be ethically murky.	I'm aware of both personal and broad ethical debates but struggle to clarify nuances or implications.	I rehearse specific ethical scenarios with nuanced contexts and can describe multiple "right" answers.

ETH2: Making ethical decisions and standing up for the rights of others

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I make decisions based on my "gut" or intuition, prioritizing my own wants and needs.	I shy away from ethical dilemmas, struggling to balance my needs with other's.	I grapple with ethical dilemmas and take action to protect others' rights, though I occasionally fail.	I make intentional ethical choices and follow through on them, prioritizing the rights of others.

ETH3: Understanding and showing compassion for the perspectives of others

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I expect others to view the world the way I do and hold everyone to the same ethical standards, judging those who do not.	I recognize that ethical standards differ due to culture, background, or experiences, but still judge others by my standards.	I make efforts to empathize with other perspectives, yet have difficulty seeing divergent conclusions as valid.	I am compassionate toward other perspectives but draw the line with particular rights and wrongs.

ETH4: Recognizing and implementing one's moral code

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I struggle to identify my central values, so my actions are not consistent with any clear moral code.	I notice when something conflicts with my values but find it difficult to name or act upon.	I make choices that align with my values within safe personal circles (such as teams, clubs, or family).	I lean into making difficult choices to better align my values with my actions.

ETH5: Contributing to the broader group or community

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
I tend to focus on myself and my friends and not think about the broader community.	I try to ensure I don't do any harm to my community, though I don't engage with it further.	I balance my attention, resources, and priorities between myself and my community.	I am interconnected with my communities and regularly embed community input and involvement into my life.