

## Humanist ethics: overview (age 5+)



**Big question:** How can I know what is good?

**Key vocab:** happiness, consequences, empathy, the Golden Rule

| <b>Knowledge outcomes:</b><br>Students should know about the following common features of a <b>humanist approach to ethics</b>   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Trying to be kind to other people, animals, and the planet</b>  | <b>Thinking carefully about how other people might feel</b>   | <b>Treating other people the way we would like to be treated</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognising that we all want to be happy – none of us wants to be harmed</li> <li>Being kind as a way to make the world a better place to live</li> <li>The belief that being good can make us happy</li> <li>Recognising that most people are good to each other most of the time</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding that rules can be helpful, but believing that we also need to think about the consequences of our actions</li> <li>Trying to support happiness and reduce suffering</li> <li>Empathy as the capacity to imagine how other people might feel</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Golden Rule as a way to think about how we should treat other people</li> <li>Recognising that being good can sometimes persuade other people to be good too – everyone benefits</li> </ul> |

### Introduction

- Begin with the '[A humanist approach to life: a summary](#)' slide to introduce/recap the core features of a humanist approach to life.
- Explain that you are going to explore why humanists believe we should try to be good and how they decide how to act.

### Being good

- Carry out the [Being good activity](#) to explore why humanists think we should be good to each other and how they believe empathy and thinking about our shared needs and feelings can help us to decide how to act.

### The Golden Rule

- Read Aesop's fable called *The Fox and the Stork* or show a video of the story ([youtube.com/watch?v=7n538d6rHhE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7n538d6rHhE)) then discuss the information and questions on the [The Fox and the Stork activity](#) to explore the Golden Rule.
- Digging deeper: Carry out the [Moral dilemmas activity](#) to explore how humanists might approach different situations.

### Are human beings good?

- Read *Most People* by Michael Leannah or show a video of the story ([youtube.com/watch?v=XIWno5pY7io](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIWno5pY7io)). Discuss the information on the [Most people activity](#) to explore the humanist belief that being good often comes naturally to us (although this does not mean we are always good).

### Summary and assessment

- Review the knowledge outcomes above.
- Ask the students what questions they would like to ask a humanist.