

# **BUSINESS ETHICS ON THE JOB**

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## CREDITS

### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Anson W. Schloat

### PRODUCER

John O'Neill

### CONSULTANT

Dr. Farhad Rassekh, Professor of Economics  
University of Hartford, CT

### TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

Elisabeth Kwak Hefferan

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# BUSINESS ETHICS ON THE JOB

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Although the concept of business ethics is far from new, it seems lately as if it has regained the attention of corporations everywhere. Reports of business scandals or unethical corporate conduct have arisen with increased frequency. Working in an ethical manner is not merely the domain of CEOs and owners. A business is made up of its employees; each worker must understand the importance of ethical business behavior if the company—and the individual workers—are to succeed.

Typically, teens have little experience in the working world. But it is never too early for a young person to learn the fundamentals of business ethics. Even an after-school job can teach teens the crucial lessons of integrity, loyalty, honesty, responsibility, empathy, confidentiality and respect. Acquiring these ethics will help any young worker on her way up the career ladder. Employees who follow these basic principles will find that employers will be happy to hire them, keep them on the job and promote them to higher levels of responsibility.

The age-old “golden rule”—to treat others the way you would like to be treated—continues to be the cornerstone of ethical behavior. Seven ethics that young people should understand include **integrity**, which means standing up for what one believes is right. By acting with integrity, employees will soon become a trusted and valuable part of the business. In addition, teens should grasp the importance of **loyalty** on the job, whether it is to a supervisor, a co-worker or loyalty to the company itself. Loyal employees will find moving up the corporate ladder an easier task. Next, a young person should realize that **honesty** on the job is paramount. Being honest and open shows that a worker deserves the confidence of the boss. Another important ethic is **responsibility**. Employees should recognize the value of going above and beyond their own personal tasks for the good of the entire workplace. **Empathy** is another skill that will help young workers be successful. The ability to see situations from another’s perspective opens the way for smooth, conflict-free business. Teens must also understand the importance of **confidentiality**. The ability to distinguish between harmless gossip and sensitive facts that should not be discussed is vital. Finally, young people should realize that all people—from customers to co-workers to the owner of the company—should be treated with **respect**.

In today’s competitive world, it is more essential than ever that young people set themselves apart from the crowd. *Business Ethics on the Job* was designed to help teens learn the basic ethics necessary for successful employment. By advising students of the fundamentals of business ethics, educators are preparing their students for a long, fruitful and enjoyable career.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the video *Business Ethics on the Job* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- explain the importance of behaving ethically on the job
- articulate their own moral values and apply them to the working world
- recognize the value of treating others with respect
- understand how loyalty to an employer benefits both the workplace and themselves
- realize the importance of honesty in business
- understand that taking on extra responsibility at times is part of a career
- see the benefit of analyzing a situation from other perspectives
- decide what information can be discussed on the job and what should be kept confidential
- handle ethical dilemmas on the job with confidence

The video opens by introducing Bruce McKnight, a 23-year-old professional software programmer about to start his first day at Planetmaker, a computer game company. As Bruce is greeted by his supervisor, Pat Keogh, the narrator emphasizes that Bruce is now entering a new world—the world of business. In order to succeed in this world, he will have to work hard and make tough decisions, but most importantly, Bruce will have to navigate according to his moral compass as he explores the workplace.

Next, the program mentions several recent corporate ethics scandals, in which business leaders made morally bankrupt and illegal decisions. Dr. Farhad Rassekh, Professor of Economics at the University of Hartford adds that, “in the long run . . . those of us who do not act ethically, break the law or moral rules of society, will end up paying the price in terms of leading an unhappy life or in case of breaking the law, we may end up in jail.”

It is emphasized that every company must face ethical decisions, not just huge corporations. As Bruce begins to settle in, viewers are reminded that he will face ethical dilemmas almost every day; he will have countless opportunities to do the right thing, or to veer off course.

The next step in Bruce’s first day on the job is to read and sign Planetmaker’s own code of ethics. Pat explains that the purpose of the company’s code of ethics is not to dictate its employees’ values, but instead to set a standard for behavior. Many are common sense and based on the golden rule: treat others as you would like to be treated.

A few weeks pass and Bruce is performing well in his new position. Everything has been going smoothly, but he will soon be confronted with his first ethical dilemma on the job. Ellen, his coworker, stops by his desk and tells Bruce how happy she is to see an American programmer be recognized for once. She goes on to mock the Indian-Americans that work at Planetmaker. The narrator tells viewers that Bruce faces a situation of integrity—“guts,” or standing up for what one believes is right. Bruce has a choice to make: he can risk losing Ellen’s friendship by confronting her and telling her that he was offended by the comment, or he can ignore it and hope she doesn’t do it again.

The next ethical dilemma presented deals with honesty and loyalty. Jennifer, one of Bruce’s supervisors, stops Bruce and asks his opinion about an applicant named Paul Brennan. Paul and Bruce interned at another company during the same time period, so Jennifer would like to know if Bruce would recommend him to work at Planetmaker. However, the narrator explains that Paul and Bruce became good friends when they worked together—but that Paul was often unreliable, arriving late and missing deadlines. Bruce is caught between loyalty to his friend and loyalty to the company; he must also consider how honest to be with his supervisor.

The video then turns to the ethic of responsibility. Bruce is in the office late after working overtime when he notices that a rush shipment to one of Planetmaker’s distribution centers has been left behind. It is not part of Bruce’s job to take care of shipments, and he knows he

could pretend he never saw the package and go home. The narrator poses the question: where does one's responsibility to the company end?

The next ethical dilemma facing Bruce concerns empathy, or the ability to put oneself into another person's shoes and understand another point of view. Pat approaches Bruce and thanks him for working late, and Bruce admits he needs the weekend to recharge and spend time with his girlfriend. Pat goes on to say that a company deadline has been moved up and Bruce needs to work through the weekend. Viewers are asked to consider how empathy could affect this situation: should Pat understand Bruce's exhaustion and give him the weekend off, or demand he work over the weekend? Should Bruce stand his ground or help the company out in a tight spot?

The video then discusses the ethic of confidentiality. One of Bruce's close friends, Ernie, tells him that he is meeting with his supervisor for his annual review. Since Bruce has been promoted and given the responsibility for the company's personnel files, he has access to the salaries of other assistant programmers; Ernie would like to know the salaries so he can negotiate for a raise. The program poses the question: would giving Ernie the information be a betrayal of confidentiality?

The next ethical dilemma is presented while Bruce is in a meeting with Jennifer. She tells him that the company is having problems with personal emails bogging down the computer system, so she would like Bruce to start screening all emails, even personal ones. Bruce faces the issue of respect; if he screens the emails, he violates his own value of respect for personal privacy. If he doesn't, the company will not operate as efficiently as possible.

The narrator explains that ethical dilemmas such as the ones Bruce has encountered happen every day, but that the business world is made up of mostly honest people with good values. Dr. Rassekh adds that "if you look at those corporations that were caught breaking the law ... the number is just a fraction, a tiny fraction of all overall corporations in the U.S., so by and large ... I believe most businesses really focus on doing what they should be doing...providing a good or service, selling them in the market, trying to make profit, cover the costs, and go on their daily business."

Next, the video reviews the values that have been presented: honesty, loyalty integrity, confidentiality, respect, empathy, and responsibility. The narrator tells viewers they will see how Bruce handled each dilemma, but that there are other positive outcomes to each situation.

The program returns to Bruce's first problem, which he considers a matter of integrity: Ellen's racist comments. Bruce decides to wait until Ellen makes a similar remark, then to tell her that she has a right to her own beliefs, but that her comments make him uncomfortable. Dr. Rassekh adds that in a situation like this, "the least an individual should

do is not encourage the other person, not to laugh with them or not to go along with what they are saying.”

The video then goes back to the dilemma concerning loyalty and honesty, in which Bruce’s supervisor asked him about his friend and former coworker. Bruce handles the situation by telling Jennifer that he and Paul are good friends, so it is not his place to say anything. Dr. Rassekh comments, “Loyalty is a virtue, honesty is also a virtue, but ... prudence is also a virtue and being prudent, meaning having discretion, knowing what to say when and what not to say, is also important.”

The ethic of responsibility is then revisited. Bruce calls the shipping supervisor and finds out that the distribution center does need the package first thing in the morning. He asks Bruce to drive the package to the driver’s house so that he can take care of it. By handling the situation this way, Bruce takes responsibility for the package without having to do a lot of extra work. Dr. Rassekh adds, “If we don’t take our responsibilities seriously, then nothing would be done properly. In addition to that, I think an individual who does not take responsibility seriously does not enjoy what they do.”

Next, the video returns to Bruce’s empathy dilemma. Instead of being demanding and rigid, Bruce and Pat both look at the other’s perspective and compromise. Bruce offers to come in and work for part of the weekend and early on Monday; Pat agrees and promises to consult Bruce in the future. Bruce adds that he will also tell Pat his best days for working overtime.

The next dilemma involves confidentiality. Bruce decides to tell Ernie that his request is out of line and asks that he not repeat it. Dr. Rassekh explains, “Someone who doesn’t keep the information confidential and discloses that to other people, ... however they do it, whether they talk about it over lunch or an e-mail or whatever the case may be, then cannot be trusted.”

The last dilemma to solve concerns respect for personal privacy. Bruce tells Jennifer that he understands the problem but that he will not read his coworkers’ email because he would not like others to read his. He suggests that they hold a meeting to explain the problem instead.

The narrator wraps up the video by reminding viewers that Bruce made the right ethical decision in each case by putting himself in the shoes of others. Dr. Rassekh adds, “Who are the people whom we admire as virtuous, who are the people whom we admire as people with integrity, with dignity? If you really think about it, these are the people who know what to say, who know what to do without being dishonest, without being deceptive, without being insincere, and somehow these people have developed those practical wisdom or that practical wisdom and those virtues.”

Finally, the narrator tells viewers that they will soon be in the world of work, if they are not already. He advises them to deal with ethical dilemmas by thinking about all the issues involved, thinking about their values, and considering how they will feel about themselves after they make their decisions.

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethical dilemmas are rarely black and white—they often involve many different people, opinions and considerations. Sometimes they even involve more than one type of ethic. Read each of the dilemmas below and decide which ethic (or ethics) are in question. When you have finished, discuss your answers with classmates. How do your answers compare?

**THE SEVEN BUSINESS ETHICS**

- |                       |                |                        |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>integrity</b>      | <b>loyalty</b> | <b>honesty</b>         |
| <b>responsibility</b> | <b>empathy</b> | <b>confidentiality</b> |
|                       |                | <b>respect</b>         |

**1.**

Steve and his best friend Allen both work at a coffee shop, where they are required to come in early to open up. Recently, Allen has been arriving at work later and later, so that Steve must set everything up by himself. Sometimes Steve can't manage to open the coffee shop on time. Steve is getting sick of covering for his friend, but he doesn't want to get Allen in trouble. One day, the boss asks Steve why the coffee shop has been opening late.

The ethics involved in this dilemma are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2.**

Elaine works in an office. She's alone most of the day and gets bored with her work, so she downloads music and plays it on her computer. However, since all the office computers are connected internally, Elaine's downloads slow up every computer in the office. No one knows the reason why the network is slow. Elaine hears her co-workers complaining about it.

The ethics involved in this dilemma are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3.**

Matt has an internship at a veterinarian's office. He is in charge of feeding the animals that are boarding at the vet, among other things. One night he has a fight with his girlfriend and stays up late arguing with her. The next morning he feels angry, upset and tired. He's not really sick, but he doesn't feel mentally ready for work. Matt considers calling in sick.

The ethics involved in this dilemma are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**4.**

Nadia's summer job is at a popular hotel where she doesn't have a lot of supervision. Since no one is watching her closely to make sure she gets everything done, she tends to take long breaks and to do the bare minimum expected of her. Nadia probably won't get in trouble for slacking off, but the hotel doesn't run as smoothly when she isn't working hard.

The ethics involved  
in this dilemma are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5.**

Reggie is spending his summer vacation as a house painter. He works with a crew of older men. They are friendly and fun, but they often make racist and sexist comments that Reggie finds offensive. He wants to fit in with them, but their jokes and comments are making him more and more uncomfortable.

The ethics involved  
in this dilemma are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6.**

Gina works at a clothing store with a lot of other young people. She gets along with all her colleagues except for one girl, who is rude and unpleasant. Gina and her co-workers all dislike her and sometimes make fun of her when she isn't around. One day Gina accidentally overhears the girl telling their boss about some serious problems at home. Later, when her friends start gossiping about the girl, Gina wonders if she should mention what she heard.

The ethics involved  
in this dilemma are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Please consult the next page for the Answer Key.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWER KEY

The answer key below offers suggestions for how students may answer; answers may vary. It is possible to include other ethics not mentioned below. The most important thing is not that you have the same answers as those listed below, but that you have strong reasoning behind your choices.

- 1. Steve and Allen:** Loyalty, honesty, responsibility
- 2. Elaine:** Respect
- 3. Matt:** Honesty, responsibility
- 4. Nadia:** Responsibility
- 5. Reggie:** Integrity
- 6. Gina:** Confidentiality, respect

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Adults who have experience in the working world usually have confronted a variety of ethical challenges and have learned valuable lessons along the way. You can benefit from their wisdom.

**Part 1:**

For this activity, interview an adult who has been working for at least five years. You can use the questions below for your interview, or add some of your own. Use additional paper if necessary.

What do you think are the most important ethics for an employee to have?

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What kind of ethical dilemmas have you faced in your career?

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Can you tell me about a time you made the right ethical decision? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

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Can you tell me about a time you made the wrong ethical decision? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

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What are the most important things for young employees to remember about ethics?

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**Part 2:**

After your interview, read through your notes and write a short paper on the lessons you've learned. Describe the ethical tips that were suggested by the adult you interviewed.

**Part 3:**

With your classmates, combine your findings to make a "Book of Ethics." Keep a copy of the book in your classroom for future reference.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Integrity means standing up for what you believe is right. However, not everyone has the same set of beliefs. You surely have your own values that you follow every day—even if you don't spend time reflecting upon them. Are certain actions or behaviors always wrong, or does it depend on the situation? Are there any circumstances that would make a wrong behavior acceptable? For example, you may think that lying is always wrong, or you may think that lying is acceptable if you are doing it to spare another person's feelings.

**Part 1:**

Answer the questions below. You may decide that a certain behavior is NEVER acceptable, or that it is SOMETIMES acceptable. If you answer SOMETIMES, explain why you chose that answer.

**Is it ever acceptable to...**

Steal?

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Lie?

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Cheat (on a game, on a test)?

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Take credit for someone else's work?

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Break rules (at school, home, or work)?

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*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:**

Now that you have identified your personal values, consider the situations below. What is the right thing to do in each situation? Use your personal values to decide what's right, and then explain your reasoning.

**1.**

You work at the front desk of a local business, doing odd jobs, filing papers and answering phones. The front desk is always stocked with office supplies—paper, pens, stamps, staplers, scissors, etc. The new school year is coming up and you wonder if you should just take whatever school supplies you need from the office. It would save you money and you're sure no one would miss them.

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**2.**

While working at the concession stand at the cineplex, you accidentally stock the candy in the wrong places. Your error will take a lot of time to correct, and you know your boss will be really mad. But when your boss discovers the problem, she mistakenly assumes that a co-worker who recently quit is the one who made the mistake.

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**3.**

You need to pass a written test in order to get your driver's license. You have been practicing for months and you know you're a really good driver. But you've been very busy lately and didn't have any time to study for the written test. The tests are given at the DMV and you know you could easily sneak a cheat sheet into the room.

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*This activity is continued on the next page.*





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethics of honesty can be complicated. Is honesty always the best policy? Or is lying sometimes the best thing to do? If you don't tell the whole truth, is it the same as lying? With a partner, discuss the following situations. Each person should decide what he or she thinks is the best course of action. Compare your opinions, and explain how you reached your decision. Did you reason through each situation in the same way? Did your partner's thought process make you reconsider your own decision?

**1.**

A friend of yours wants to be a poet. He is going to enter your school's poetry contest. Submissions are anonymous, so no one will know he wrote the poems unless he wins. He asks you for your opinion on some of his poems. You read them and think they are awful. Your friend is really proud of his work. What do you tell him?

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Now imagine your friend is in the same situation, except this time he will have to read his poetry in front of the entire school at an assembly. You're afraid he will embarrass himself. What do you tell him?

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**2.**

You and your friend work as assistants at a local law firm, filing papers. You are very good at your job, but your friend has made many mistakes. She is afraid she will be fired if she messes up again. One day, she misfiles some important papers. When your boss finds out, she asks you who made the mistake. Since you have such a good record, you don't think you will be in much trouble if you say it was your mistake. You also think your friend might be fired if you tell the truth. What do you tell your boss?

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Now imagine you and your friend have both made mistakes in the past and are both on shaky ground with your boss. What do you tell your boss?

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*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.**

While making deliveries with the pizza van for your after-school job, you accidentally dent a car in the parking lot. No one saw the collision. When you return, your boss asks you his routine question: were there any problems? What do you tell him?

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Now imagine someone called the pizza parlor to complain about the dent, but doesn't know who the driver was. Since many employees deliver pizzas near that parking lot, your boss knows the guilty one could be one of many people. He asks you: Did you dent that car? What do you tell him?

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**4.**

You really want a job at the new restaurant in town, but your only similar job experience is washing dishes in a restaurant that closed last summer. When you are on your interview, the interviewer asks if you have ever worked as a server. You know your chances of being hired will be much greater if you say yes. Since the restaurant will train all new employees anyway, you figure you can learn fast and no one will know. What do you tell her?

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Now imagine that the restaurant is looking for skilled servers. The interviewer makes it clear that they do not want to train new employees. You don't know how to perform all the serving tasks they require, but you figure you can learn on the job. What do you tell her?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Most students have responsibilities to fulfill, even if they are not related to business. Maybe you have to baby-sit your little sister, or clean your room, or go to football practice every day. Your responsibilities include anything that you are expected to do. What would happen if you didn't take care of your responsibilities?

Think of as many personal responsibilities as you can (at home, school or work), and identify all the people who have a stake in them. How would each of these people be affected if you did not follow through on your responsibilities? Use additional paper if necessary.

**Example:**

What is my responsibility?     *To pick up my little brother from his music lessons.*  
Who is involved besides me?     *my mother, my brother*  
How will they be affected?     *My brother will be upset if I don't pick him up. He'll call my mom at work, and she'll have to leave work early. She may get in trouble with her boss.*

**1.**

What is my responsibility? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who is involved besides me? \_\_\_\_\_  
How will they be affected? \_\_\_\_\_

**2.**

What is my responsibility? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who is involved besides me? \_\_\_\_\_  
How will they be affected? \_\_\_\_\_

**3.**

What is my responsibility? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who is involved besides me? \_\_\_\_\_  
How will they be affected? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Empathy is the ability to understand someone else’s point of view. Not everyone will approach a situation the same way you will. Being able to “step into someone else’s shoes” will help you negotiate problems, find reasonable compromises and discover workable solutions in all aspects of life. Consider the following disagreements. How does each person involved look at the problem? How would you work out a solution in each case?

**1.**

Bob works at a fast-food restaurant that gets very busy at mealtimes. However, between lunch and dinner hours, very few customers come in and Bob finds the work very boring. Lately, he’s been calling his friends on the job to pass the time. He always hangs up the phone if a customer comes in. One day, his supervisor catches him and gets very angry. Bob can’t understand why the supervisor is so upset.

How does Bob see the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does his supervisor see the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can they solve the problem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2.**

Jackie and Beth are both summer interns at an insurance company. Together, they have to make a presentation to their department. They are nervous and want to do well. Jackie really wants to work for the company after she graduates, so she especially wants to impress their bosses. Beth, on the other hand, thinks of her internship as a summer position. She doesn’t think the presentation should be a big deal. Jackie wants Beth to work overtime for a week so they can prepare, but Beth would rather spend time with her friends and family. One morning they get into a huge argument.

How does Jackie see the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does Beth see the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can they solve the problem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.**

Dennis recently got his driver’s license and really enjoys his new independence. However, his parents are not convinced that he should be driving late at night. They have given him an early curfew. Dennis has to be home more than an hour before his friends. He hates leaving early, but his parents insist the rules are for his safety. Dennis doesn’t understand why his parents are being so strict—he never gets into trouble and they have no reason not to trust him.

How does Dennis see the situation?

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How do his parents see the situation?

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How can they solve the problem?

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**4.**

Stacey loves babysitting for her eight-year-old neighbor, Heidi. They have a great time. Stacey lets Heidi eat all the junk food she wants and together they stay up late watching movies. Heidi is not usually allowed to do these things, but Stacey doesn’t baby-sit very often and she knows Heidi has fun. One night Heidi’s parents find out that Stacey allows their daughter to break the rules and they are angry. Stacey doesn’t want to lose her babysitting job over something that doesn’t seem very important to her.

How does Stacey see the situation?

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How do Heidi’s parents see the situation?

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How can they solve the problem?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITY 9**  
**FOCUS ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

One important skill in the workplace is realizing what information is okay to share and what information should stay confidential. There will not always be clear guidelines regarding what to keep a secret and what to share; you will have to use your own judgment. Consider the following situations and decide which items are okay to talk about and which should be kept in confidence. Check the appropriate box, then explain why.

	Keep it confidential	Okay to share	Explain your reason
You catch your co-worker stealing from the cash register.			
You find your teacher's grade book and see the grades of all your classmates.			
You catch your boss stealing from the cash register.			
You are volunteering at a hospital when a classmate comes in for emergency drug abuse treatment.			
A teammate tells you she is having a romantic relationship with your coach.			
You pass your boss's desk and see an email message praising one of your friends.			
You pass your boss's desk and see an email message criticizing one of your friends.			
One of your fellow servers drops some food, rinses it off and serves it anyway.			

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Respect is probably the most important ethic of all. Respect makes good communication and good work possible. Treating others the way you would like to be treated is often the best way to make your interactions—both business and personal—go more smoothly. On the other hand, being disrespectful can make even the simplest of tasks difficult and unpleasant. On a separate sheet of paper, re-write the exchanges below so that each person shows respect for the other.

**1.**

*Employee 1:* Why didn't you finish that case from yesterday?

*Employee 2:* What are you talking about? Everything's under control.

*Employee 1:* No, it isn't! You were supposed to do the last case. Now what am I going to do? I'm the only one who does anything right around here.

*Employee 2:* Actually, I got an extension from our supervisor, but you were obviously too busy nosing into everyone else's business to know that. Why don't you keep your mind on your own work?

**2.**

*Brother:* Don't even think about using the car tonight. I have a date.

*Sister:* Too bad. Mom and Dad already said I could have it to go to the mall.

*Brother:* No way! You can go to the mall anytime. This is much more important.

*Sister:* Says who? You always take the car. Mom and Dad said I could have it, so I'm going to take it.

*Brother:* Don't be such an idiot!

*Sister:* Don't be such a jerk!

**3.**

*Boss:* I need you to stay late tonight.

*Employee:* Again? I already have plans.

*Boss:* I don't care what your plans are, this is more important.

*Employee:* But this is the third time this week! I'm really getting sick of this.

*Boss:* It sounds to me like you're not committed to this company.

*Employee:* That's so unfair. This isn't part of my job!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Research one of the topics from the following list, and write a brief paper on your findings. You can gather information at your school or local library, as well as on the Internet. Use a *Resource Tracker* (Activity 11b) to collect information.

## **TOPIC 1: ETHICS IN THE NEWS**

In recent years, you may have heard about several high-profile scandals in the news. Enron, WorldCom, Martha Stewart and *The New York Times* have all been mentioned in stories about ethical mistakes. Choose a scandal and research the details. Many corporate scandals are complicated—don't worry about understanding every aspect. Concentrate on the big picture. Write a short paper on your findings. Some questions to get you started:

What happened?

When did it happen?

Who was involved?

What kind of crime was committed or allegedly committed?

How was the activity unethical?

Who was hurt by the scandal?

What consequences will be faced as a result?

How did others in the industry react?

Are steps being taken to prevent similar scandals in the future?

## **TOPIC 2: PROFESSIONAL CODES OF ETHICS**

Many professions have their own particular codes of ethics, like those found in medical and legal careers. Choose one such profession (medicine, law, journalism, advertising, etc.) and research its unique code of ethics. First write down what ethics you think would be important for this career. Then compare your list to the profession's actual code of ethics. How alike are the two lists? Did you miss anything important? Should the profession add anything to its existing code? Explain your answer.

You may want to consult the online Code of Ethics at the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions: [www.iit.edu/departments/csep/PublicWWW/codes/](http://www.iit.edu/departments/csep/PublicWWW/codes/)



# FACT SHEETS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **INTEGRITY**

Standing up for what you believe is right.

## **LOYALTY**

Being committed to certain people or groups.

## **HONESTY**

Telling the truth.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Taking care of all aspects of your job.

## **EMPATHY**

Understanding another person's point of view.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Keeping other people's personal information private.

## **RESPECT**

Considering the feelings and viewpoints of others when you act.

and last, but not least...

## **“The Golden Rule”**

Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Each ethical situation is different, and each deserves careful consideration before deciding how to handle it. This decision-making framework is an example of how you might be able to think through an ethical dilemma.

## **1. Consider the situation.**

Ask yourself,

What are the facts?

Who has a stake in the outcome of my decision? How?

What are all of my options?

Who can I consult about this decision?

## **2. Evaluate your possible courses of action.**

Ask yourself,

Which option will do the most good?

Which option will do the least harm?

Which option promotes the common good for all people involved?

If you told someone you respect about your decision, what would he or she say?

How would you feel if your decision were published in the newspaper for all to see?

## **3. Reflect on your decision.**

Ask yourself,

How did the situation turn out?

If I could do it over, would I make the same decision?

What have I learned for the future?

## Great workers...

Are open to new ideas.

Have the initiative to put new ideas into action.

Show an interest in learning how to do the job the right way.

Are flexible and ready to do anything that the employer needs done.

Care about what customers, clients, and co-workers find important.

Pay attention when they are customers and notice how others provide good service.

Know how to work well with a team.

Know when to take a break.

Volunteer to help others if they see a need.

## Great workers do not...

Blame others for their mistakes.

Get discouraged when others disagree with their ideas.

Assume anything negative about anyone or any situation.

Gossip about their co-workers or supervisors.

Talk to their friends on the job.

Put off things that can be done now.

Complain helplessly; rather, they work to find solutions.

Support an idea simply because others agree with it.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

FACT SHEET 4

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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