

ETHICAL LENSES

The **six ethical lenses** are different ways of evaluating whether an action or decision is ethical. They are commonly used in ethical decision-making frameworks. [\[scu.edu\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

1. Rights Lens

Key question: *Does this action respect the rights of everyone involved?*

This lens focuses on protecting fundamental human rights such as dignity, freedom, privacy, and truthfulness. People should be treated as ends in themselves, not merely as means to an end. [\[studylib.net\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

2. Justice (or Fairness) Lens

Key question: *Is this fair to everyone?*

This lens emphasizes equality, fairness, and impartial treatment. Similar cases should be treated similarly unless there is a good reason not to. [\[quizlet.com\]](#), [\[typeshare.co\]](#)

3. Utilitarian Lens

Key question: *Will this produce the greatest good for the greatest number?*

This approach evaluates the consequences of actions and seeks to maximize benefits while minimizing harm. [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

4. Common Good Lens

Key question: *Does this benefit the community as a whole?*

This lens focuses on what serves society and promotes the welfare of everyone, not just specific individuals or groups. [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[quizlet.com\]](#)

5. Virtue Lens

Key question: *What would a person of good character do?*

This approach considers virtues such as honesty, courage, integrity, compassion, and responsibility. It asks whether the action reflects good character. [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

6. Care Ethics Lens

Key question: *Does this action show care and concern for others?*

This lens emphasizes relationships, empathy, compassion, and attending to the needs and feelings of those affected. [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[quizlet.com\]](#)

Easy way to remember them

Lens	Main Focus
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Rights	Respecting individual rights
Justice/Fairness	Treating people fairly
Utilitarian	Greatest good for the greatest number
Common Good	Benefit to the community
Virtue	Good character and values
Care Ethics	Relationships and compassion

The ethical lenses become most useful when you're facing a difficult decision and want to look at it from different perspectives before acting.

A Simple Process

When faced with a dilemma, ask six questions:

- 1. **Rights:** Whose rights are affected?
- 2. **Justice:** Is everyone being treated fairly?
- 3. **Utilitarian:** What will produce the most good and least harm?
- 4. **Common Good:** What benefits the group or community?
- 5. **Virtue:** What would a person of good character do?
- 6. **Care Ethics:** How can relationships and people's needs be respected? [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

Example 1: A Learner Is Caught Cheating

Rights Lens

The honest learners have a right to fair assessment, and the learner who cheated has a right to due process and to be heard. [\[studylib.net\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

Justice Lens

The learner should face the same consequences as others who committed the same offence. [\[quizlet.com\]](#), [\[typeshare.co\]](#)

Utilitarian Lens

Consider which response will best uphold academic integrity and discourage future cheating while minimizing unnecessary harm. [\[typeshare.co\]](#), [\[scu.edu\]](#)

Common Good Lens

Maintaining trust in the school's assessment system benefits the entire school community. [\[quizlet.com\]](#), [\[typeshare.co\]](#)

Virtue Lens

Act with honesty, integrity, and courage, even if the situation is uncomfortable. [[scu.edu](#)], [[typeshare.co](#)]

Care Ethics Lens

Try to understand why the learner cheated and provide support if underlying issues exist. [[quizlet.com](#)], [[typeshare.co](#)]

Example 2: A Teacher Shares Confidential Information

Rights Lens

The learner's right to privacy may have been violated. [[studylib.net](#)]

Justice Lens

The matter should be investigated fairly without bias. [[quizlet.com](#)]

Utilitarian Lens

Consider the consequences of the disclosure for the learner, family, staff, and school. [[typeshare.co](#)]

Common Good Lens

Protecting confidentiality helps maintain trust throughout the school community. [[quizlet.com](#)]

Virtue Lens

Professionalism, discretion, and integrity should guide actions. [[scu.edu](#)]

Care Ethics Lens

Show sensitivity toward the learner's feelings and wellbeing. [[typeshare.co](#)]

Example 3: Selecting Student Leaders

Rights Lens

Every eligible learner should have an opportunity to participate. [[studylib.net](#)]

Justice Lens

Selection criteria should be applied consistently and fairly. [[quizlet.com](#)]

Utilitarian Lens

Choose leaders who will have the most positive impact on the student body. [\[typeshare.co\]](https://typeshare.co)

Common Good Lens

Consider who will best serve the interests of the whole school community. [\[quizlet.com\]](https://quizlet.com)

Virtue Lens

Look for qualities such as responsibility, honesty, respect, and leadership. [\[scu.edu\]](https://scu.edu)

Care Ethics Lens

Consider whether candidates are compassionate and supportive of others. [\[typeshare.co\]](https://typeshare.co)

The six lenses are **not competing systems** so much as **different viewpoints on the same ethical problem**. In practice, they often overlap and point toward the same decision, although sometimes they may conflict. [\[typeshare.co\]](https://typeshare.co), [\[scu.edu\]](https://scu.edu)

Where the Lenses Overlap

1. Rights and Justice

Both focus on treating people appropriately and respectfully.

Example: A school disciplinary hearing.

- **Rights Lens:** The learner has a right to explain their side.
- **Justice Lens:** The learner should be treated fairly and consistently.

Both lenses support a fair process, but rights emphasize individual protections while justice emphasizes fairness across all learners. [\[studylib.net\]](https://studylib.net), [\[quizlet.com\]](https://quizlet.com)

2. Utilitarian and Common Good

Both consider the welfare of many people.

Example: Implementing a stricter cell phone policy.

- **Utilitarian Lens:** Does it improve learning for the greatest number?
- **Common Good Lens:** Does it help create a better school environment for everyone?

The overlap is concern for collective wellbeing, but the common good lens focuses more on strengthening the community itself. [\[typeshare.co\]](https://typeshare.co), [\[quizlet.com\]](https://quizlet.com)

3. Virtue and Care Ethics

Both focus on the character and relationships involved in a decision.

Example: Supporting a learner struggling emotionally.

- **Virtue Lens:** A compassionate teacher would offer support.
- **Care Ethics Lens:** The teacher should consider the learner's needs and wellbeing.

Both encourage empathy and kindness, but virtue asks, "*What kind of person should I be?*" while care ethics asks, "*How should I respond to those who depend on me?*" [typeshare.co], [scu.edu]

When All Six Lenses Align

Sometimes all six support the same action.

Example: Preventing bullying at school.

- **Rights:** Learners have a right to safety.
- **Justice:** Bullying is unfair.
- **Utilitarian:** Stopping bullying reduces harm.
- **Common Good:** It improves the school environment.
- **Virtue:** It reflects courage and integrity.
- **Care Ethics:** It protects vulnerable learners.

In this case, every lens points toward intervention. [typeshare.co], [scu.edu]

When the Lenses Conflict

The real challenge comes when they suggest different actions.

Example: Searching a learner's bag because of suspected drug possession.

- **Rights Lens:** The learner has a right to privacy.
- **Common Good Lens:** The school must protect all learners.
- **Utilitarian Lens:** Searching may prevent significant harm.
- **Care Ethics Lens:** The learner should be treated with dignity and support.

There is no automatic answer. Ethical decision-making requires balancing the values highlighted by each lens. [typeshare.co], [scu.edu]

A Helpful Analogy

Think of the six ethical lenses as **six cameras aimed at the same event:**

- **Rights** asks: *Are people's rights protected?*
- **Justice** asks: *Is it fair?*
- **Utilitarian** asks: *What are the consequences?*

- **Common Good** asks: *What benefits the community?*
- **Virtue** asks: *What reflects good character?*
- **Care Ethics** asks: *How are relationships and people affected?*

No single camera shows the whole picture. The wisest ethical decisions usually emerge when all six perspectives are considered together. [\[typeshare.co\]](http://typeshare.co), [\[scu.edu\]](http://scu.edu)

As a Grade Head, you may find that **Justice, Care Ethics, and Virtue** frequently overlap in learner discipline matters, while **Rights and Common Good** often need to be balanced when dealing with school policies and student welfare.