

# PHILOSOPHY

## for Children

### DISCUSSION CARD SET

60 Philosophical Question Cards  
Ethics, Identity, Knowledge & Justice  
Socratic Circle Guide, Unit Plans & Rubric

### UM Printables

# Socratic Circle Facilitation Guide

The Socratic Circle is a structured, student-led discussion method that promotes deep thinking, active listening, and collaborative meaning-making. Use these steps to facilitate meaningful philosophical discussions with your cards.

## Step 1: Preparation (5 mins)

Select one discussion card. Read the question aloud. Give students 2-3 minutes of silent thinking time to jot down their initial thoughts in their reflection journal.

## Step 2: The Inner Circle (10-15 mins)

Divide the class into two groups. The Inner Circle sits facing each other and discusses the question. The teacher acts only as a timekeeper and refrains from interjecting opinions.

## Step 3: The Outer Circle (10-15 mins)

The Outer Circle sits outside the inner group and observes. They do not speak. Their job is to evaluate the discussion using the Discussion Rubric—listening for logical reasoning, evidence, and respectful debate.

## Step 4: The Switch

After 10-15 minutes, the circles switch roles. The new Inner Circle continues the discussion, building on points made by the first group.

## Step 5: Debrief (5 mins)

Bring the whole class together. Ask the Outer Circle to share constructive feedback on the discussion dynamics. What was the strongest argument heard? What was missing?

# Philosophical Discussion Rubric

| Criteria                 | 4 - Master Thinker                                                                             | 3 - Proficient Thinker                                             | 2 - Developing Thinker                                                        | 1 - Novice Thinker                                                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Logical Reasoning</b> | Presents highly logical, clear arguments; connects ideas deeply to the philosophical question. | Presents logical arguments; mostly connects ideas to the question. | Presents simple arguments; occasionally strays from the core question.        | Illogical or irrelevant statements; struggles to connect to the question. |
| <b>Use of Evidence</b>   | Consistently uses specific examples or hypothetical scenarios to back up claims.               | Often uses examples to support claims, though some may be vague.   | Rarely uses examples; relies mostly on personal opinion without backing.      | Makes claims with no evidence or examples provided.                       |
| <b>Active Listening</b>  | Builds directly on others' ideas ("I agree because..." or "I challenge that because...").      | Acknowledges others' points before sharing own view.               | Listens, but often just waits for a turn to speak without referencing others. | Interrupts, dominates conversation, or ignores peers completely.          |
| <b>Civil Discourse</b>   | Respectfully challenges ideas; shows high intellectual humility.                               | Respectful of peers; disagrees politely.                           | Usually respectful, but may occasionally react defensively.                   | Disrespectful; attacks people, not ideas.                                 |

### ETHICS

*"If you find a wallet full of money and no ID, is it okay to keep it?"*

### ETHICS

*"Is it ever okay to break a rule if you think the rule is unfair?"*

### ETHICS

*"Should people be punished for things they do by accident?"*

### ETHICS

*"If everyone else is cheating on a test, is it okay for you to cheat too?"*

### ETHICS

*"Is it better to be honest and hurt someone's feelings, or to lie and protect them?"*

### ETHICS

*"Do animals have the same rights as humans? Why or why not?"*

### ETHICS

*"Should you tell a teacher if your best friend is bullying someone?"*

### ETHICS

*"Is it stealing if you take something that was going to be thrown away?"*

### ETHICS

*"If a robot can feel pain, is it wrong to turn it off?"*

### ETHICS

*"Should wealthy people be forced to give money to the poor?"*

### ETHICS

*"Is it fair that some people get to go to better schools than others?"*

### ETHICS

*"If you promise to do something but forget, are you still responsible for breaking the promise?"*

# Reflection Journal Prompts

Use these prompts to guide student thinking before, during, and after Socratic Circles. Students can write their answers in a dedicated philosophy journal.

## Before the Discussion:

- What is my initial gut reaction to this question?
- What experiences have I had that make me think this way?
- What might someone who disagrees with me say?
- What is one word that describes how this question makes me feel?

## After the Discussion:

- Did my mind change during the discussion? Why or why not?
- What was the strongest argument I heard from a classmate?
- What is a question I still have that wasn't answered?
- How did it feel when someone disagreed with me?
- Did we reach a class consensus, or are there still multiple valid viewpoints?
- How does this philosophical question connect to something happening in the real world?

# Unit 1: The Right Thing to Do

Focus: Ethics

**Essential Question:** How do we decide what is right and wrong?

**Suggested Cards:** Ethics Cards 1–12

## Suggested Pacing:

**Day 1:** Introduction to Ethics. Display Card 1 (The Wallet). Have students write initial thoughts in their reflection journals. Discuss as a class.

**Day 2:** Socratic Circle. Inner circle discusses Card 2 (Breaking Unfair Rules) and Card 4 (Cheating). Outer circle evaluates using the rubric.

**Day 3:** Deep Dive. Explore Card 5 (Honesty vs. Feelings) and Card 6 (Animal Rights). Partners brainstorm arguments for both sides.

**Day 4:** Application. Groups design a 'Code of Ethics' for the classroom using themes from Cards 7–9. Present to the class.

## Assessment / Journal Focus:

Journal Prompt: Describe a time you faced an ethical dilemma. Did you make the right choice? Why or why not?