

Ethics in computing

40 minutes

Strand 1: Introducing computer science

Outcome 1.4

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

In this lesson you explore ethical questions in computing by considering privacy, fairness and access. You take a stand on real cases about apps, listen to opposing views, build a permission card with working ON and OFF states, and decide if your position changes.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
1.4	discuss the ethical and legal issues that could be encountered when using computers, applications, or digital devices, or when engaging online

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Identify an ethical question raised by a computing technology: privacy, fairness, access (LO 1.4)
- Discuss more than one point of view (LO 1.4)

BEFORE THE BELL

- Decide whether to run the opinion line as the on-screen interactive, as a walking line on the floor, or both.
- The three statements are already in the interactive. Project it, or copy them to the board only if you are running without the interactive.
- Have a clear space on the board for the model Location permission card and the phone-frame ON/OFF toggle, which you draw while you talk through Case A. Students answer the card build and then only Case B or Case C for their half-room, on screen or on paper.
- Decide walking line, on-screen opinion-line interactive, or both. If walking: mark Not OK / It depends / Perfectly fine with tape or chairs. Statements are already in the interactive.
- Pre-draw the model Location permission card and a phone-frame ON/OFF toggle on the board before the step. Paper or on-screen prompts for the 4-minute card build, then Case B or Case C only for each half-room.

Ethics in computing

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

4 min	introduction	Start
3 min	content	Three kinds of ethical question
2 min	content	Think about an app you already use
15 min	activity	Hands-on: Take a stand on the line
3 min	content	Case A, together
3 min	content	Build one permission card
4 min	content	Your case only: B or C
3 min	content	Make sense
2 min	content	Reflect
1 min	summary	What you covered

TEACHING MOVES

- Model giving a strong argument from the opposing side in the line activity.
- On Case A, model the full answer pattern orally once and leave the filled model card on the board, so the build is "name yours like this" rather than inventing from scratch.
- Close the card build at four minutes and run two live flips on the board toggle, so the class sees ON change to OFF.
- Circulate during B and C to prompt both viewpoints; two bullet phrases are enough.
- If time slips, take one voice per half-room, and keep the live flip and the two bullets.
- Use whole-class discussion to highlight position changes from the line.
- Keep the final reflection brief so the class finishes on a clear thought.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students stating only their own view: prompt them to summarise the opposing argument.
- Confusing privacy with access: clarify definitions using a quick example.
- Failing to specify what would change their mind: encourage thinking of a specific condition.
- Permission card stays vague ("be nicer"): push for concrete ON and OFF lines a user would actually read, using the model card as the shape.
- Students write essays on B and C: stop them at two bullets plus a circled label.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: pair students for discussing cases before responding.
- Support: offer these sentence starters: "The ethical question here is whether..." / "This fits privacy/fairness/access because..." / "Someone might say it is fine because..." / "Someone might say it is not OK because..." / "I would change my mind if..."
- Support: allow B and C answers as short oral phrases rather than written bullets if writing is a barrier; still ask for both viewpoints.
- Support: students who find the design hard may change only one line of the model card rather than rewrite all three.
- Extension: invite students to invent their own ethical case, or to add a third state to a classmate's permission card (for example "ask every time").