



PHILOSOPHY

We are asking all students to complete some Independent Preparatory Work over the summer, before they join Year 12 in September. You will need to bring this work to lessons as the content will be assessed through introductory assessments which will be completed within the few first weeks of the new term.

Tasks

TASK INSTRUCTIONS: Read through, research, think about, then answer the following questions about Epistemology and Moral Philosophy. They will give you a taster of the skills and topics that you will be learning about in your AS course. As you think more about these topics, and build strong, supported, opinions, you will find the work more interesting and accessible.

1.

- a. Find out and write down what the word 'philosophy' means.
- b. Find out and write down what the word 'epistemology' means. Watch this video to help: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_Y3utleTPg
- c. One philosophical question in epistemology is 'what can we know for sure?' What do you think we can know for sure? Either:
 - i. Explain with a developed reason why there is nothing we can know for sure; OR
 - ii. Write down some things we can know for sure and explain with a developed reason why we do know these things for sure.

2. Rene Descartes

- a. Find out 5 facts about the philosopher Descartes. Write them down.
- b. Watch a YouTube video about Descartes' demon. Describe what you think one of the points of this story is. Do you agree with any of Descartes' views? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLKrmw906TM>

3. Could people be brains in jars having sensory information fed directly by wires into their brains to make it appear as if they are a body in this world? Why or why not? Give two reasons for each point of view, then say which side you agree more with and why. This might help get you thinking:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqjdRAERWLC>

4. George Berkeley

- a. Find out 5 facts about the philosopher George Berkeley. Write them down.
- b. Watch a YouTube video about Berkeley's idealism. Describe what you think one of the points of this theory is. Do you agree with any of Berkeley's views?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C-s4JrymKM&t=189s>

Moral Philosophy



Sixth Form Summer Work 2026



1. Research the following theories, explain what they are:
 - a. Utilitarianism (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a739VjqdSI> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvmz5E75ZIA> might help)
 - b. Kantian Ethics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8blys6JoEDw> might help)
 - c. Aristotle's Virtue Ethics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrvtOWEXDIQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFPBf1AZOQg> might help)
2. Explain a fully developed reason for your answer to each of the following questions.
 - a. Give a reason in favour of Utilitarianism – why is it a good approach to make moral decisions?
 - b. Give a reason against Utilitarianism – why is it not a good approach to make moral decisions?
 - c. Give a reason in favour of Kantian Ethics – why is it a good approach to make moral decisions?
 - d. Give a reason against Kantian Ethics – why is it not a good approach to make moral decisions?
 - e. Give a reason in favour of Aristotle's Virtue Ethics – why is it a good approach to make moral decisions?
 - f. Give a reason against Aristotle's Virtue Ethics – why is it not a good approach to make moral decisions?
3. Are there moral facts? Is right and wrong the same for everyone, everywhere? Give reasons for your answer.
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOoffXFpAlU> might help)
4. If there are no moral facts, is nothing right or wrong? Explain your answer.

Extra reading

Blackburn, S. Think, OUP 2001

Law, S. The Philosophy Files, Orion 2002; The Outer Limits, Orion 2003; The Philosophy Gym, Hodder Headline 2003: three collections of very accessible short pieces on a wide range of philosophical puzzles

Nagel, T. What Does It All Mean?, OUP 1987 (reprinted 2004)

Warburton, N. Philosophy: the Basics (5th ed.), Routledge 2012