

The Ethical Butterfly: Opt-in vs. Opt-out

(Year 9 - Ages 14-15)

Lesson 6 of 9

Lesson Summary

In Lesson 5, we learned that communication is the catalyst. In Lesson 6, we explore the System that surrounds that catalyst. This 60-minute lesson dives into one of the world's biggest bioethical debates: "Opt-in" (Active Consent) vs. "Opt-out" (Presumed Consent/Deemed Consent).

Students will participate in a "Silence Experiment"—a classroom simulation where silence is interpreted as agreement—to feel the ethical weight of "Presumed Consent." They will then analyze why Australia uses an Opt-in system (which prioritizes certainty and family trust) and debate whether changing the law would actually fix the "broken link" of family refusal. The lesson culminates in a "Town Hall" debate where students must justify a policy position using ethical reasoning.

Learning Intentions

Students will

- Differentiate between "Hard Opt-in", "Soft Opt-in" (Australia), and "Opt-out" (Deemed Consent) systems.
- Analyze the ethical implications of "Silence as Consent" versus "Active Choice."
- Investigate whether changing the legal system (e.g., to Opt-out) effectively increases donation rates if family trust is not maintained.
- Construct a reasoned argument for or against a specific consent model based on ethical evidence.

Success Criteria

Students can

- Define "Opt-in" and "Opt-out" using the "Subscription" analogy (e.g., subscribing to a newsletter vs. being auto-subscribed).
- Explain why Australia's system is described as "Soft" (because the family is still consulted).
- Identify one benefit and one risk of an "Opt-out" system.
- Participate in a "Town Hall" debate, using at least one statistic or ethical principle to support their view.

Lesson Details

Time:	60 minutes
Year Level:	Year 9 (Ages 14-15)
Unit:	This is Lesson 6 of 9 in the series.
Educational Partner:	This lesson is adapted from resources provided by DonateLife

General Capabilities

Ethical Understanding; Critical and Creative Thinking; Intercultural Understanding; Civics and Citizenship.

Curriculum Mapping and Links

Australian Curriculum (v9.0)

Subject	Strand	Content Descriptor
Civics and Citizenship	Knowledge and Understanding	<u>AC9HS9K04</u> : The role of political parties and... how citizens participate in Australia's democracy. (Focus on how laws influence social behaviour and policy debate)
Health and Physical Education	Personal, Social and Community Health	<u>AC9HP10P05</u> : Critique behaviours and community actions that impact health and wellbeing. (Analyzing health policy effectiveness)
English	Literacy / Interacting	<u>AC9E9LY02</u> : Plan, create and edit... texts... to present a point of view. (Debating skills)

Queensland Curriculum (QCAA)

Subject	Syllabus	Content Description
Civics and Citizenship	Year 9	How citizens can participate in Australia's democracy and the values that underpin it.
Health and Physical Education	Year 9	Analyze ethical dilemmas in health.
English	Year 9	Creating texts that express a personal view or argument.



Resources Required

- Whiteboard/Smartboard.
- Resource: "The Systems Map" (A visual comparison of global consent systems).
- Student Worksheet: "The Ethics Lab: Decoding Consent."
- Video Hook: A clip explaining "Nudge Theory" or the "Default Effect" (Behavioral Economics).
- Prop: A "Contract" for the class (used in the hook activity).

Skills

- Ethical Reasoning (Weighing fairness vs. utility).
- Debating (Structuring an argument).
- Systems Analysis (Understanding policy).
- Critical Thinking (Challenging assumptions).

Teacher Preparation

- The Metaphor: "The Default." Humans are lazy. We stick with the default option.
 - Opt-in: Default is "No." You must exert energy to say "Yes."
 - Opt-out: Default is "Yes." You must exert energy to say "No."
- Key Concept: Be prepared to explain that even in Opt-out countries (like Spain), doctors still ask the family. The law changes the paperwork, but it doesn't remove the conversation. This is a common misconception.
- The Simulation: Prepare a "Class Contract" (e.g., "Everyone must stay in at lunch to clean") that effectively "opts them in" unless they sign a form by the end of class. Reveal this at the start to spark the debate.

Additional Information

This lesson treats Year 9s as young adults capable of understanding complex policy. It moves beyond "Donation is nice" to "How should society organize itself?" It connects perfectly with the Civics curriculum regarding how laws reflect community values.

