

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

(Year 9 - Ages 14-15)

## Lesson 6 of 9

### Teacher Preparation

#### Introduction for Teachers

The debate around consent systems is often simplified in the media to: "Opt-out saves more lives." The reality is more complex. Countries with the highest donation rates (like Spain) have Opt-out laws, but they also have massive investment in ICU staff and family support. The law alone isn't the magic bullet; the system and trust are.

The Goal: To help students look beyond the headline and understand the nuance. We want them to see that regardless of the system, the "Butterfly Flap" (The Choice) is most powerful when it is intentional.

### Safety and Sensitivity Considerations

- Respecting the Law: Ensure students understand that currently, Australia is Opt-in. We don't want them going home confused about their current legal status.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Some cultures deeply value the integrity of the body after death and might find an "Opt-out" system (where the state "owns" the decision by default) distressing. Validate that bodily autonomy is a core human right.
- No "Right" Answer: This is an ethical debate. Students are allowed to disagree with Australia's current system. The assessment is on the quality of their argument, not their opinion.

### Teacher Resources

- Video: Search for "Dan Ariely Are we in control of our own decisions?" (TED Talk excerpt on organ donation defaults).
- Visual Aid: A world map highlighting Opt-in (Blue) vs Opt-out (Green) countries.

### The Alchemist's Data: The Global Lab (Year 9)

#### The Spain vs. USA Comparison

- Spain (Opt-out): Highest donation rate in the world.
- USA (Opt-in): High donation rate (top 5).
- Analysis: Both systems can work well. The common factor isn't the law; it's the number of Donation Specialists in hospitals talking to families.

The "Brazil Experiment" Brazil tried switching to "Hard Opt-out" (taking organs unless a person had an ID card saying 'No'). It caused panic. Families felt they were losing control of their loved ones. The government had to repeal the law.

- Lesson: Trust is more important than legislation.



# Key Concepts & Language for Teachers

## 1. The Three Systems

- Hard Opt-in: You must carry a card. If you don't have it, doctors cannot take organs, even if family says yes. (Rare).
- Soft Opt-in (Australia/USA): You register "Yes." Doctors check the register, but always consult the family to confirm.
- Opt-out (Deemed Consent): You are assumed to be a donor. You must register "No" to stop it. In practice (Soft Opt-out), doctors still ask the family.

## 2. The "Default Effect" (Nudge Theory)

- Humans rarely change the default settings (think of your phone ringtone or browser homepage).
- In Opt-in countries, the "Lazy" default is Non-Donor.
- In Opt-out countries, the "Lazy" default is Donor.
- The Question: Is a donation "heroic" if you did it by accident/laziness? Or is it better to have fewer, but 100% committed, donors?

## 3. The Family Veto

- Why do doctors ask the family even in Opt-out countries?
- Because public trust is fragile. If a doctor removes organs against a distressed family's wishes, the media backlash could destroy trust in the whole system for decades.
- Conclusion: No matter the law, the Family Conversation (Lesson 5) remains the ultimate safety net.

