

Do I have a right to the internet?

Philosophy Smash with Henry!

Lesson plan

Henry Taylor

philosophysmash@gmail.com

<https://henrytaylorphilosophy.com/philosophy-smash-with-henry/>

Introduction for teachers.

This is a discussion of a topic in the philosophy of technology, and ethics. It focusses on whether we have a right to internet access, or whether internet access is more of a luxury. It's also an opportunity for thinking about human rights generally, and what sorts of things we have a right to.

It can be used for lessons in RE, Philosophy and Computer Science lessons, or lunchtime philosophy clubs. The lesson is intended to promote discussion about the role of the internet in human life, as well as the dangers of the internet. It's primarily aimed at ages 9-13 (KS 2-3), but is also suitable for older age groups.

The lesson is designed to be done with the help of the *Philosophy Smash with Henry!* video on the same topic. It's also meant to be used with the handout (the video and handout are available at the website above).

This lesson plan will take approximately 2 hours to complete, though this may vary depending on the age and ability of your group.

Learning Outcomes.

Emerging:

Appreciate and explain the ways in which internet access is thought to be a right, and also some of the dangers presented by the internet.

Expected:

Engage in a sophisticated philosophical discussion.

Be respectful of other views, and recognise alternative ways of looking at philosophical questions, whilst at the same time supporting one's own view with evidence and/or argument.

Explain some of the complexities around the question of whether internet access is a right, including appreciating the ways in which technology is morally important in our digital society.



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Exceeding:

Using the information provided, take a clear view on whether the internet is a right, and back up this opinion with a reasoned argument and/or concrete examples from everyday life.

Ground Rules.

Start by setting some ground rules for discussion. These can be varied based on the style and ability of the group, but they might include:

- 1) Remember to always be respectful of other people's opinions. Everyone's opinion is equally valuable.
- 2) You can give your own beliefs and opinions if you like, but you don't have to. If you don't have an opinion on the question, then just think about what a sensible opinion might be, and think about why someone might hold that.
- 3) Try not to just give 'yes' or 'no' answers, remember always to back up your opinions with reasons and arguments.
- 4) It's fine to disagree with other people!
- 5) It's fine to change your mind! Changing your mind when someone else makes a good point is a sign of maturity and a good philosophical brain.

Sentence stems:

Depending on the ability and age of your group, you may like to use the following sentence stems to encourage children to think:

Questions:

'Why do people think...? '

'Does anyone disagree that....?'

'Do people from other cultures think that....?'

Statement of views:

'I think that... because...'

'One view I think is wrong is ... because ...'

'Someone else might think ...because ...'

'Someone in my group thinks ..., but I think that ...'

'It's difficult to know the answer to this question because....'

'I think there's another sensible view, which is...'



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



‘In order to answer this question, we would need to know....’

Changing your mind:

‘On reflection, I’ve now realised that...’

‘At the beginning, I believed...., but now I’m not sure. I now think that...’

‘I’m not sure about... because....’

Teaching Activities.

There are two teaching activities associated with this lesson: a general discussion and a ‘do I have a right to the internet?’ debate. They are intended to be used with the *Philosophy Smash with Henry!* video ‘Do I have a right to the internet?’ as well as the handout for the topic. These are available at the website on p.1 of this lesson plan.

The video that goes with this lesson plan is an interview between a presenter (Henry) and an expert in ethics. The expert is Merten Reglitz, a philosopher at the University of Birmingham.

Teaching activity 1: general discussion about rights.

Start off by watching the first few minutes of the video, until Henry says ‘take a second and decide what you think’. There will then follow a cartoon, and some text saying ‘what do you think?’. Pause the video there.

Do a round of Q and A to get a sense of whether the class understands the basic issue. The question they need to understand is that we have a right to ideas, like the right to freedom of speech for example. But we also might have a right to *things* like clean water. The question is whether internet access is one of the things we have a right to.

Ask the class to give some examples of other things they think we should have a right to, and why they think we should have a right to them.

It may be helpful to start them off by giving them a few suggestions, such as:

- 1) We have a right to freedom of speech.
- 2) If we have been accused of a crime, we have a right to a fair trial where we can defend ourselves.
- 3) We have a right to pick our own religion, or to have no religion.



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



When they have given some examples of things that we have a right to, ask them whether we have the following:

- 1) A right to go to school.
- 2) A right to television.
- 3) A right to clean clothes.

For each of the above, ask them whether we have a right to these things, and ask them to explain their answer.

Once the class understands the idea of rights, ask them whether they think we have a right to internet access. You may find it helpful to write their opinions on the whiteboard, to refer back to later.

Teaching activity 2: debate about internet access.

Watch the rest of the video, including the 45 second segment by Merten, the discussion between Merten and the presenter, and the 'final thought' section.

Then, distribute the handout. The handout summarises the main points of the discussion, in case children have forgotten, or if they naturally learn better with written and video materials. Give them some time to read through the handout.

Divide the children into groups of about 6 people. For each group, assign them either 'For' or 'Against'. The 'For' group should argue in favour of internet as a human right. The 'Against' group should argue against it. Give each group 15-20 minutes to prepare their arguments.

Then, each group will present their arguments to the class, and the rest of the class will have the opportunity to ask them questions, to which they will respond.

Additional resources

These resources are by Merten Reglitz, the guest for this topic. Depending on the age and ability of your class, these resources may not be suitable for them to read. However, they will be very useful for teachers in thinking about the wider issues around care work, to help frame discussion.

<https://theconversation.com/free-broadband-internet-access-is-now-a-human-right-no-matter-who-pays-the-bills-127267>

<https://sponsored.chronicle.com/internet-access-as-a-human-right/index.html>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/university-of-birmingham-b2650919.html>

Philosophy Smash with Henry! is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/X003388/1) in partnership with SAPERE P4C.



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

