

Kohlberg's level and Stages of Moral development

Level / definition	Stage	Definition	Examples
<p>Preconventional Level</p> <p>→ We make decisions based on how they will affect us personally.</p> <p>→ <i>No internalization of values and rules.</i></p>	Stage 1 – Punishment and obedience	We obey authority figures in order to avoid punishment.	It would be bad for me to take my friend's toy because the teacher will punish me.
	Stage 2 – Mutual Benefit (Individualism and Exchange)	We trade or cooperate with others in order to get what we want or need. “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.”	If Katy is nice to me, I'll be nice to her, but if she is mean to me, I won't feel bad about being mean too.
<p>Conventional Level</p> <p>→ We strive to meet the expectations of our peers, families, and/or nation.</p> <p>→ <i>Conformity to social roles, rules, and expectations that the person has learned and internalized guide moral reasoning.</i></p>	Stage 3 – Interpersonal Expectations (Good boy/Good girl)	We are “good” by doing what is approved by others. Approval can come from individuals or the expectations of peers, groups, or society. Meaning well counts, even if the outcome isn't what we intended.	I better not drink and drive because my friends will think less of me and I, in turn, will think less of myself.
	Stage 4 – Law and order	We are “good” by following the law and obeying authority. We do our duty and avoid challenging the social order.	I am personally against the war, but would never publicly protest it on campus without the administration's permission.
<p>Post Conventional Level</p> <p>→ We strive to live up to “higher” laws of morality and ethics even when they conflict with the law, authority, and social order.</p> <p>→ Moral reasoning is guided by internalized legal and moral principles that protect the rights of all members of society</p>	Stage 5 – Legal principles	We look beyond laws and decisions by authority members to the rights and principles that our society is based on. (i.e., “All men are created equal” is a principle we might try to live by even if it is contradicted by a particular set of laws or customs).	It can't be right that huge corporations sometimes pay no taxes; that law needs to be changed, so that the burden of taxes falls more equally on everyone's shoulders.
	Stage 6 – Universal moral principles	We strive to live according to our own consciences and universal principles of justice and human dignity. <i>*Kohlberg believed most people do not reach this level.</i>	I refuse to obey a law which treats a large portion of the population as second-class citizens.