

Lesson 3**Rights and responsibilities****How can rights exist without responsibilities?**

Learning objectives	The students understand how they can contribute to protecting human rights. The students understand that human rights are connected to responsibilities – responsibilities of the state and of institutions, as well as their own moral responsibilities.
Student tasks	The students identify responsibilities to protect human rights, including their personal contributions.
Resources	Blank sheet of paper and a pen. Student handout 5.4 for each pair of students. Student handout 5.2 for each pair of students.
Methods	Work in pairs or groups. Critical thinking.

Information box

A human right will never be respected if no individual or authority takes responsibility for its realisation. Although governments are the main duty-bearers in this case, there is a strong need for other bodies and for individuals to promote and protect human rights. Every individual has the moral responsibility to contribute to a culture in which human rights values inspire our behaviour in daily life.

A possible extension activity would be to introduce the subject of positive and negative rights and project work.

The lesson

The students form pairs. It is important that there is an equal number of pairs in the classroom.

Each pair is given a blank sheet of paper and a pen and is asked to write down three important rights that they think they should have at school and three important rights that they think they should have at home. Examples might be the right not to be overloaded with homework or the right to get some pocket money.

Once this has been completed, the teacher distributes a copy of student handout 5.4, Rights and responsibilities, and student handout 5.2, List of human rights to each pair. The students are then asked to examine the list of human rights and to discuss which rights best correspond to the six rights they have written on their sheet of paper.

Once they have decided, they write the six rights in the first column of student handout 5.4. At this point, the teacher can ask the students if they need any clarification on the rights they have listed.

Once the first column is complete, the teacher explains to the students that every right carries corresponding responsibilities, giving the following example: “The freedom of speech is limited by the responsibility not to say untrue things that will degrade another person and abuse his/her right to dignity and good reputation.” The teacher can also explain that the balance of a person’s rights and his/her responsibilities to respect the rights of other people means that we have to exercise our rights within certain restraints. There are many situations in which the rights and responsibilities of different people conflict. For example, in the classroom, the right of education can conflict with the right to leisure, when some students want to learn while others prefer just to have fun. Moreover, school has the responsibility to teach and to educate the students and to ensure that teachers have the right of decent working conditions (such as not too much noise in their working environment).

The teacher now asks each pair of students to swap their list with another pair. The new pair now has to discuss examples of two levels of responsibility that correspond with each right listed by the other pair (see example below):

- **First level:** the responsibilities that individuals have to ensure so that others can enjoy the right (this should be written in the second column).
- **Second level:** the responsibilities (where these exist) for authorities (such as school or local authorities) to ensure this right. This should be written in the third column. For example, the responsibility of each individual to respect the privacy of the diary of other students; the responsibility of the school not to search an individual’s belongings when this is unnecessary (for example, not reading the diary while searching the classroom for a stolen calculator).

Human right (in school, at home)	(Moral) responsibility of the individual	Responsibility of the school, the authority, etc.
The right to privacy	Not to look in someone else's diary	Not reading a student's diary when searching individual belongings in a case of theft

The teacher can then ask each pair to report to the rest of the class on one right and the corresponding responsibilities from their lists.

As the emphasis of this lesson is on responsibilities, the teacher can choose to draw two columns on the blackboard, one for individual responsibilities, the other for responsibilities of authorities, and as the students give examples, these can be written on the blackboard. The teacher can end the class with a review of the responsibilities and ask the students to comment on the lists.

Extension activity

If time allows, or if the teacher wishes to extend the lesson to include the idea of positive and negative rights and project work, he or she could carry out the following activities.

The teacher can begin by explaining that sometimes human rights are divided into “negative rights” and “positive rights”.

“Negative rights” are rights that ban or forbid something unpleasant (such as the ban on torture). “Positive rights” are rights that explicitly ask one to do something or to have something done (such as the right to food: everyone is entitled to have adequate food). Whereas “negative rights” expect people not to carry out specific actions, “positive rights” expect individuals and authorities to carry out certain activities in order to provide those rights.

The teacher also explains that most of the human rights have both negative and positive sides. For example, the right not to be tortured means that authorities must not mistreat people who have been detained, but also that the authorities need to give clear instructions about this to their police forces.

The students are invited to return to their lists of human rights and to choose three of them. They should then look for examples of positive or negative action in their lives to illustrate their own moral responsibility. They should then look for other examples, this time to show the responsibility of the school or the local/national authorities. For this purpose, they could add a plus or minus sign to the responsibilities chosen: see example below.

Human right (in school, at home)	(Moral) responsibility of the individual	Responsibility of the school, the authority, etc.
Right to privacy (= example)	(+)	(+) To take care that the students' school file cannot be looked into by visitors
	(-) Not to look into someone's diary without being invited to do so	(-) (school) Not to search someone's belongings if not strictly necessary (-) (state) To provide legislation protecting the privacy of individuals

If teachers wish to use this activity as an introduction to project work, they could ask students to choose some of the human rights that will be treated more in depth over the next few weeks or months. Students then set up a plan in which they agree on the overall objective and the different steps to be taken. They also decide by when which task has to be completed and by whom.

Plan

Overall objective:		
What has to be done?	Who will do it?	When should this be ready?

During the course of the next few lessons, this plan has to be followed up and finally evaluated.