

# Fairness

## Syllables

fair•ness

## Pronunciation

fair-nis

## Definition

Doing something in an honest and evenhanded way.

*(The class chose Eli to be the judge because he was known for his fairness.)*

**Simply put:** Not taking sides before you have all of the facts.

## Related Terms

Impartial: Not favoring one side (example: person or team) over another.

Unbiased: Unprejudiced.

## Fundamental Question:

**Do you consider all the facts, even when an opinion differs from yours?**

**Students will investigate the idea that** fairness involves being impartial, reasonable, and able to predict consequences of actions and decisions; that *fair* and *equal* are not necessarily synonymous; and that sometimes it's necessary to go beyond weighing and measuring to determine what is best for all.

## Objectives

Each student will:

1. Explore whether fairness means treating everybody exactly alike as opposed to treating people differently because of individual circumstances;
2. Determine who is harmed in an unfair situation; and
3. Offer solutions to remedy a situation that seems unfair.

## Before you begin

- Print out a copy of *It's Not Fair!* for each student.

## Suggested Sidebars:

### Speaking of Fairness (Discussion Idea)

Does *fairness* mean *identical treatment*? Look at these examples of people being treated *differently*. Are both examples fair? Is anyone being harmed? What could be done?

1. Sharon has diabetes and is careful about what she eats. She can not have a lot of sweets. When Oliver brought cupcakes to school, he brought an apple for Sharon.
2. Emilee is 10 years old. She is allowed to stay up until 9:30 p.m. Her sister Maya is 6 years old. Her bedtime is 8:00 sharp.

## Taking It to the Next Level

As a class, select one or more seemingly unfair situations (example: kids have to wear uniforms to our school, but some families can't afford to buy the uniforms), suggest solutions (example: organize a gently used uniform drive and distribution), and carry out your plan.

# Fairness

## Procedure

- 1. Say:** “Suppose we were playing a game, and right in the middle, I decided to change the rules. Would that be fair?” (Discuss.) “How about if the winning team members were each promised a prize, but when they won there were only 7 prizes for the team of 10? Would that be fair?” (Discuss. Have the children share examples of other situations that seem unfair.)
2. Try to reach a consensus (or agreement) of definitions for *fair* and *unfair*.
- 3. Say:** “Let’s go back to the example about changing the rules in the middle of the game. What could be done to make that situation fair? How about the one with the prizes?” (Discuss.)
4. Ask each student to write down an example of a real (actual) unfair situation. It may be one in which (s) he is or was involved, read about in the newspaper, etc. Break the class into small groups of three to five students each. Have the children take turns reading their examples aloud, discussing them with the group, and reaching conclusions about what could be done to make the situation fair.
- 5. Say:** “Fairness involves being reasonable or rational. What if everyone in the class whose birthday happened to fall during the winter months got extra time at recess, everyone whose birthday fell during spring or summer got no recess at all, and everyone whose birthday fell during autumn not only didn’t get recess, but had to stay after school, too? Would that be reasonable or rational? Would it be fair?” (Discuss.)
6. Distribute the *It’s Not Fair!* activity sheets and review the instructions with the class. When the sheets are completed, collect them and read aloud the verdicts and sentences. (It’s up to you and your class as to whether the judges remain anonymous during the readings.)
- 7. Follow Up:** Arrange to visit a courtroom during a trial. Invite a judge to talk to your class. Find out how (s) he makes a fair decision in the courtroom.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Reminder:** Fairness means doing something in an honest and evenhanded way.

## It's Not Fair!

Here's an example of people being treated differently. Is the situation fair? You're the judge!

**Case #: 76534240-453673**                      **Kids of All Heights v. (versus)** \_\_\_\_\_

**WHETHER IT'S THE CLASS PHOTO OR THE SCHOOL MUSICAL, IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME.  
THE TALL KIDS STAND IN THE BACK AND THE SHORT KIDS ARE RIGHT UP FRONT.**

Judge (your name): \_\_\_\_\_

Notes (example: your comments, questions for the lawyers, thoughts about the case, research):

---

---

---

Verdict:

\_\_\_ The situation is fair. It allows everyone to be seen by the photographer or audience. Height is "the luck of the draw."

\_\_\_ The situation is unfair. Why should kids – tall or short – be penalized for physical attributes over which they have no control?

Judge's Sentence or Statement:

---

---

---

Today's Thought: *Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.* — **H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author**