

# Introduction to Professional Ethics

## Introduction to Professional Ethics

Key concepts, purpose, and practical application for any profession

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## 1. What Is Professional Ethics?

| Aspect     | Description                                                                                                      |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Definition | A set of principles, values, and standards that guide behavior and decision-making within a specific profession. |
| Scope      | Covers relationships with clients, colleagues, employers, the public, and the profession itself.                 |
| Goal       | Protect public interest, maintain trust, and uphold the integrity of the profession.                             |

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## 2. Why Professional Ethics Matter

- Public Protection** – Ensures services are delivered safely, competently, and fairly.
  - Trust Building** – Consistent ethical conduct creates confidence among clients and society.
  - Professional Identity** – Distinguishes a qualified practitioner from an unqualified one.
  - Legal Safeguard** – Many ethical standards are reinforced by statutes, licensing boards, or professional codes.
  - Workplace Harmony** – Clear expectations reduce conflicts and promote collaborative environments.
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## 3. Core Ethical Principles (Common Across Professions)

| Principle       | Typical Expression                                                   |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Beneficence     | Act in the best interest of those served.                            |
| Non-maleficence | Do no harm; avoid actions that could cause injury or damage.         |
| Autonomy        | Respect individuals' right to make informed choices.                 |
| Justice         | Treat all parties fairly; distribute benefits and burdens equitably. |
| Confidentiality | Protect private information unless legally required to disclose.     |
| Integrity       | Be honest, transparent, and consistent in all professional actions.  |

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## Principle

## Typical Expression

**Accountability**     Accept responsibility for decisions and their outcomes.

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## 4. Elements of a Professional Code of Ethics

1. **Preamble** – Vision and purpose of the profession.
  2. **Core Values** – Fundamental beliefs (e.g., honesty, respect).
  3. **Specific Standards** – Concrete rules for conduct (e.g., “do not accept gifts that could influence judgment”).
  4. **Procedures for Violations** – Reporting mechanisms, disciplinary processes, and appeals.
  5. **Interpretive Guidance** – FAQs, case studies, or commentaries to aid application.
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## 5. Typical Ethical Dilemmas & How to Approach Them

| Situation                                                                             | Decision? Making Steps                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Conflict of Interest</b> (e.g., personal financial stake in a client's project)    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify the conflict.</li><li>2. Disclose it to relevant parties.</li><li>3. Recuse or seek supervision if needed.</li></ol>                                                    |
| <b>Confidentiality Breach</b> (e.g., subpoena for client records)                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Verify legal requirement.</li><li>2. Inform the client (if permissible).</li><li>3. Release only the minimum information required.</li></ol>                                     |
| <b>Competence Issues</b> (e.g., being asked to perform a task outside your expertise) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Assess your skill gap.</li><li>2. Decline or refer to a qualified colleague.</li><li>3. Pursue additional training if the task is essential to your role.</li></ol>              |
| <b>Pressure to Cut Corners</b> (e.g., cost-saving measures that compromise safety)    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Refer to the professional code and legal standards.</li><li>2. Document concerns.</li><li>3. Escalate through proper channels; consider whistle-blowing if unresolved.</li></ol> |

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## 6. Implementing Ethical Practice in Daily Work

1. **Continuous Education** – Attend workshops, read updates to the code, and