

## DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT YOUR ETHICS – COURSE CHEAT SHEET

Note a stand alone, best used after taking the course, **Don't Leave Home Without Your Ethics**, which contains the full explanations. The course was created and taught by Stephen Priddle, [www.practicalpd.com](http://www.practicalpd.com)

### General

Seek to maintain your ethics, even after years in the business world  
Carefully investigate if you are ever get tipped off about ethics concerns  
It is good to know why your predecessor left  
Don't exaggerate career or accomplishments on LinkedIn  
It is not unethical or realistic to try for 100% safety, everything has risks  
Don't deliberately expose workers to high safety risks, and consider statistics  
Do you generally try to be ethical, or don't even try at all??  
It is probably unethical to not push back against a shortage of work when employed  
If this happens, complain, review manuals, review colleagues work, offer to help others  
Be careful you aren't in trouble with the association rule (205 Canada except Quebec 26) when there is fraud going on and you are not directly involved and think you are OK  
Unethical accountants often do it again and again  
Some accountants think they are ethical, because they have never stolen, but ethics goes beyond that  
Businesses need a conscience at every level including the boardroom  
Full ethical disclosure in government funding applications can mean they will view claims more favourably  
Ethics is good for all, functioning in society, without the need for so much verification and checking  
Always be clear in language on bills, to stay ethical, eg the way shipping costs are charged  
It is possible to avoid being false, but be very misleading (10 kids and cemetery illustration)  
Watch out for unsupported financial numbers in corporate narratives, including pro forma numbers  
Presidential mistruths during key sales discussions, may represent a real underlying ethics problem, that will cause a CPA problems

### Income tax

A slightly aggressive tax position, that has some support and is fully disclosed to CRA is probably not unethical at all

### Quotes

Proverb: *The integrity of the upright will guide them. But the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them*  
Churchill wrote: *Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it. Ignorance may deride it. Malice may distort it. But there it is.*

Queen Victoria apparently said "Don't tell me what is expedient, tell me what is right."

### Interviews

Make your ethics know in the job interview  
But check if the interviewer sees ethics, somewhat as you do, are you on the same page?  
What do you think of when you hear the word ethics? Can you expand?  
What do you think of politician X (Canada or even US)?  
When are there exceptions to working ethically in your worldview?  
Suppose we barely have enough money to make payroll and the bank is about to call our loan, will your ethics change? Are they situational? Does the ends justify the means?  
Bring up an ethical angle, to something that was mentioned in the interview  
Do you stretch the forward-looking numbers presented for fund-raising?  
Ask industry ethics questions  
If the interviewer is offended by the discussion, don't work there

### Truth

Some people say your truth, my truth, everyone has their own truth  
I think this is logically impossible by the definition of truth

### General

You can get in trouble for verbal promises and it is morally wrong to break them in the context of statements made to induce investments, even if not legally actionable. It is very wrong to be proud to be unethical. Spouses can be a huge moral and financial support during ethics battles, but if they are against your ethics, this could be problematic, choose spouses wisely for this and a lot of other reasons...

Consideration should be given for a charity not to accept donations from certain parties that raise conflict of interest questions and thus ethical questions. If a business might in fact be illegal, get a legal opinion, or wait for the laws to change.

Military personnel can be tortured for their adherence to their Code, use this as inspiration.

### Can CPAs be too narrow?

Topic, personal expenses and the like on tax returns  
Be careful with the materiality excuse  
Remember, we are not CRA

### Moral conscience in business

Don't be afraid to bring up moral questions in meetings, others may follow suit, who have been waiting for someone else to raise it.  
"We should not do this because it is wrong" or "we should do this, because it is morally right"  
"We should not do this because it could come back and bite us" or "Do you think we can get away with this, the risks are low?"  
They might at least listen to reputational risk

### Lessons from long case

Small theft can be the tip of the iceberg of unethical behaviour.  
Don't book entries without proper support.  
Purchasers can fall into influence buying temptation.  
Look around at the entire area if something unethical is uncovered.  
M&A situations bring temptations.  
Don't sign anything you are not comfortable with.  
Consider underlying motivations of other's unethical behaviour.  
Don't trade ethics for promotions.  
Be ready to be fired, if necessary.  
Don't be afraid to bring up the F word, fraud, if warranted.  
The auditors might sometimes be a possible ally.  
An outside forensic firm may sometimes be needed.  
Seek pragmatic solutions.  
Get your ducks lined up before you go to the ultimate authority on complex matters.

### Ethics conflict lines (not all serious)

*"I would like you to document your logic in writing in full and confirm in writing that this is ethical, moral and legal"*  
*"Is your personal brand 'unethical'?"*  
*"You will get your bonus, but you may not be able to sleep at night"*  
*"Can you sign this indemnity form to hold me harmless if ...."*  
*"You could have done the right thing, but have chosen not"*  
*"What will your spouse/significant other think?"*  
*"Would you be proud of this in 30 years?"*  
*"It is universal advice to hire employees who are not yes people, and you did that, but now that I disagree, you don't like it"*  
*"I have always kept you out of trouble and now ..."*  
*"The best lawyer in Canada could not get you out of this one"*  
*"This needs to go through Legal, HR and Compliance first"*  
*"I will not do/sign this, until I confirm \_\_\_\_"*  
*"The ethics advisor for my profession told me that this is offside"*  
*"Will your hand shake, when you sign it?"*  
*"Play stupid games, win stupid prizes"*