

A Taxonomy of Statements

Statements

Statement: any sentence that “makes a claim” (and so is presumably either true or false).

Non-evaluative statement: (**descriptive**)

“The door is open.” “There are fewer kidney donors than those on the waiting list.”

Evaluative statement: (**normative**)

Non-Moral: “John did a good job preparing lunch.” “Mary reasoned well.” “You should tighten that screw a bit more.”
“The team did a nice job.” “I like cheese.”

Moral: “You should help that man.” (“That man needs help.”
“You should help those in need whom you *can* help.”)

Indicator Terms for Evaluations

Verbs

Want
Desire
Prefer
Should
Feel obliged
Ought
Prefer
Like
Oppose
Despise
Require
Permit

Nouns

Benefit
Harm
Duty
Responsibility
Right
Obligation
Permission

Adjectives

Good/Bad
Right/Wrong
Virtuous/Vicious
Responsible/Ir-
Proper/Im-
Appropriate/In-
Moral/Im-

Moral and Non-Moral Evaluations

Distinguishing between different kinds of evaluation ('should', 'ought', 'good'):

Legal: "You should not jaywalk."

Technical: "You should not use so much torque while tightening that screw."

Prudential: "You should not ignore your boss."

Etiquette: "You should not chew with your mouth open."

Moral: "You should not take that man's coat."

Ethical and Other Questions

Question	Characteristic
Scientific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks testable questions about the natural world. • Can be explored through scientific inquiry and observation. • Relies on empirical and measurable evidence. <p>Example: How does a kidney function in the body?</p>
Religious/Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks us what would be in line with a particular religious belief or practice, or the common practices of a particular culture. Questions of etiquette also belong here. <p>Example: What does my religion or culture say about whether it is acceptable to donate a kidney?</p>
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks us what the law says about a particular issue. • Ethics may inform the law, but sometimes laws are unethical and sometimes the ethically right thing to do may be illegal. <p>Example: Is it legal to sell kidneys in the United States?</p>
Ethical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks us what the ‘right’ thing to do is – what we ‘should’ or ‘ought’ to do – often in the face of a moral dilemma. • Often arises out of a conflict in values among individuals or groups. • Requires moral reflection (making evaluations and judgments about responsibilities, rights, duties, values, and principles). <p>Example: Should individuals who donate kidneys be allowed to choose the recipients?</p>