

Tips for ethics teachers on wearing face masks in your ethics lessons

Key points

- ✓ Students are now used to seeing their teachers wearing a face mask but haven't seen you in one before – if they comment, stay neutral and use a reassuring and positive tone of voice
- ✓ Wearing a face mask *does affect* your ability to communicate with your students i.e., being heard and understood by students and, if they are wearing face masks, being able to hear and understand them
- ✓ If you have any concerns about a student/s, speak directly with school staff and/or contact Primary Ethics Helpdesk.

Student reaction

Some students may feel unsure or anxious about their ethics teacher wearing a mask – to younger students you may look different or strange, they cannot see your face nor hear you very well. Others, particularly older students, may feel comfortable but also be curious and interested in exploring related ideas.

Primary students are strongly recommended to wear masks indoors and they are compulsory in high school. It is not the role of the ethics teacher to enforce this.

Some tips on managing the wearing of a face mask in ethics lessons

While sticking to the script and creating a familiar, safe and secure learning environment will hold you in good stead, the wearing of a face mask does add another dimension to your teaching. So...

Before the lesson

- Check-in with your ethics coordinator for the latest information about how your school is implementing COVID-19 requirements
- Ask school staff for information about how face mask wearing is being handled and spoken about with the children. Also seek advice on students in your class with special learning and support needs (what can you expect, what do you do when/if..., what works)
- If required, contact the supervising class teacher and discuss how face mask wearing is being managed with students
- With your students in mind, anticipate how wearing a face mask is likely to affect them and think how you will manage this, eg, if a student makes a negative comment about mask-wearing, what is your response?
- Prepare for the lesson, keeping in mind what you know about your students and the learning environment you teach in. You might like to annotate the script, highlighting key instructions, underlining words for emphasis, adding useful facilitation questions or reminders to “praise”

- For the first ethics lesson back, you will welcome the students back to ethics and explain that, yes, you are wearing a face mask to help keep you and me safe from COVID-19. If there are children not wearing face masks, explain that they are keeping you and me safe by doing other things like washing your hands and coughing and sneezing into your elbow.
- Rehearse the lesson wearing a face mask and thinking about what you can do to effectively communicate with students.

You might try:

1. **Different types of face masks** to see what suits your needs best, eg, how to manage wearing a face mask *and* your reading glasses.
2. **Turn up ...your voice** by increasing the volume, speaking clearly (enunciating) and perhaps slowing the pace. Try accentuating the initial and the end of word sounds. Also ensure the ends of sentences or the ends of sections of speech do not drop in volume and clarity.
3. **Turn up...your body movements** by making extra eye contact, using exaggerated eye, eyebrow, head, hand and body movements.

During the lesson

- Stay calm and positive about wearing the face mask (even if you aren't really feeling it)
- Monitor how students are managing you wearing a face mask. Do regular checks for understanding by asking students if they can hear you okay and/or having them repeat the instructions you give. If students are not engaged or not following directions, it may be that they cannot understand what you are saying or they only got a part of what you said.
- Monitor how you are managing wearing a face mask and respond as required, eg, stop to drink from time to time, un-fog your reading glasses, adjust your face mask so it is comfortable.

After the lesson

- **Reflect** on the lesson and plan for the next – what's working and what's not, what I'll do next time. Perhaps you notice that after the lesson you feel more tired than normal, that your voice feels strained or your throat feels dry. It is very important to take care of your voice and seek medical advice if symptoms persist.
- **Share and seek advice** from other ethics teachers
- If required, seek the advice and support of the ethics coordinator, the school classroom teacher, Primary Ethics Classroom Support.

For more information about face mask wearing and children 0-12 years:

[Face masks & COVID-19: supporting children | Raising Children Network](https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide/face-masks-coronavirus-children)

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