



# **Doing Philosophy in a Pre-College Setting**

Packet for Pre-College Philosophical Engagement

A product of the Philosophy Outreach Project

# **Acknowledgments**

PLATO: Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization

Ball State University, Provost Immersive Learning Grant

Ball State University, College of Science and Humanities Immersive Learning  
Micro-Grant

Ball State University Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Muncie Central High School

# Table of Contents

What is Philosophy?	3-7
What is Philosophy?	3
The Big Questions of Philosophy	5
Why Philosophy?	6
Who Does Philosophy?	7
Doing Philosophy Now	8-21
Finding Philosophy	8
Reading Philosophy	11
How to Start a Philosophy Club	14
Creating a Philosophy Club Presentation	17
The Do's and Don'ts of Philosophy	21
Philosophy in College	22-25
Why Study Philosophy in College	22
Who Has a Philosophy Degree?	23
How to Find Philosophy Departments	24
Life as a Philosophy Major	25

# What is Philosophy?

Congratulations, you have just done philosophy... sort of. The word philosophy comes from the Greek *philosophia*, which literally means “love of wisdom.” Philosophy as we know it today first began to develop around 500 BCE in Ancient Greece via Socrates, around the same time as Buddhism and Jainism developed elsewhere in the world. For the Greeks, philosophy comprised math and biology, poetry and art, political science and astrology. In this way, philosophy helped lay the foundation for all the many academic disciplines we study today.

Philosophy asks the questions that have no easy answer, questions which can't be answered by simply observing the world. Different branches of philosophy ask different kinds of questions. Metaphysics examines “being,” asking what there is in the universe and what those things are like. Epistemology takes a look at knowledge, questioning what it means to know and how we can know what we know. Ethics is all about telling right from wrong, while aesthetics seeks to understand the nature of beauty. Logic is crucial for any philosophical discussion, so important that it constitutes its own branch of philosophy. These branches can be examined individually or alongside one another. Political philosophy, for example, must draw from ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics in order to advance the best ideas about how humans should organize themselves in society.

These questions might seem very academic, things to discuss in stuffy classrooms and nowhere else. But philosophy does not just belong in the halls and classrooms of the academic world. It is able to be applied to almost every aspect of our lives as a way of explaining things that occur within them. As we've already discussed, philosophy asks the initial questions that lead to the creation of disciplines like psychology, biology, chemistry, sociology, economics, and political science. But even though these disciplines are studied separately from philosophy today, philosophy can contribute to their development by asking questions about the processes and underlying assumptions of these disciplines.

But philosophy is about more than just asking questions. To do philosophy well, you must truly care about finding the answers. Philosophy is a great way to develop your critical thinking skills, but if you only take up philosophical questioning as a way to learn how to win arguments, you run the risk of practicing sophistry or arguing for the sake of winning. Philosophy should not just be about winning or losing. Rather it is about finding answers to the fundamental questions at the heart of human existence. Whatever else philosophy is, it should be genuine in its pursuit of truth.

When we dedicate ourselves to the genuine pursuit of truth, we open ourselves up to tremendous potential for personal growth and discovery. We each have a unique filter through which we view the world. This filter includes our assumptions about how the world operates, the values that are important to us, and our lived experience of the world. Doing philosophy demands we critically examine our filters and address our biases. In this way philosophy helps us gain a better understanding of who we are and where we fit in the world. Philosophy also brings our perspective into conversation with that of others. It reminds us that behind every idea is a person whose life experience informs their views. Making a good faith attempt to understand these views and experiences both adds nuance to our own perspectives and teaches us to respect difference in others. Philosophy helps combat the ignorance at the heart of intolerance, helping us better

“

**Philosophy helps us relate to one another and respect difference rather than breed intolerance towards difference or erase difference all together.**

”

navigate discourse and conversations in an often divided world.

Philosophy is not easy to define. This is due in part to just how many areas of our lives it touches upon. But while it may not be easy to define philosophy, it is easy to see the benefits of philosophy. It sets a foundation for all other academic pursuits and gives us the tools to ask questions about these fields. It demands we set aside notions of winning and losing so that we can work collaboratively to find the truth. Philosophy helps us question our presuppositions and understand the perspectives of others. Above all, philosophy reminds us that the world is full of wonder and opens us up to new ideas and experiences, which are essential to living a rich and fulfilled life.

# The Big Questions of Philosophy

By far, one of the coolest parts about philosophy is how many ways it can connect to other fields of study. Philosophy provides those who study it with the unique opportunity to ask and answer questions about almost anything. The following are just some examples:

1. How much can we know about anything?
2. What do we owe to our communities?
3. Who, of those in a society, should rule?
4. What is goodness?
5. Does God exist? If God exists, how does God exist?
6. What constitutes societal progress?
7. How do you know that you exist? How do you know others exist?
8. Is there a standard outside of humans that guides morality?
9. Should art ever be censored?
10. What sets humans apart from animals?
11. Do you have free will?
12. What responsibility do people have for other living things? For non-sentient beings like plants?
13. What makes some people more credible than others?
14. What is fairness? Why do we strive for fairness?
15. What is happiness? Is it the same for everyone?
16. What societal change is possible or impossible?
17. What purpose do laws serve?
18. Is it ethical to eat animals?
19. Is all art political?
20. What are some good and bad habits? What makes them good or bad?
21. Does the individual have different interests than the community?
22. How does knowledge transfer from one mind to another?
23. What is the meaning of life?
24. How do I fit in with society?
25. Should society prioritize the individual over the collective? Or vice versa?
26. What is consciousness?
27. What makes good art? What makes bad art? What can be considered beautiful?
28. Do other people know you better than you know yourself?
29. Is truth something that is created, or is it discovered?
30. What is the relationship between knowledge and power?
31. What kind of lenses do you view the world through?
32. What is the nature of time?
33. What is a soul, and who has one?
34. What role do art and music play in the way people think?
35. What in the universe is real? Are you real?
36. Why think about art and not just experience it?

While this list contains many examples, it is up to you as a young philosopher to come up with new questions that reflect and critique the world you live in.. Next time you find yourself wondering about the state of existence or society or even something mundane about something a friend said, consider writing your own list! Even if there is no concrete answer to your questions or the ones listed here, they are sure to lead you down interesting trains of thought.

# Why Philosophy?

Even if you have no formal exposure to philosophy, there is a good chance you have already thought about the answers to some of the most important philosophical questions at some point in your life. “What is out there?” “What does it mean to know?” “How should we live?” Our answers to these questions help shape the way we interact with the world on a daily basis. Philosophy is a chance to seek these answers for yourself. Philosophy can also be of value to you in several ways:

## Improved Academic Performance

Philosophy can set you up for academic success by honing your skills in analytical reasoning, reading comprehension, logical argumentation, and independent thinking. One study found that philosophy programs help young students improve their reasoning, discussion, and logical argumentation skills.<sup>1</sup> Another study found that students who study philosophy also tend to perform higher on the Cognitive Reflection Test which measures problem-solving skills.

“

**Philosophy can be a deeply personal enterprise and engaging in it means putting yourself into your work.**

## Enhanced Civic Engagement

Philosophy demands that we examine our own biases and strive to understand the perspectives of others. It emphasizes that behind every idea is an individual with their own history and that this history is integral to truly understanding their thoughts. In this way, philosophy prepares you to better negotiate a world that's often marked by conflict and partisan tensions and helps you develop robust and nuanced understandings of the world, while also imparting the tools necessary for fruitful contribution to civil discourse.

”

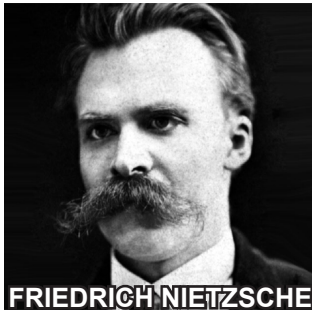
## Personal Growth

Answers to philosophical questions are rarely clear-cut. Philosophy can be a deeply personal enterprise and engaging in it means putting yourself into your work. It teaches you to be self-critical, which, in time, gives way to greater self-confidence. Numerous studies link studying philosophy to socio-emotional growth, independent thinking, and positive self-esteem.



# Who Does Philosophy?

Philosophy is a very old and international discipline. Through time, a lot of diverse individuals have made their mark on philosophy. Below, you can find a brief biography of a group of famous philosophers throughout history. If you're interested in learning more, read up on them or even pick up one of their original works!



**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**

1844–1900

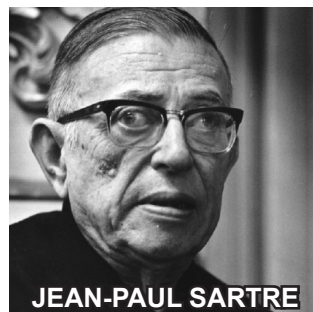
Mustache aficionado and German philosopher, Nietzsche is most known for his ideas on the nature of good and evil, religion's role in society, and his idea of the "Übermensch," or "super" man.



**ANGELA DAVIS**

b. 1944

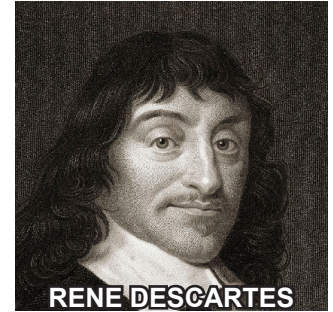
Equal parts philosopher and political activist, when she was young, Davis was an active member of the Black Panthers. As a philosopher, she is best known for her work on issues of race and social philosophy.



**JEAN-PAUL SARTRE**

1905–1980

Father of the existential crisis, Sartre is most known for his writings on Existentialism, dealing with the nature of existence and freedom. So committed to his philosophy, he once refused a Nobel Prize.



**RENE DESCARTES**

1596–1650

Largely considered the first modern philosopher. Known for "Meditations of First Philosophy," saying "I think therefore I am," a response to the idea that he might be followed by an evil demon.



**SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR**

1908–1986

A French Existentialist and contemporary of Sartre, de Beauvoir is a famous figure in the field of feminist philosophy, especially *The Second Sex* in which she critiques the idea of patriarchy.



**TERESA D'AVILA**

1515–1582

Philosopher, nun, and patron saint of headaches, d'Avila was a Spanish noblewoman known for her book, *The Interior Castle* in which she writes about mysticism, the self, and the soul.



**HYPATIA**

350–415

One of the OG female mathematicians and philosophers, Hypatia became the head of the Platonist school in Alexandria and was respected even by her male contemporaries.



**ZERA YACOB**

1599–1692

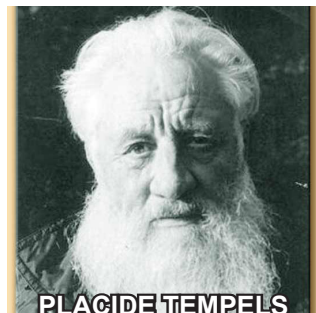
An Ethiopian philosopher, Yacob is best known for his work on ethics and morality and especially his theories regarding the nature of harmony in the world, often centered around religion.



**ZHUANG ZHAO**

369 BCE – 286 BCE

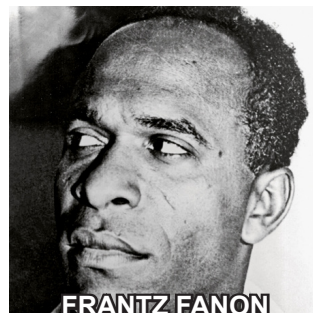
A Chinese philosopher of the warring states period, Zhuang Zhao (aka Chuang Tzu,) is a founding figure of Taoism and one of the authors of the authors of *The Inner Chapters*.



**PLACIDE TEMPELS**

1906–1977

Tempels was a Belgian missionary working in the Congo who authored *Bantu Philosophy*, one of the foundational texts of modern African philosophy.



**FRANTZ FANON**

1925–1961

Part philosopher, part psychiatrist, Fanon was from the West Indies who worked extensively on issues of race, post-colonial thought, and Marxist theory.



**DAVID CHALMERS**

b. 1966

With a rocking hairdo and his own rock band (you can find their song "Zombie Blues" on Youtube,) Chalmers works mostly on philosophy of mind and philosophy of language.

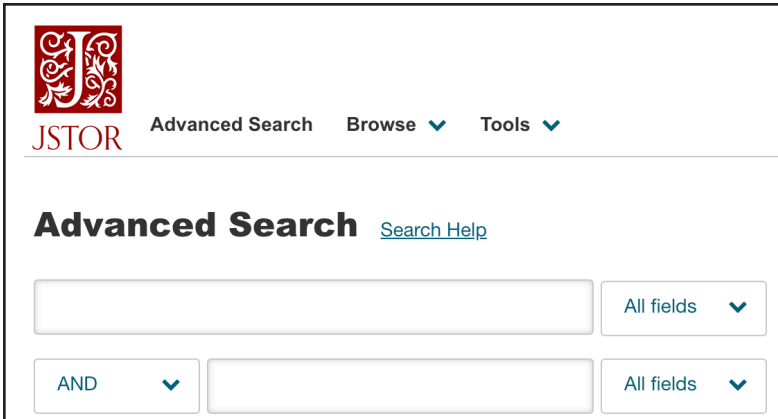


# Finding Philosophy

So, you are just getting started out with doing philosophy. Way to go! It's going to be a wonderful time. But, perhaps you're at a bit of a loss when it comes to knowing exactly where to start when it comes to finding philosophy—especially philosophy that you'd interested in. Should I just read the books and articles my teacher shows in class? What if I'm just doing it on my own? Is philosophy only in hard-to-read books? Should I only read work by professional philosophers? Where do I look? If you've found yourself asking questions like those, hopefully, this guide will get you on the right track on your philosophical journey.

Researching philosophy can seem hard if you don't know where to look. There are a number of different sources to find philosophy. It can come in the form of books, articles, webpages, and even internet videos—all of which we will explore in just a moment. These various sources serve different needs and are better for some applications than others. Below are descriptions of several different places to look for philosophy:

**Academic Online Sources:** Chances are that if you are enrolled in dual-credit high school courses, you may have access to licenses to use certain academic databases. This means that your school paid for you to be able to use websites such as OneSearch, EBSCO Host, or JStor (just to name a few) to find material online. These websites work a lot like your standard search engines, helping you research academic articles and books about anything you can imagine. Academic databases are good for finding material to use when writing papers or doing research that needs peer-reviewed sources. But these sites are not always available to everyone, so check with your school's library or local public library to see if you have access.

A screenshot of the JSTOR website's Advanced Search page. At the top left is the JSTOR logo, a red square with a white 'J' and the word 'JSTOR' below it. To the right of the logo are links for 'Advanced Search', 'Browse' with a dropdown arrow, and 'Tools' with a dropdown arrow. Below this is the heading 'Advanced Search' followed by a link for 'Search Help'. There are two search input fields. The first field is empty, and to its right is a dropdown menu labeled 'All fields' with a downward arrow. Below the first field is a button labeled 'AND' with a dropdown arrow. The second field is also empty, and to its right is another dropdown menu labeled 'All fields' with a downward arrow.

**Other Online Databases:** If you are not a dual-credit student or a student at a college or university, then you may not have access to the academic databases mentioned above. However, there are some other databases that you can find philosophy papers on if you're not a college student. Google has one called Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>). With this search engine, you can quickly find primary source material on any topic in philosophy. However, not all papers or essays may be entirely free for you to view, some are behind pay walls. There is another one specifically for philosophical research, called PhilPapers (<https://philpapers.org/>). It works much like the other databases, making an interesting article just a few key words and a click away. You can even turn on different filters and tools to refine your search, so you can narrow your results by the year published or length of the article. These are also great resources for writing papers as well as independent research

**Online Philosophy Encyclopedias:** There are some other online resources that offer in- depth information on philosophy in the form of encyclopedia-style webpages. Two of the most notable ones for philosophy are The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<https://www.iep.utm.edu/>) and The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<https://plato.stanford.edu/>). Both websites offer very detailed information on different philosophers, theories, and terminology. It is important to note that these encyclopedias do not contain primary sources like databases do (i.e., the articles aren't original works in themselves; instead, they are explanations and definitions about different original works and ideas—think Wikipedia).



However, these secondary sources provide helpful bibliographies of the primary sources they are referring to.

**Libraries and Books:** If you are interested finding physical copies of philosophical work, then you can look into a library in your community or school (as well as bookstores if you want to purchase them). Libraries often have diverse catalogs of material at your disposal, free of charge. You can see if there is a “philosophy” section in your library. If you can’t find what you’re looking for there—or if there isn’t one—then you might want to look in different sections. Since philosophy and philosophical topics are so far-reaching in terms of subject matter, there is a chance that you can find philosophy under subjects like “Political Science” or “Political Theory” (for Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau etc.), “Psychology” (for Freud, Lacan, Piaget etc.), “Gender Studies” (for de Beauvoir, Butler, hooks etc.), as well as “Literature” (for Sartre, Camus, Thoreau, etc.). And as always, don’t be afraid to ask the librarian.

## Alternative Sources

Philosophy isn’t just relegated to books and papers written by professional philosophers. Emerging media offer philosophy in new and interesting ways, from YouTube videos and web comics to podcasts and other interactive websites. These are good if you’re looking to be entertained while learning or receiving clarification on philosophical topics. Below are a few specific examples of these alternative media:

- **The School of Life** – A YouTube channel which produces visually quirky, collage-style videos about all sorts of philosophers and philosophy from Kant’s thoughts on the sublime to Heidegger’s concept of *dasein*. The videos are narrated by Alain de Botton, a documentarian and philosopher, who explains different theories and ideas from philosophy in accessible language. The School of Life also features other video playlists dedicated to Eastern philosophy and Psychoanalysis.

- **Wisecrack** – Another YouTube channel which delivers philosophical analyses of the ethics, aesthetics, and logic of your favorite movies and shows in a comical, but informative way. Some examples of their videos are “The Philosophy of House of Cards,” “The Philosophy of Rick and Morty,” and “The Philosophy of Kanye West.” Additionally, Wisecrack produces another YouTube channel, 8-Bit Philosophy, in which videos animated in the style of vintage video games explain different philosophical topics

- **CrashCourse: Philosophy** – Vlog Brothers, Hank and John Green, produce this educational YouTube channel where they offer an in-depth video series about philosophy. CrashCourse: Philosophy lays out the basics of philosophy, covering historical origins and theoretical positions using well-researched information along with entertain graphic design. Examples of their videos include “The Meaning of Knowledge,” “Aesthetic Appreciation”, and “How Words Can Harm.” With these helpful videos, you can feel like you’re taking a whole Philosophy 101 course right on your laptop.

- **Nerdwriter** – A YouTube channel which features a number of critiques and analyses of films, books, and politics, among other things, in video essays. Video essays, like those of the Nerdwriter, are akin to written essays read aloud but are embedded in a series of related videos, images, and graphics, which

“

**Philosophy isn’t just relegated to books and papers written by professional philosophers.**

”

help to convey the thesis of the author. This channel is good for aesthetic and literary analyses which philosophically argue different theses. Examples of his work include “What the Truman Show Teaches Us About Politics” and “Seinfeld: What ‘Nothing’ Really Means.”

- **The Partially Examined Life (PEL), Philosophize This!, and Philosophy Bites** – Philosophy podcasts by professionals (available on podcasting services) which feature well- rounded philosophical discussions and analyses of different concepts and ideas. These convenient podcasts are free and explain the topics at hand for novices. The Partially Examined Life (PEL), in particular, makes a point of having discussions about philosophical topics with the assumption that the listener is not a student of philosophy or that they have read any philosophy. PEL works much like a reading group where the hosts discuss a book they’ve read collectively, prior to taping the podcast (their reading list can be found on their website). Philosophize This! is an interesting podcast which often features special guest academics and philosophers, explaining different philosophical topics like existential freedom, capitalism, and more.

- **Existential Comics and Philosophy Bro** – In both of these sources, you can find philosophy in the form of funny illustrations and humorous dialogue which put philosophy in everyday terms. Existential Comics is a web comic series that illustrates different philosophers having silly, yet intellectually stimulating, conversations as they navigate interesting situations. For example, they have a comic where Karl Marx, Bertrand Russell, and Simone de Beauvoir start a fight club, beating each other up after a philosophically rigorous dialogue goes south. Then, there is Philosophy Bro, a website that boils philosophy down to very basic terms in the form of goofy, yet well-done explanations in frat-boy language. For example, they frame Heidegger’s concept of dasein in the setting of a “bro” thinking about the nature of his existence at party.

- **New Philosopher, The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, and Critical Theory** – These websites offer interesting articles and pages about philosophy and philosophers. They often pair clear-cut information with good design and reader accessibility in mind. They use visual media like photos and videos to help convey information. On these sites you can find some primary and secondary material. New Philosopher, specifically, is a philosophy journal which produces its own material. Critical Theory is a similar website but includes more humor.

Below is a table which summarizes some of the key points about each source:

Type of Source	Accessibility	Primary Sources?	Pros	Cons
<b>Academic Databases</b>	Usually just for college students	✓	Access to large body of published work	Not accessible to everyone
<b>Other Databases</b>	Usually free	✓	Accessible to more people	Material usually geared to advanced readers
<b>Online Encyc.</b>	Free	✗	Access to a large body of knowledge	No primary texts
<b>Libraries</b>	Free	✓	Access to a large body of work	Can be tricky to navigate to find specific material
<b>Alternative Sources</b>	Free	✓	Easy to digest without much training	Informal; not great for citing in papers

# How Do I Read Philosophy?

(Adapted from Dr. David W. Concepción's "How to Read Philosophy")

So, now that you've found some philosophy, it's important to know some helpful ways to approach reading it! There are many ways to read philosophy, but here are some of the basics.

**Expectations and Goals:** Even if you are smart and read a lot, you are likely to experience some frustration when reading philosophy. But, you can do it! Like many worthwhile things in life, reading philosophy takes practice. In many pieces of philosophical work, you'll encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, abstract ideas, complexly organized writing, and even unsettling views—all of which might induce some confusion. This is normal, but do not confuse those reactions for failure. You are just getting started.

Your aim is to develop your belief system by building on what you already know about yourself and the world around you. Philosophy is also a system of beliefs, made up of different conclusions, supported by various premises—or in other words, arguments. When a philosopher offers an argument, what they are really doing is trying to convince you to accept or believe something by offering their reasoning. Keep this in mind as you read philosophy, because philosophy is not about plots, character development, or presenting information—it's about defending and justifying various positions on certain issues or ideas.

“  
**Like many worthwhile things in life, reading philosophy takes practice. In many pieces of philosophical work, you'll encounter vocabulary, abstract ideas, complexly organized writing, and even unsettling views.**  
”

## Basic Good Reading Behaviors:

- Take care of yourself; take breaks and sit where you're less likely to get distracted.
- Interact and engage with the material—talk your friends and classmates about what you've read. Refer to dictionaries or philosophical encyclopedia while reading for clarification. Think about how the philosophy is applicable to your life or things you know about the world or history.
- Keep reasonable expectations. You may not understand everything at once—don't let that stop you!
- Work on explaining the author's argument aloud. If you can, try to write out the conclusion and supporting points.
- Always flag the text and take notes! If you own the book or have printed the article, go ahead and use a pencil to underline key points and circle interesting or difficult words. Write your thoughts in the margins next to paragraphs that intrigues or confuse you. If the book isn't yours, keep a notebook ready to put down page numbers and exact paragraphs to refer to later. By the time you're done reading, your article should have writing all over it!

## A Three-Part Reading Process:

- 1) **Set the Stage:** Start by quickly examining the general features of the text. Check out the title, section headings, and footnotes. This is to help you get a basic idea of what the piece is about.
  - You can then begin to ask yourself questions like: is this a primary or secondary text? What do the title and subheading tell me about the argument of the text? What is the main point of this text?

- Next, fast-read the text. If you're working with just an article, read the whole thing fairly quickly to get a general understanding of the text.
- Try to find the thesis statement in the text and underline it—just know that you might not find the true thesis until later in the piece, so mark what seems most important at first; then pick what seems most central later.
- Take notes and circle words you don't understand so you can look them up later.
- Don't let anything stop your progress! You can skim through certain parts of the texts if they are too long (but try to read shorter pieces when starting out).

2) **Read for Understanding:** This is where you develop a better understanding of the text. When reading for understanding remember to do the following:

- Re-read the whole text very carefully. Add to and correct your notes and previous flagging.
- Continuously re-explain the meaning of the text in your own words to make sure you understand it. Draw charts and diagrams to map out the flow of premises in the argument, leading to the main conclusion.
- Ask yourself some more questions: How am I doing? Have I found the thesis statement and written it down? Do I know the general argument the author is making? Can I list all the premises and the conclusion? Did I re-re-read the parts that were confusing at first?

3) **Time to Evaluate:** At this point, you should have a written summary of the author's argument in your own words. You're able to explain the general meaning of the text to a friend or classmate. This is the stage of reading when you're thinking about how well the author supports their conclusion—you are now in the debate!

- Now is your chance to look critically at the argument of the author. Reflect on what you've learned and determine whether or not you have been effectively convinced and why.
- Ask yourself if you found the argument to be persuasive. Are all the conclusions well defended? Can you think of counter-examples to the author's premises? Can you think of criticisms to the author's argument? Did the author get you to believe what they concluded?

**The Specifics of Flagging and Note Taking:** There are some important things to keep in mind when flagging and taking notes while reading philosophical texts. Flagging is the act of putting short notes in the margins of the text along while also circling and underlining different pieces of information (like key phrases and confusing terms.) This is preferably done in pencil because you are likely to erase and change your flagging upon learning new information and gaining a better understanding of the material in the re-reading and evaluation stages. Flagging is also better than highlighting because its erasable and it provides better detail than just highlighting; when you highlight, you might come back to passage and not remember why you highlighted it. With flagging, you write down why you underlined or circled something, so it's more useful later.

There are many ways to flag when reading, so feel free to develop your own method and notations. For example, you can put question marks beside things you don't get (you can try "???" for things you really don't understand). Below are a few examples of helpful flagging abbreviations you might use:

#### **Abbreviation Meaning:**

**RSN** Reason: This is a premise or reason for the conclusion.  
**THESIS** This is a thesis statement.



<b>DEF</b>	Definition: This is a definition of a technical term.
<b>EX</b>	Example: This is an example or case of a concept.
<b>SPOST</b>	Signpost: This is a signpost or statement that makes a transition in the text.
<b>???</b>	I really don't get this part.

**Key Words:** There are a number of key words and phrases that author's use to signal (or "signpost") different transitions in the flow of the text as well as to highlight what kind of information is coming up. Below is a list of some of these key words and phrases and what they mean:

<p><b>Focal Statements are often signaled by phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"I will discuss..."</p> <p>"Consideration will be given..."</p> <p>"My main concern is..."</p>	<p><b>Thesis statements are often signaled by phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"In this paper I argue that..."</p> <p>"I hope to conclude that..."</p> <p>"I will show that..."</p>
<p><b>Premises, reasons or assertions are often signaled by words or phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"Because," "Since," or "Whereas"</p> <p>"Secondly...", "It follows that..."</p> <p>"Given that..."</p> <p>"As shown or indicated by..."</p> <p>"The reason is that..."</p>	<p><b>Objections or criticisms the author introduces are often signaled by words or phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"Moreover," "However..."</p> <p>"It could be objected that..."</p> <p>"Opponents of my view might claim..."</p> <p>"Critics might say..."</p> <p>"There is reason to doubt..."</p>
<p><b>Replies or Rejoinders are often signaled by words or phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"This criticism fails because..."</p> <p>"My opponent does not notice that..."</p> <p>"In response we should remember..."</p> <p>"Nevertheless...", "On the other hand..."</p>	<p><b>Conclusions are often signaled by words or phrases such as the following:</b></p> <p>"In summary...", "Thus...", "Therefore..."</p> <p>"Hence..."</p> <p>"Accordingly...", "Consequently..."</p> <p>"As a result..."</p>

# How to Start Philosophy Club

There are a few different ways you can start a philosophy club in a high school, but each involves some common factors. No philosophy can have just one person, as philosophy does not bloom in isolation. Even if you find a group of interested peers, all of this is also dependent on your school and teachers. The methods that are best suited for your school will depend on whether or not you already have an established philosophy program.

## Starting A Philosophy Club in a School Without Formally Established Philosophy Courses

Before anyone can start a philosophy club in a school without formal philosophy courses, a question must be answered. How does one become interested in philosophy when the education system does not typically expose students to philosophy? This is a hard question to answer, but one of the easiest ways to introduce philosophy to students in the school system is through a philosophy club. Once you find peers who are interested in philosophy, the first hurdle has been passed. The next hurdle of starting a philosophy club in a school without formally established courses is finding a faculty advisor.

A faculty advisor is a member of your high school faculty or staff that acts as a liaison between the administration and the organization when necessary. A good way to go about finding a faculty advisor is by reaching out to your teachers in English and history departments, since their classes are focused on skills that are either historically or literary centered, which are linked to early philosophical development. Another method for seeking for a faculty advisor can be by asking if any of your teachers has a background or interest in philosophy. This can be beneficial since the teacher can relate topics discussed back to philosophical texts. If this is not possible, there is still another option. If a teacher or faculty member does not have a formal philosophical training, it may be helpful for faculty advisors to help with converting existing online lectures into lesson plans that work for philosophy club. Once trying all three methods and acquiring a faculty advisor, it is now time to move to the next task: finding a time and space.

## Finding a Time & Space

Once finding both an interested group of peers and a faculty advisor, it is now time to find a time and place for the club to meet. Here, great consideration should be given to time and consistency. Without a proper time, peers may not be able to make it. Without a location, a lack of seriousness can be perceived. Without consistency, a club may crumble. The following is recommended when considering a time and place.

Make sure to pick a day that will work for the majority of people. This will help clubs maintain a consistent attendance. It is also a good idea to keep in mind other events going on around school. It is in the best interest to plan for a day that is usually the least busy.

When considering the time of the day to hold meetings, it is recommended to make it directly after school. It would be wise to start a club five to ten minutes after school has formally been released or when your school's designated club times are.

Once picking a day and a time, you need to pick the duration of the meeting. For example, the Ball State University philosophy club meets for an hour and fifteen minutes, while Muncie Central High School's club meets for forty-five minutes. It is recommended to have about an hour given the nature of a philosophy discussion, but this might be determined by your school's allotted period for club meetings.



After setting all the time and dates for philosophy club, it is now time to make sure the space can be available for that time. Most any room will do, as long as it is a room that can be reserved and has space to sit and show presentations. You can also see if your faculty advisor's classroom is available.

Once the time and place has been agreed upon, stick to it! It is critical that consistency is maintained. Keeping it consistent will reduce on the possibility of confusion about when and where meetings are, boosting attendance.

Once gathering a group of interested peers, finding a faculty member to be your advisor, and setting a time and location, you are on your way to having a philosophy club in your high school! While the ease or difficulty of this task will differ from school to school, following this advice should guide your way through this project. This alone will not guarantee a successful philosophy club, but this will help open the door for the establishment of a philosophy club.

## How to Maintain a Philosophy Club

Now that you have created a philosophy club, the next question to ask is: How do we maintain it? There are a number of methods for maintenance of a club, and each have their own benefits and downfalls. One universal method is simply by having distinct roles regarding planning activities, mission developing, or presenting.

When beginning to assign roles for the maintenance of a philosophy club, establishing office positions is advisable. Students tend to be more attracted to extra-curricular activities when they are student-centered, and students are able to take on positions of responsibility. One system employed by many philosophy clubs is to divide responsibilities into four roles: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

### President

The role of the president consists of making sure that the meeting runs as smoothly as possible. Some of the president's responsibilities might include the following: making sure a room is reserved and that there is a presentation planned every week. No room means no or an ill-equipped club meeting. This may result in the president having to make an "on the spot" presentation if something falls through.

### Vice President

Some of the vice president's responsibilities might include the following: sending emails or distributing advertisements for the club, filling in when the president cannot attend a meeting, or presenting in the event of an "on the spot" presentation.

### Secretary

Some of the secretary's responsibilities might include the following: keeping minutes, taking attendance, and maintaining non-financial records. This information can be used to show the club's growth and where

“

**Thoroughly listening to others in order to understand their perspective, values, and experiences a skill often developed by philosophy majors that is the core of many healthy interactions, as philosophy promotes open-mindedness.**

”

the club has room to improve.

## **Treasurer**

Some of the treasurer's responsibilities might include the following: overseeing any funds and club expenditures. Expenditures might include club shirts or snacks.

## **Conclusion**

Electing people to each of the four roles will help keep your philosophy club going! It's easier to maintain a club than it is to rebuild a club from scratch year after year. If you plan on using this method, it is recommended to set guidelines on how long each person holds the role, and this might come in the form of a constitution or bylaws. It is easy to make each role last a school year, with voting to elect officers. Once this is complete, the founding of a club has been achieved!

# Creating Philosophy Club Presentations

After putting the foundations of a philosophy club together, it is important to focus on the content of club meetings. Normally, philosophy clubs center around group discussion relating to a specific philosophical topic. These topics can be areas of study (e.g. metaphysics, political theory, epistemology) or broad philosophical questions (e.g. What is reality?, Is it possible to achieve world peace?, How do we know what we know?). However, each club needs a person to create and guide these discussions. Here are some reasons why you might consider presenting:

1. You have an idea that you want to run by a group of people.
2. You have a particular interest in an area of philosophy you have not had the opportunity to discuss elsewhere.
3. You enjoy teaching and leading or moderating group discussions.

How a philosophy club picks a presenter and presentation is up to the group, but if you find yourself given the chance to lead a club meeting, you might use this section to help guide the creation of your presentation.

## Types of Philosophy Club Presentations

As with all disciplines, philosophy can be presented in many ways. The following is a list of modes of presenting philosophical content and ideas that you may want to use:

1. PowerPoint: PowerPoints are easy to create and act as discussion guides for you and your classmates. Perhaps you have a complex topic that you need to explain before you discuss it. You can use a PowerPoint to get the idea across and refer back to slides later in the discussion. Always remember to put as few words on a slide as possible. It might be helpful to use bullet points rather than complete sentences. Essentially, consider your PowerPoint as an outline for discussion, not an essay that you are reading aloud.
2. Open Discussion: Presenting like this can be fun and informal. It can also be a guided discussion based on a given topic. For these types of presentations, you may consider having a handout listing important questions, facts, or definitions for everyone to refer back to and to keep conversation on track.
3. Small Groups: Presentations that involve small groups are a great way to make sure that everyone participates in discussion. This style of presenting can be used as a philosophical “warm-up.” For example, if Sandy is presenting on the philosophy behind ancient Japanese monks and Karate, she may split the club into small groups and have them ask the question, “What do you know about Japanese religions?” Then, she can ask, “Can Karate be a religious experience?” At the end of the short conversation, she can group everyone together and have a brief reflection. Essentially, you may consider using this style of presentation if your presentation calls for asking a lot of questions.

It is important to note that these are not the only styles of presenting philosophy. You can also combine any of these together with any other presentation style. Never be afraid to be creative with how you present philosophy!

Additionally, there are many types of topics that you may want to discuss in your club. Because virtually everything can be discussed in a philosophical manner, it is important to create a presentation that is just as

engaging as the topic of discussion. The following is a sample list of types of philosophy topics along with a suitable way to present them:

1. Presentation based on books or articles: If you are presenting on a specific book or article that you find interesting, try to find notable passages to discuss. These passages should represent the thesis, important points the author used to prove the thesis, things that you have questions about, or points that you find particularly interesting. As you are preparing for the discussion, you might find it helpful to annotate the passages you want to present and form your own opinions about them. If the article or passages are short enough, consider providing handouts for the rest of the club so that they can follow along. If you want to save paper, you can put passages on a PowerPoint slide.
2. Generalized Discussion Based on a Topic or Question: If you are a part of a small club and like a more laid-back setting, you can opt to pose a general question as your discussion topic. This type of presentation may wander a bit more than other presentations because broad questions can be answered in many ways. The presenter could act as the moderator for a discussion.

3. Philosopher Biography: Some philosophers write about so many different topics that entire subsections of philosophy are about them. If you want to do a presentation on a specific philosopher, it may be easiest to use a PowerPoint. Talk about the life of the philosopher, their body of work, and their overall contribution to philosophy. It is also fun to hear about why you like them or what insights reading this philosopher has given you.

“

**Philosophy does not just belong in the halls and classrooms of the academic world. It is to be applied to almost every facet of our lives as a way of explaining things that occur within them.**

”

4. Fiction or Pop Culture Presentations: Art and media in all forms can be philosophical. If you are presenting on your favorite show or song or painting, make sure to have a visual or auditory sample to give context for what you are discussing. Even if no one has seen or heard about what you are presenting, you can still discuss what philosophical insights the work has given you! For example, Dib and Iggy have never heard of Gaz's favorite video game for the Game Slave 2 (even though it has a great story, and everyone should totally play it). Gaz can discuss the overall story of the game for context, and then talk about how her favorite parts relate to Kantian Ethics as a critique of Utilitarianism. Even though Dib and Iggy have never played the game, they can still engage based on the brief context and Gaz's arguments.

5. Games: Philosophy games and activities are fun if you want to switch things up! The following is a list of activities you might want to try:

- i. Philosophical Pictionary: Have people write topics, philosophers, and books on cards. Draw what you pick on the board and see if people can guess what you are drawing. Pictionary is a great review game at the end of the year. Because it is casual, it is a good game to play at an end of the year party.
- ii. If I Were a Dog: Split up in groups of three. Each person in the group is assigned a different perspective – an animal, a god, or a person. Answer basic philosophical questions from these views by starting each point with “If I were a god/animal/other person...” Make sure to switch perspectives every so often for the best experience! This acts an exercise in understanding different perspectives, even if you normally have a different opinion on something.

iii. Kahoot!: Kahoot! is an online quiz engine for educators and students. Create a fun quiz or survey for the class to take. Specifically, you can create a survey asking controversial questions to see the general stance everyone has on a given issue. Question submissions are completely anonymous. All you see are the amount of people who chose a specific answer. This is a great activity to discuss group positions, biases, etc.

## **Example Presentations**

The following are suggestions for cool presentations. Otherwise, please feel free to take these presentation topics and build your own!

1. A.I: What does it mean for a computer to know something?
2. Ethics: Are animals worthy of moral consideration?
3. Religion: An analysis of religion in Avatar the Last Airbender
4. Metaphysics: A brief introduction of Cosmology and the Philosophy of Science
5. Politics: A bio of Aristotle and the Philosopher King

## **Tips for the Presenter**

While philosophy is fun, presenting can be scary. The following are a few tips to make sure your presentation runs smoothly:

### **Be prepared, but do not worry if discussion heads in a different direction.**

Philosophical discussion can be riddled with tangents. While it is important to make sure that the general topic of presentation is maintained, do not worry if there is heavy discussion on something that is not in your presentation.

Say Jimmy is presenting on Philosophy of Science, specifically regarding space. Jimmy's friend, Carl, wonders what place llamas have in the universe, especially since they might have a different level of societal contribution as people (even though Carl thinks this is debatable). Carl's contribution to the discussion might deviate slightly from Jimmy's presentation, but still connects to the main topic and inspires fun and insightful conversation.

Jimmy's other friend, Sheen, adds that his favorite super hero, Ultralord, lives in space and is the ruler of the galaxy in his favorite comic book. While this statement is fun, it is ultimately tangential. Jimmy might reel the conversation back in by posing a different question, or making a different point based on what Carl said or Sheen said.

### **Make sure that there is room for discussion.**

Remember that philosophy is meant to be a collaborative effort. Thus, everyone should get the chance to participate. This can sometimes be tricky when using a PowerPoint or giving a philosopher's bio. If you are presenting on a topic that needs a lot of background info, try to ask questions throughout your explanation to let people participate.

For example, Denzel is giving a fairly odd and complex presentation on political theory. Instead of lecturing about his topic for the duration of the club meeting, he should stop after each point and answer

questions, or ask questions that lead him into the next topic. This way, Timmy, AJ, and Chester also get to participate. Denzel will also get new insights on his topic.

### **Never assume that no one will be interested in your topic.**

Philosophy can be and is about everything. If you play your cards right, you can lead a philosophical conversation about practically anything. Say that Danny is really interested in the afterlife and ghosts, but they are worried that his friends, Tuck and Sam, will not be interested in his topic. Even if Tuck and Sam are not usually interested in those topics, perhaps Danny will bring up an interesting point or line of reasoning Sam and Tuck had never considered.

You never know what people will respond to. Maybe your presentation inspires other people in your club to do research on the topic as well. As long as you create an engaging presentation, people will engage in your topic.

### **Other Resources**

For materials containing interesting presentation topics and thought experiments, please check out the following books:

- a. The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten: 100 Experiments for the Armchair Philosopher by Julian Baggini
- b. What If...: Collected Thought Experiments in Philosophy by Peg Tittle
- c. Wittgenstein's Beetle and Other Classic Thought Experiments by Martin Cohen

# The Do's and Don'ts of Philosophy



## DO

Read philosophy that interests you outside of class.

Be open to new perspectives and the possibility that you might be wrong about some things.

Voice disagreements when you have them.

Learn to accept uncertainty sometimes.

Focus on the questions you find the most interesting.

Be humble -- if you ever get the feeling you've got it all figured out, you're probably wrong.



## DON'T

Use class time to show off all the extra reading you did.

Feel that you need to change your view on something just because you encounter an objection.

Let your disagreements turn into disrespect.

Fail to investigate your beliefs.

Give up on difficult questions.

Ignore questions you think aren't related to your main interest.

Let yourself believe that you don't have anything good to say -- if you think you don't, you're probably wrong.



# Why Study Philosophy in College?

College is a chance to take your philosophy studies to the next level. College-level philosophy is not only an opportunity for tremendous personal growth, it can also set you up for career success:



## Career Earnings

Philosophy is one of the best majors for developing highly sought-after skills such as written and verbal communication, abstract thinking, and problem solving. This translates to higher average mid-career salaries than all other non-STEM majors, around \$85,100 per year.

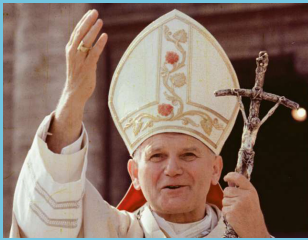
## Grad School

Thinking about grad school? Philosophy majors receive some of the highest scores on a variety of tests grad schools look at for admission including the GMAT, LSAT, and GRE.

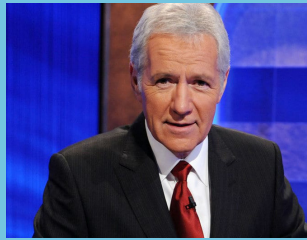
On the GRE, philosophy majors ranked number one in both the analytical writing and verbal portions of the test. The average score for analytical writing out of a possible 6 was 4.4 for philosophy majors, and, out of the 170 possible points, the average score on the verbal section was 160. Even in the quantitative section, with math and other analytical questions, philosophy majors, on average, did better than business majors with an average score of 153 out of 170, tying with biology majors.

# Who Has a Philosophy Degree?

Your engagement with philosophy doesn't need to end when you graduate high school. In fact, there are even more ways to get involved with philosophy as a college student! Colleges offer a wide variety of classes that you can take as a major, a minor or even just individually. As a philosophy student in college, you'll be able to gain a deeper understanding of philosophy than ever before as well as experience everything philosophy has to offer.



**John Paul II**  
Pope and Saint



**Alex Trebek**  
Jeopardy! Host



**David Foster Wallace**  
Novelist



**Ethan Coen**  
Director



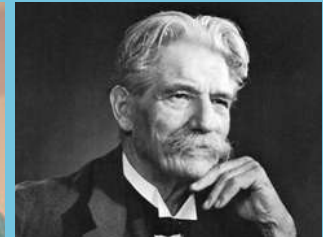
**Ricky Gervais**  
Actor



**Susan Sontag**  
Author and Activist



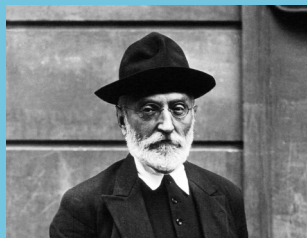
**Matt Groening**  
"Simpsons" Creator



**Albert Schweitzer**  
Nobel Peace Prize



**Susan Sarandon**  
Actor



**Miguel de Unamuno**  
Novelist and Playwright



**Stokely Carmichael**  
Civil Rights Activist



**David Souter**  
Supreme Court Justice



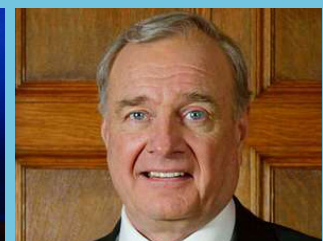
**Philip Glass**  
Composer



**Umberto Eco**  
Novelist



**Carly Fiorina**  
CEO and Philanthropist



**Paul Martin**  
Canadian Prime Minister



**Mary Higgins Clark**  
Novelist



**Juan Williams**  
Journalist



**Larry Sanger**  
Co-Founder of Wikipedia



**Iris Murdoch**  
Novelist

# How to Find Philosophy Departments

Ready to begin looking for somewhere to study philosophy after high school? There are a number of great college search engines that can help you narrow down your options.

Look for sites like BigFuture that let you search schools by major.

## Tips and Tricks for the Search Process:

- It's important to think about what type of learning environment you will function best in. Big research universities often have a very different vibe than small liberal arts colleges. Be sure to factor this in as you search.
- Visit the philosophy department websites for schools you might be interested in. Look to see how their programs are structured and what topics you can study there. Also look for opportunities a school has for you to engage in philosophy beyond the classroom like journals, conferences, and clubs.
- Always try to visit the schools you're most excited about. Definitely try to sit in on a philosophy class. Meet with a member of the philosophy department if possible. This can really give you a better idea of what your experience will be like at a particular school.
- Talk to someone who is currently studying philosophy about their experience. Ask to see if it is possible to sit down with a student when scheduling your visit to the university.



# Life as a Philosophy Major

Majoring in philosophy involves a lot of reading, writing, and coffee. In addition, there are a number of ways to take your philosophy experience beyond the classroom.

## Philosophy Clubs

Many schools have some type of philosophy club, similar to what you may have experienced in high school. These are usually open to all students and can be a way to satisfy your urge to do philosophy even if you aren't able to major in philosophy. If you are a major, this can be a fun way to further your philosophic explorations, often in a more informal way.

“

**Whether solving a problem in a group setting, working on good intellectual habits through advanced education, or bringing up issues in your local community, philosophy will give you the skills to live a creative, rational, and fulfilling life.**

”

## Undergraduate Journals

Academic journals are publications that give people in a particular field the opportunity to showcase their work. This means that you could be a published author when you graduate from college! Papers submitted for consideration to a journal undergo a peer-review process that can give you valuable feedback on your work. There are a number of journals around the country that only publish the philosophy of undergraduates. One such journal is *Stance*, which is produced entirely by undergraduate students at Ball State. Philosophy students at Ball State not only have the opportunity to publish their work, but also to act as the publishers of an international journal.

## Conferences

Conferences are gatherings of people in the philosophy community to share ideas. They typically feature paper presentations, panel discussions, and commentaries on books. Much like journals, conferences are a great opportunity to share your work with others in your field and get ideas for your next project. There

quite a few annual conferences that are dedicated to undergraduate work. Many professional philosophy conferences also feature an undergraduate paper or two. Some conferences may even offer cash prizes for your work. Even if you're not presenting, attending conferences can still be a fun way to engage with the work of other people in your field in real time.

# References

“Advice to Philosophers Seeking a Pre-college Teaching Position.” So You Want to Teach Pre-college Philosophy - The American Philosophical Association. Accessed April 10, 2018. <http://www.apaonline.org/general/custom.asp?page=precollege>.

Concepción, David W, “Reading Philosophy with Background Knowledge and Metacognition,” *Teaching Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (December 2004): 351–368.

Frederick, Shane, “Cognitive Reflection and Decision Making,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 4 (2005): 25–42.

Lone, Jana Mohr, and Michael D. Burroughs, *Philosophy in Education: Questioning & Dialogue in K-12 Classrooms* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Trickey and Topping, “Philosophy for Children”; Millet, Stephen, and Alan Tapper, “Benefits of Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry in Schools,” *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 44, no. 5 (2012): 546–67.

Riley, Sean A., “Building a High School Philosophy Program,” *Teaching Philosophy* 36, no. 3 (September 2013): 239–52.

Trickey, S., and K.J. Topping, “Philosophy for Children: A Systematic Review,” *Research Papers in Education* 19, no. 3 (2004): 365–80.

“Why Study Philosophy.” University of Tennessee Chattanooga. [https://www.utc.edu/philosophy-religion/why\\_study\\_philosophy.php](https://www.utc.edu/philosophy-religion/why_study_philosophy.php) (accessed April 8, 2018).