

# How To Share The Wisdom



*Philosophy  
for Kids!*

**A Perplexed Parent's Guide  
to Philosophy for Kids**

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Illustrated by Mark Hughes

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*How to Share The Wisdom (A Perplexed Parent's Guide to Philosophy for Kids)*

Second Edition published by Red T Media

[www.RedTKids.com](http://www.RedTKids.com)

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## Hey Grown-Ups! This Book Is For You!

### Philosophy For Kids...Really?

It's interesting to see how parents react to the idea of teaching philosophy to their children. They say things like:

- “Really? Kids can do philosophy?”
- “I’ve always wanted to learn about it myself.”
- “What if my child asks questions that I don’t know how to answer?”

What’s interesting is that as they become better acquainted with philosophy, most parents end up saying something like “Oh, she asks questions like that all the time.” or “You wouldn’t believe some of the ideas he comes up with!”

The truth is, your child is already a natural philosopher. According to some experts, even before we learn to talk, we’re already pondering the mysteries of the universe, exploring human nature, and developing our own ideas about life, love and happiness. Some experts even believe that we’re better at doing this when we’re small, when our lives and minds are less cluttered.

## What Can Philosophy Do For My Child?

The philosophy for children movement has been growing in popularity since the 1980's. It recognizes that children are naturally curious about big ideas, and aren't afraid to ask.

Studies have shown that children who do philosophy:

- Develop the ability to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and relationships. This can help with emotional and behavioral issues.
- Develop skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication.
- Think creatively, and are more open to new ideas.
- Carry the skills they learn in philosophy into other subjects, and often show improvement on standardized tests.
- Become interested in important world issues, and become sensitive to other people's thoughts and feelings.
- Become more self-aware, and gain an understanding of why they themselves do and think certain things.
- Feel empowered when they have their ideas recognized, are included in important conversation, and are given the opportunity to articulate what they think and feel.



## What Can Philosophy Do For Me?

Philosophy for children has benefits for parents too.

- Maybe you've been asking philosophical questions for a long time too, and would love the opportunity to explore them in a fun, accessible way.
- Philosophy takes the sting out of saying "I don't know." Questions presented in philosophy may not have clear answers, but that just means there's more room for exploration and discussion.
- Making room for open-ended discussion with your children presents an opportunity to really understand and bond. You'll get to know each other on a whole new level.



## The “ThinkAboutIt” Approach:

Our books and website were created with all of this in mind. We believe that philosophy is for everyone, including kids and their parents, and not just for academics or old, bearded men in togas.

- Our books are fun, colorful, and humorous. They feature a fearless and curious child narrator named Sophia the Wise.
- Through Sophia, our books take on some of philosophy’s most interesting questions, enlisting the help of male and female thinkers from throughout history and around the world.
- Readers are also invited to try out the big ideas presented by Sophia, with hands-on activities and work pages.

We know your kids will gobble up these ideas like candy, but we’re also confident that they’ll start some pretty interesting conversations with parents, older siblings and teachers. You’ll probably hear “Yeah, I’ve been thinking about that” more than once. Our books are designed to get kids acquainted with philosophy, in all its coolness. They are intended to give both children and adults the sense that asking big questions has kept human minds buzzing for millennia.

Don’t be shy. Choose a page, read it with your child, and see what happens. You’ll be pleasantly surprised.



**Let the thinking begin!**

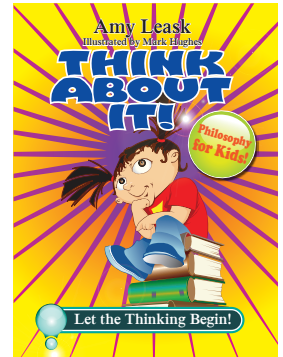
# So, What Is Philosophy, Exactly?

The word “Philosophy” comes from the Greek words Philos (love) and Sophia (wisdom). In other words, philosophy is the love of wisdom. It’s the practice of asking very big questions, ones that often have more than one possible answer. Here is a very small sampling of the types of the philosophical topics covered in our books:

## Philosophy in General

- What It Is
- How It Works
- Ways It Can Help

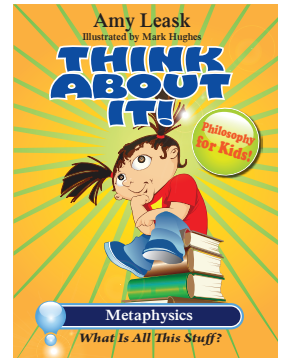
Get started with our introductory book, *Let the Thinking Begin!*



## Metaphysics, or Theory of Reality

- The Relationship Between Mind And Body
- Free Will
- The Nature Of The Universe
- Personal Identity

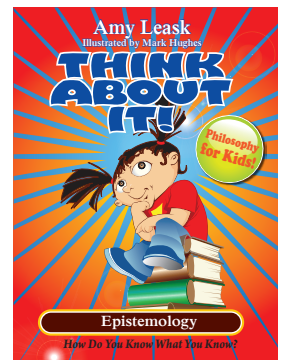
For more ideas like this, check out *Metaphysics: What Is All This Stuff?*



## Epistemology, or Theory of Knowledge and Understanding

- The Role Of Our Senses
- Believing Versus Knowing
- What It Means For Something To Be True

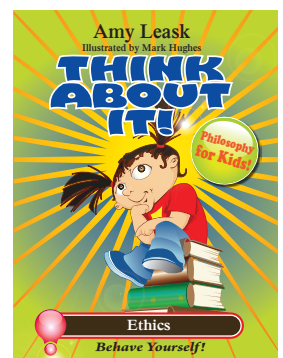
To learn more about this, give *Epistemology: How Do You Know What You Know?* a look.



## Ethics, or Theory of The Good Life

- Right And Wrong
- Rules For Conduct

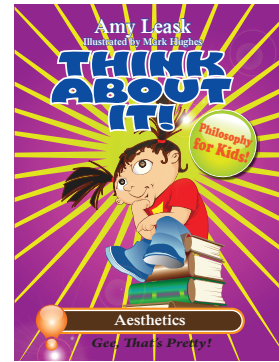
If this sparks your interest, so will *Ethics: Behave Yourself!*



## Aesthetics, or Theory of Beauty and Art

- Definition Of Beauty
- Difference Between Good Art And Not-So-Good Art
- Creativity And Originality

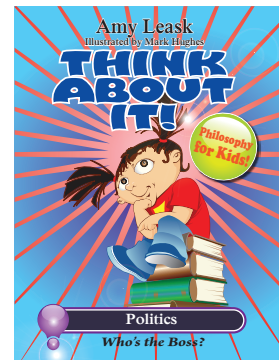
If this sounds appealing, you'll love *Aesthetics: Gee, That's Pretty!*



## Political Philosophy

- Power
- Change
- Fairness
- Justice

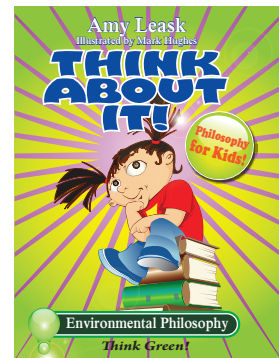
Jump into these ideas with *Politics: Who's the Boss?*



## Environmental Philosophy

- Our Relationship With Nature
- The Right And The Wrong Way To Interact With Our Environment

Grow some new ideas with *Philosophy and the Environment: Go Green!*

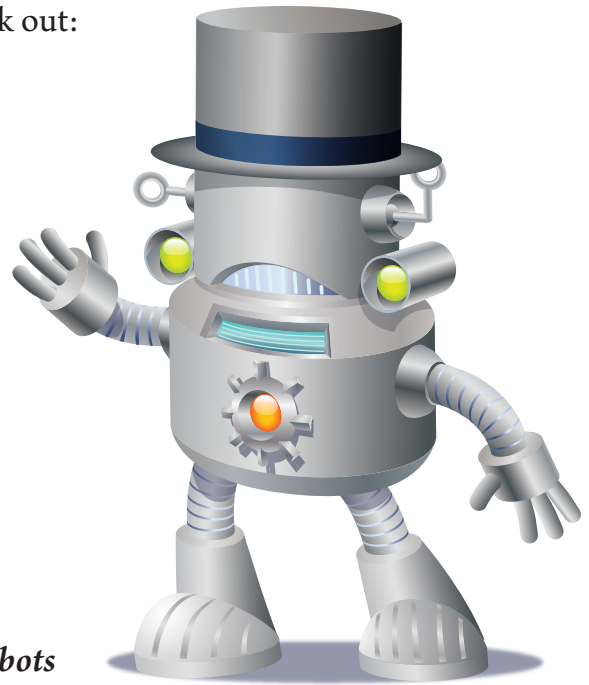


Sound interesting? Well, it is.



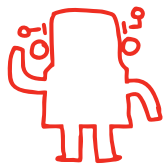


For a philosophical twist on robots, you can check out:



*According to Phil: A Young Thinker's Guide to Robots*

Sure, they look cool, but do you really know what robots are, how they work, or what they can really do? Join Phil Bot (Phil to his friends) as he explores the wide world of robots.



You can also find activities, resources, and other goodies on our website, [www.RedTKids.com](http://www.RedTKids.com), or follow us on **Facebook** (Red T Media) and **Twitter** (RedTKids).

# 10 Rules For Doing Philosophy With Kids

## (These Work In Other Situations Too)

### 1. There is no such thing as a silly question.

- Some of the most interesting theories are found in strange places, and if no one asks, no one will ever find out. Applaud curiosity, and leave no stone unturned!

### 2. Keep your questions open.

- Simple “Yes” and “No” questions don’t make for very interesting discussions. Try to find real, open-ended problems with a variety of possible answers. Begin your questions with “Tell me about this” or “What do you think about...”

### 3. Everyone should have a chance to speak.

- In order for arguments to be balanced and valid, they need to include as many different perspectives as possible. Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable putting in their two cents worth.

### 4. Philosophy should never get personal.

- It’s fine to question ideas or theories, but it’s never okay to insult or attack actual people.

### 5. No prejudice allowed!

- Racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination have no place in philosophy (or anywhere else, for that matter).

### 6. Examples are always welcome.

- Arguments need to be supported. Draw from personal experience, the media or current events. Anything goes!

### 7. Stay on track.

- Don’t let the discussion wander too far. Write down “extra” ideas and save them for another day.

### 8. Always explain why.

- “I agree” or “I disagree” aren’t enough. Ask your child to explain the reasons for their beliefs.

### 9. Take time to review and reflect.

- It’s important to know the ideas, but even more important to develop your own thoughts about them. Whether it’s the day after or a week later, encourage your child to respond to what they’ve learned.

### 10. Write, read and discuss.

- In addition to discussion, give children short passages to read (or read to them), and give them the time to write down or even draw their thoughts and ideas.

This is just a basic list. You and your child will find your own rules to add to the list.

# Already A Philosopher!

Hmmmm...where to begin? How about trying out a few practice activities with your child? The next few pages are just a taste of what's in store! To get the most out of these pages, it's a good idea to first review the 10 rules for doing philosophy, found on pg. 9 of this book.

To begin, have a look at the list below. It's chock-full of questions philosophers have been asking for thousands of years (and are still asking). Put a check mark beside anything you've ever wondered about. You may be surprised at how much deep thinking you've done.

- What is the universe made of? How did it get here, and where is it going?
- What makes me who I am? Is it my body, my mind, or some combination of the two?
- What's the difference between being awake, and dreaming? How do I know that the world in which I live is real, and not just a figment of someone's imagination?
- Am I free to choose my own actions, or am I just like a robot who follows a program?
- Is it possible to travel through time? Why or why not? How would it work?
- Can I trust my senses to tell the truth about the world? If my eyes and ears can play tricks on me, then how do I gather reliable information?
- Who can I trust to tell me the truth? What makes someone a reliable source of facts?
- What does it mean to have language? Can we have thoughts without having some sort of symbols or words to go with them? Are humans the only ones with language?
- What does it mean to have a good life? Does it mean being rich, famous, happy, healthy, or something else?
- How can I figure out the right thing to do? Should right and wrong be the same for everyone, or should each person get their own set of rules?
- Why is it that some people have power, while others don't? What does it mean to be powerful?
- What's the difference between something that's beautiful, and something that's ugly?
- What's the real difference between a human and a non-human? What makes us different from other animals, and from other things?



## Advice From An Old Friend

While studying philosophy, you'll be introduced to a number of great thinkers from throughout history. Some of their ideas may seem extreme, practical, or even crazy. Remember that it's fine to disagree, as long as you can explain why. It's also fine to agree, as long as you can explain why.



Socrates, a Greek philosopher who lived from 469-399 BC, is one of the most well-known philosophers in Western history. Socrates created his own school of philosophy, and was famous for his way of helping students think through an argument without just telling them a specific answer.

Although Socrates never wrote any of his theories down, his students and fellow philosophers did manage to capture a few nuggets of wisdom.

Read the ideas given below and write your reaction to them. What do you think Socrates meant by them? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Quote #1: The unexamined life is not worth living.

Quote #2: The wisest person is the one who admits he doesn't really know anything.

# Biggest Questions Ever

In philosophy, it's not only important to ask questions, but also to evaluate possible answers before deciding which one is the best. Don't worry if there are several answers that seem equally good and don't worry if you find new answers later on. Philosophy is all about collecting and discussing new ideas, not about solving problems once and for all.

What is the biggest, most difficult question you've ever asked? What was it about the question that made it so tricky?

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What are some of the possible answers you've found for this question? Which answer seems to be the best one? What makes this answer seem better than others?

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## Hands-On!

### Suggestions for Activities At Home

Philosophy is not only fun, but it can be as multifaceted as the kids who do it. Challenge your child with a variety of approaches, and don't be afraid to incorporate big ideas into playtime. Here are some suggestions:

#### 1. Role Playing!

Plato himself was famous for writing “dialogues” in which characters discuss various ideas. Your child may enjoy pretending to be actual thinkers, debating an issue, or they may act out a specific scenario featuring a philosophical question. Costumes, props and even sets can add to the experience. Role playing will not only make the experience more humorous, but will also encourage your child to express themselves verbally, and to pick and choose the ideas which are most important.

#### 2. Journaling

Philosophical discussions can bring about strong responses. Encourage your child to write short paragraphs or draw pictures explaining why they agree or disagree with an idea. Encourage them to include their own theories as well. In general, journal responses allow children to feel more confident in their own point of view, and also teach written communication and critical thinking.

#### 3. Show and Tell

After introducing a new concept or theory, ask your child to describe a time when they encountered or thought about something similar. Start with “Has something like this ever happened to you?” Drawing from their own experience will make philosophy more relatable, but will also encourage sensitivity to important issues, and to the feelings and thoughts of others.



#### 4. Argument Jigsaw Puzzle

In some cases, you may be introducing a specific argument to your child. As a visual aid, write each part of the argument on cue cards, shuffle them, and have them put the cards in the correct order. This sort of activity is great for children who are visual learners and problem solvers.

#### 5. Famous Philosophers

When studying specific thinkers, make timelines with your child containing important events, or a poster outlining their origins and areas of interest. Philosophical ideas can make for great art projects, and can also foster a love of world history and geography.

#### 6. Mind-mapping

Philosophers love to categorize ideas and objects. For children who are more visual, use charts, maps, and diagrams to do the same. For kids who love tactile learning, sort ideas into actual boxes or piles.

#### 7. Philosophy Set to Music

After learning about thinkers and theories, have your child create a song or poem that includes these facts. Try choosing their favorite holiday tune or nursery rhyme, and changing the words. Ideas infused with rhythm and melody are not only easier to remember, but are also more accessible.

#### 8. Philosophy in the Media

Quite often, philosophical issues are the basis for stories, movies, and television shows. Find examples from your child's favorite shows, music and films. Do the characters do or say things that a philosopher might say? Do the situations portrayed have any major lessons similar to those taught by philosophers? This presents children not only with the opportunity to learn new ideas and questions, but to evaluate the reliability of the media in general.

#### 9. Philosophy in a Story

Read a fairy tale, a parable, or a short story that deals with a philosophical issue. For example, what does "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" have to tell us about believing everything we hear? Children who are already avid readers will jump at the chance to find philosophy in their favorite stories, and activities such as this can encourage literacy in all types of learners.

#### 10. Become a Junior Philosopher

Ask your child to imagine that they are a famous philosopher. What questions will they ask? What part of philosophy interests them most? What do they really want to know? Let your child know that his or her ideas are important, and may inspire others to think big!

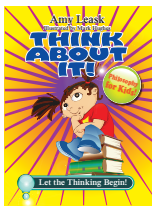
# A Basic Philosophy Timeline:

When learning about something new, it's always nice to have a little perspective. Philosophy has quite a history, and both you and your child are in the process of adding to it. Take time to appreciate how many thinkers have gone before!

Who?	Where?	When?
Buddha	India	563-483 BC
Confucius	China	551-479 BC
Socrates	Greece	470-399 BC
Plato	Greece	428-347 BC
Diogenes	Greece	412-323 BC
Aristotle	Greece	348-322 BC
Hypatia	Egypt	370-415 AD
Empress Wu Zetian	China	625-705 AD
Avicenna	Persia (Iran)	980-1037 AD
St. Teresa of Avila	Spain	1515-1582 AD
Thomas Hobbes	England	1588-1679 AD
Rene Descartes	France	1596-1650 AD
John Locke	England	1632-1704 AD
Baruch Spinoza	The Netherlands	1632-1677 AD
Gottfreid Leibniz	Germany	1646-1716 AD
Anton Wilhelm Amo	Ghana	1703-1759 AD
David Hume	Scotland	1711-1776 AD
Immanuel Kant	Germany	1724-1804 AD
Jeremy Bentham	England	1748-1832 AD
Mary Wollstonecraft	England	1759-1797 AD
Chief Seattle	United States	1780-1866 AD
John Stuart Mill	England	1806-1873 AD
Soren Kierkegaard	Denmark	1813-1855 AD
William James	United States	1842-1910 AD
Friedrich Nietzsche	Germany	1844-1900 AD
John Dewey	United States	1859-1952 AD
George Santayana	Spain/United States	1863-1952 AD
Bertrand Russell	England	1872-1970 AD
Martin Buber	Austria	1878-1965 AD
Jean-Paul Sartre	France	1905-1980 AD
Ayn Rand	Russia/United States	1905-1982 AD
Hannah Arendt	Germany	1906-1975 AD
Rachel Carson	United States	1907-1964 AD
Simone de Beauvoir	France	1908-1986 AD
Simone Weil	France	1909-1943 AD
Marshall MacLuhan	Canada	1911-1980 AD
Iris Murdoch	England	1919-1999 AD
John Rawls	United States	1921-2002 AD
Val Plumwood	Australia	1938-2008 AD



## Ready for even more big ideas? Check out these other titles from Enable Publishing!



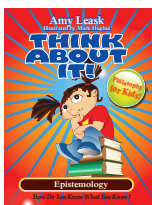
### **Let the Thinking Begin!**

What is philosophy anyway, and how do you do it? Get started on your journey into some of the most amazing ideas ever, with your guide, Sophia the Wise!



### **Metaphysics: What Is All This Stuff?**

Daringly debate what is real, what is imaginary, and what makes us who we are!



### **Epistemology: How Do You Know What You Know?**

Quibble over quandaries like “Can we trust our five senses?” and “How do we know when something is true?”



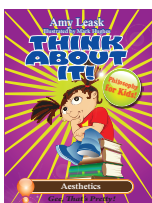
### **Ethics: Behave Yourself!**

Ponder propositions about what’s right, what’s wrong, and all the stuff in between!



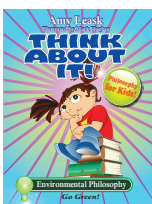
### **Politics: Who's the Boss?**

Intrepidly investigate ideas about power, change, and the way we make important decisions!



### **Aesthetics: Gee, That's Pretty!**

Frolic fearlessly through the magical world of beauty, art and creativity!



### **Philosophy and The Environment:**

**Go Green!** Venture valiantly into the animal kingdom, our environment, and how we think we fit into both!



### **According to Phil: A Young Thinker's Guide to Robots**

Join Phil Bot (Phil to his friends) as he explores the wide world of robots. Includes fun facts, high-tech history, and wild, wonderful worksheets.

**I share this organization's innovative materials at my workshops... I applaud such an enthusiastic effort.**  
~Marietta McCarty, author *Little Big Minds*, Nautilus Book Award Winner

**The *ThinkAboutIt* books are splendid in particular. These books can open your children's eyes.**  
~Peter Cave, author *Do Llamas Fall in Love?*