

■ A-Level Religious Studies Summer Preparation Pack

🔑 Aims:

- Introduce students to core philosophical and ethical questions
 - Build confidence in reading, thinking, and writing about abstract ideas
 - Encourage curiosity, reflection, and open-mindedness
 - Develop familiarity with key thinkers, concepts and terminology
 - Cultivate a reflective journal of ideas, questions and beliefs
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🧠 SECTION A: Philosophy of Religion

1. Big Questions: What is Philosophy of Religion? (30 mins)

Task:

- Watch: [CrashCourse Philosophy - What is Philosophy?](#)
- Reflect on questions like:
 - Does God exist?
 - Why is there suffering in the world?
 - Can miracles happen?
 - What happens when we die?

Write: A list of *three* questions you personally find most interesting or challenging – explain why.

2. Arguments for the Existence of God (1 hour)

Task: Research three major philosophical arguments:

- The **Cosmological** Argument
- The **Teleological** (Design) Argument
- The **Ontological** Argument

For each:

- What is the main idea?
- Who is associated with the argument?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Create a one-page summary with bullet points, diagrams or visual metaphors.

3. Evil and Suffering (45 mins)

Task:

- Research the **Problem of Evil** and the difference between **moral** and **natural evil**.
- What is the **Inconsistent Triad**?
- What is a **theodicy**, and how do Christians try to explain suffering?

Write: How does suffering challenge belief in a loving, powerful God?

4. Religious Experience & Miracles (45 mins)

Task: Find definitions and examples of:

- Mystical or conversion experiences (e.g. St Teresa of Ávila, Nicky Cruz, or a modern-day account)
- A claimed miracle (e.g. Lourdes, incorruptible saints, or a healing event)

Reflect: Are these convincing evidence of God? Why or why not?

5. Religious Language & Life After Death (1 hour)

Task: Research the question:

- Can we speak meaningfully about God?
Explore terms like:
- Analogy
- Symbol
- Verification principle
- Falsification

Bonus: Research beliefs about the soul and life after death (dualism, resurrection, reincarnation).

Create a table: Summarise three different views on the afterlife and what evidence or reasoning supports them.

SECTION B: Ethics and Religion

6. What is Ethics? (30 mins)

Task:

- Watch: [Wireless Philosophy: What is Ethics?](#)
- Reflect on questions like:
 - Is there a right or wrong way to live?
 - Can we ever justify killing?

- Should animals have rights?

Write: A short paragraph: *What does it mean to live a good life?*

7. Major Ethical Theories (1-1.5 hours)

Task: Research these three ethical theories:

- **Utilitarianism** (Bentham)
- **Kantian Ethics** (Kant)
- **Natural Law** (Aquinas)

For each, include:

- A summary of the core principle
- Strengths and criticisms
- One real-life example of how the theory might guide a moral decision

Create revision cards or mind maps for each theory.

8. Issues of Life and Death (45 mins)

Task: Research:

- **Euthanasia**
- **Abortion**
- **Animal testing**
- **Factory farming**

For each:

- What are the key ethical debates?
- What do religious perspectives say (e.g. Christian, Buddhist)?

Write: A brief position piece (150-200 words) on *one* of these issues, giving both sides of the argument and your personal view.

9. Meta-Ethics & Free Will (45 mins)

Task: Explore these two concepts:

Meta-Ethics:

- What do words like “good” or “bad” really mean?
- Research *emotivism*, *naturalism* and *intuitionism*

Free Will & Moral Responsibility:

- Are we truly free to make choices?
- What is determinism?

Write: Do you believe people are morally responsible for their actions? Why or why not?

10. Conscience (30 mins)

Task:

- Research: What is the conscience?
- Explore religious and psychological perspectives (e.g. Aquinas, Freud)

Answer: Is the conscience a reliable guide to moral decision-making?

OPTIONAL: Wider Reading & Media

Recommended Reading:

- *The Puzzle of Ethics* by Peter Vardy
- *Think* by Simon Blackburn
- *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder (intro to philosophy through fiction)
- *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* by Simon Blackburn
- *The Philosophy Gym* by Stephen Law

Podcasts / YouTube:

- *Philosophy Vibe* (YouTube)
- *Philosophy Bites* podcast
- *Wireless Philosophy* (YouTube channel)

Websites to Explore:

- BBC Ethics Guide
 - [Philosophy Now](#)
 - RE:Online
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Final Task: Summer Philosophy & Ethics Journal

Keep a journal or scrapbook over the summer. Include:

- Thoughts on philosophical or ethical questions
- News stories that raise moral dilemmas
- Personal beliefs or questions that arise
- Quotes, images or artwork that relate to key themes

- Any questions you'd like to explore in class