

You Can... **Explore actions and consequences**

The idea that actions have consequences is an important concept for children to grasp. It helps them to develop responsibility for their own behaviour, a key factor in successful learning.

Thinking points

- As far as it is sensible or safe, it is best for children to discover the natural consequences of their actions. Where young people learn by making their own mistakes, this motivates them not to repeat an action in the future.
- Sometimes, adults will need to apply external consequences to change a child's behaviour, for example removing privileges or applying sanctions. The younger the child, the more immediate the consequences must be, so that they make the link between the action and the outcome.
- The ideal is, of course, for children to learn to take responsibility for their actions without any external controls. In the wider world, society enforces consequences (such as, prison) on those who cannot stick to our laws and moral codes.
- The consequences of our actions can, of course, be positive as well as negative!

Tips, ideas and activities

- Use the photocopiable sheet on page 58 ('Chain of consequences'). This is designed to get your pupils looking at the chain of events that might be set in motion by a single action. The chains might include both positive and negative consequences. Before tackling the activity:
 - Talk through the concept of consequences with your class, thinking about how one action can lead on to others.
 - Discuss the concept of logic. Use the sheet to try out some sample chains of consequences that would make sense.
 - Ask the children to complete the sheet.
- A series of consequences offers a good way of creating a story outline. After completing their chains, ask your pupils to use them as the basis for a story.
- Discuss the religious belief that the way we behave in life will have consequences for us after we die. Explore the thinking of different faiths on this subject, for example, the concepts of:
 - heaven and hell
 - reincarnation
 - karma.
- Talk with your class about short- and long-term consequences, encouraging them to think beyond the immediate action–consequence. Give them some scenarios and ask them to consider the likely outcomes within different time scales. For example, a child who regularly misses school could:
 - Short term: find it hard to make friends and keep up with the learning
 - Medium term: fail exams or be suspended from school
 - Long term: be unable to get a job, get involved in crime to make money and end up in jail.
- Use Newton's third law of motion to encourage some thinking about consequences; 'For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction'. You could talk about:
 - the science behind this law
 - whether the law applies to human behaviour as well
 - whether we can 'get away with' bad actions without suffering consequences
 - whether a negative action can have positive consequences.