

## Ethics

In sociology, **ethical considerations** involve making sure that your research is not offending or harming anyone – that you are doing the right thing.

Situation	Acceptable /not?	Why? – ethical principle
1. Jill does some research & publishes her results in a newspaper alongside her participants' names	No	<b>Anonymity</b> – normally we make sure that no names are mentioned in our finished report, this is so that people don't know who we did our research on so their identities are private
2. Susan is a teacher & decides to do some research on her class without telling them	No	<b>Informed consent</b> – normally we make sure that our respondents know what our research will involve, and what it will be about. Then we should ask them (or their parent) whether they agree to take part.
3. Jim is doing some research into behaviour in extreme situations and takes his participants to a dangerous cliff path before asking them questions	No	<b>Protection from harm</b> - we should normally make sure that we don't put our participants in dangerous or distressing situations. This might include dangerous situations (cliff path), or even asking them questions which they might find very upsetting.
4. Ali is managing some researchers & wants to find out about a mass fight. She sends one of her researchers to get involved to learn about gang warfare.	No	<b>Not placing yourself in harms way</b> – as researchers we have a duty not to place ourselves in harm when we do research. So for example, doing research in a dangerous situation (like a gang fight or with some criminal groups) might not be ethical.
5. Mary goes into a shopping centre to watch (observe) how people behave around lots of shoppers	Yes	Although we should gain <b>informed consent</b> from participants, if we're just watching ( <b>observing</b> ) participants and make sure their <b>anonymity</b> is protected, then it's ok to not seek permission.
6. David tells his participants what his research will involve – interviews about things that terrify them - and then ask whether they want to take part. He makes sure they're ok after the interviews.	Yes	Because David makes sure the participants are ok after the interviews (he <b>debriefs</b> them), and gains <b>informed consent</b> (by telling them what will happen before they take part) David's research is probably ethically ok – although he should make sure his participants are <b>protected from harm</b> as much as possible.
7. When John does research into violent criminals he makes sure the results he publishes don't identify the criminals he talked to or what crimes they were involved in	Yes	Phil keeps <b>confidentiality</b> – he makes sure personal details about the individual participants are kept between him (the researcher) and the participant themselves. This way they stay <b>anonymous</b> (because no names were used) and they can't be identified by individual facts about the criminals.