

# 29 Prompts for Reflection on Your Integrity

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[A Man's Life](#)

The word integrity is related to the roots of words like “integrate” and “entire,” and its Latin root means “wholeness.” Integrity thus implies the state of being complete, undivided, intact, and unbroken. Such a state contrasts with one that is scattered, fragmented, and incomplete.

When you profess to one principle, but act in a way contrary to it; when you say you’ll do something, but fail to fulfill that promise; when you disregard a business’s or your employer’s rules, even though you implicitly agreed to them in using its service and taking your job; when you act one way as an anonymous avatar online, and another in real life — in short, when you treat others in a way you wouldn’t want to be treated yourself — you create a rupture, a rift, in your character. You divide one part of yourself from another.

In contrast, when you act in line with your conscience, and follow the golden rule, your life becomes a consistent, unified whole. Integrity is really the bond that holds a man’s other virtues together; it is the mark of a man who has successfully integrated all good principles.

It behooves us, then, to regularly check in on how we’re living day to day, and with that in mind, we’ve created 30 questions designed to act as prompts for reflection on your integrity. I originally got this idea from *What’s Your Emotional Age?* — a book published in 1936. I took some of the questions provided in it, updating some with more modern language, and then created more having to do with contemporary ethical quandaries.

Some of the questions may seem to deal with very small, even trivial issues, where the decision one makes doesn’t really carry much moral weight. But research has shown that people don’t suddenly wake up one day and commit a huge ethical violation; instead, studies have demonstrated that big moral mistakes are invariably preceded by smaller ones. The slide towards ethical ambiguity begins with little, seemingly insignificant choices. Once someone makes such a sidestep, he rationalizes his choice, and his view of what is right and wrong subtly shifts. His ability to commit such acts, and still see himself as a good person, increases. To soothe any cognitive dissonance that remains, he will then act dishonestly again, to further cement and justify his choice. A cycle thus begins that can put a man on a path that takes him further and further from his original principles and intentions.

Thus, in both small choices and big, it pays to be vigilant in assessing whether we’re acting with integrity. It requires the acknowledgment that we can be dishonest by way of commission (a direct action) and omission (the failure to do something) alike. And it calls for the kind of frank, unflinching self-awareness born of introspection. Reflecting on the questions below, as well as those you come up with yourself, will be a help in this ongoing, and never-ending, process.

1. Have you ever borrowed a book or another item from a friend without returning it?
2. If a cashier hands you more change than you’re entitled to, without noticing it, do you accept it?
3. Have you ever borrowed small sums of money and failed to return them?
4. Do you “theater hop,” watching two movies even though you only paid for one?
5. Have you ever kept somebody else’s newspaper or magazine when it was wrongly delivered to your home?
6. Have you ever returned goods as damaged or defective when you yourself damaged them?

7. Have you ever sent a text, had an online interaction, or searched the internet for something you would be ashamed to have your significant other read?
8. Did you ever keep library books or DVDs without paying for them?
9. If you find a wallet or purse with money in it, do you attempt to find the owner or give it to an official, or do you keep it and say nothing?
10. Did you ever buy something at a store, use it once with entire satisfaction, but then return it and claim it to be unsatisfactory?
11. If you could obtain a million dollars by some shady trick without much danger of being found out, would you take it?
12. Did you ever take a towel or other object from a hotel?
13. In school did you ever cheat on tests or assignments?
14. Have you ever “ghosted” someone you were dating — ceased communications without offering an explanation?
15. Have you ever taken some small thing at a store — when nobody was looking — a piece of candy or fruit or even a small piece of merchandise?
16. Have you ever tried to get a child’s price on a meal or attraction for a child who in fact exceeded the age limit for the discount?
17. Did you ever push ahead of somebody in line or get ahead of your rightful turn?
18. Do you accept a paycheck for 40 hours of work, when you really do significantly fewer and spend a lot of your hours goofing around/surfing the internet?
19. Are you currently in a romantic relationship you know you’re going to end, but continue to delay having the break-up conversation?
20. If you get to the parking lot of a store, and realize there’s an item in your shopping cart you didn’t pay for, do you go back inside to pay for it or take it home with the rest of your items?
21. Do you show up for meetings and appointments at the time you agreed to be there?
22. Do you visit a blog/website (which costs the site’s owner money in server costs) while using ad-block, without financially supporting the site in another way?
23. Have you ever inflated or outright fabricated something on your resume?
24. Have you ever accepted the credit for an idea or project that was really due someone else?
25. Have you ever taken home your employer’s office supplies for personal use?
26. Have you ever made an anonymous comment online that you would have been ashamed to have attached to your real name?
27. Have you ever framed and filtered a picture on Instagram in a way that made the experience depicted seem far more interesting/exciting/exotic than it really was?
28. Have you ever said you’d go do something and failed to show up?
29. Have you ever disclosed a piece of information to others that a friend told you in absolute confidence?

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN YOUR ACTIVITES SECTION:**

1. **What is the authors’ definition of Integrity?**
2. **Answer each of the 29 questions with a YES/NO. Were there any questions that were easy? Difficult? What was the hardest to answer?**
3. **How are choices involved in determining ones’ integrity?**
4. **How is the concept of integrity involved in leadership?**
5. **How does the concept of integrity apply to high school sports? How does it apply to sports leadership?**