



## Bringing co-operative values to education

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### Co-operative Values and Principles

Values are fundamental beliefs and can be described as the way we live our lives. Principles are the guidelines that enable us to put our values into practice. There are six cooperative values and four ethical values. Most retailers will subscribe to the ethical values of honesty and openness, social responsibility and caring for others. However, it is the combination of the six co-operative values that make co-operatives a different kind of business.

These are:

1. **Self help** - in co-operatives people help each other whilst helping themselves by working together for mutual benefit.
2. **Self responsibility** - individuals within co-operatives act responsibly and play a full part in the organisation.
3. **Democracy** - a co-operative will be structured so that members have control over the organisation.
4. **Equality** - each member has equal rights, "irrespective of race, creed or political belief" – co-operatives have been doing this since 1844, not as a result of recent equality legislation.
5. **Equity** - members will be treated fairly and justly and receive benefits according to their contribution.
6. **Solidarity** - members will support each other and other co-operatives.

**Co-operatives also share seven principles** - which enable them to put their values into practice.

These are:

1. **Voluntary and open membership** - co-operatives are voluntary organisations open to everyone willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without discrimination.
2. **Democratic member control** - all members have an equal voice and a right to participate in decisions and policy making. Officials and elected representatives are accountable to the membership.
3. **Member economic participation** - the capital of a co-operative is controlled democratically by its members and for their benefit. The basis of the allocation of surpluses is approved by the members.
4. **Autonomy and independence** - co-operatives should always be controlled by their members, even when they enter into agreements with the Government and other organisations.
5. **Education, training and information** - co-operatives are committed to the development of their members, representatives and staff in order to make the cooperative effective. They inform the public and young people about the benefits of co-operation.
6. **Co-operation among co-operatives** - co-operatives work together at local, regional national and international levels to achieve their aims.
7. **Concern for the community** - co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.