

The Centre for Effective Altruism's understanding of effective altruism and its guiding principles

What is effective altruism?

Effective altruism is about using evidence and reason to figure out how to benefit others as much as possible, and taking action on that basis.

What is the effective altruism community?

The effective altruism community is a global community of people who care deeply about the world, make benefiting others a significant part of their lives, and use evidence and reason to figure out how best to do so.

Putting effective altruism into practice means acting in accordance with its core principles:

The guiding principles of effective altruism

Commitment to Others:

We take the well-being of others very seriously, and are willing to take significant personal action in order to benefit others. What this entails can vary from person to person, and it's ultimately up to individuals to figure out what significant personal action looks like for them. In each case, however, the most essential commitment of effective altruism is to actively try to make the world a better place.

Scientific Mindset:

We strive to base our actions on the best available evidence and reasoning about how the world works. We recognise how difficult it is to know how to do the most good, and therefore try to avoid overconfidence, to seek out informed critiques of our own views, to be open to unusual ideas, and to take alternative points of view seriously.

Openness:

We are a community united by our commitment to these principles, not to a specific cause. Our goal is to do as much good as we can, and we evaluate ways to do that without committing ourselves at the outset to any particular cause. We are open to focusing our efforts on any group of beneficiaries, and to using any reasonable methods to help them. If good arguments or evidence show that our current plans are not the best way of helping, we will change our beliefs and actions.

Integrity:

Because we believe that trust, cooperation, and accurate information are essential to doing good, we strive to be honest and trustworthy. More broadly, we strive to follow those rules of good conduct that allow communities (and the people within them) to thrive. We also value the reputation of effective altruism, and recognise that our actions reflect on it.

Collaborative Spirit:

We affirm a commitment to building a friendly, open, and welcoming environment in which many different approaches can flourish, and in which a wide range of perspectives can be evaluated on their merits. In order to encourage cooperation and collaboration between people with widely varying circumstances and ways of thinking, we resolve to treat people of different worldviews, values, backgrounds, and identities kindly and respectfully.

Endorsements from other organisations and individuals

The following organisations wish to voice their support for these definitions and guiding principles:

- .impact
- 80,000 Hours
- Animal Charity Evaluators
- Charity Science
- Effective Altruism Foundation
- Effective Altruism Netherlands
- Foundational Research Institute
- Future of Life Institute
- Giving for Impact
- Raising for Effective Giving
- The Life You Can Save

Additionally, some individuals voice their support:

- Elie Hassenfeld of GiveWell and the Open Philanthropy Project
- Holden Karnofsky of GiveWell and the Open Philanthropy Project
- Seán Ó hÉigartaigh of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk
- Toby Ord of the Future of Humanity Institute
- Peter Singer
- Nate Soares of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute

This should not be taken as a comprehensive list of organisations or people active in the area of effective altruism.