

## Summer Learning 2026 Religious Studies A-level

Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies is a great subject to help you build a wide range of skills, including improving your skills as a writer, speaker, and thinker.

Over the summer you can read, watch and listen to interesting ideas and think about the opinions expressed. How far do they match your own views? What might someone say if they had a very different opinion?

**Reading** good quality writing is the best way of improving your own writing. As you read a good writer, you will gain a better understanding of the meanings of new words and the ways in which carefully chosen words and punctuation can add real emphasis to someone's argument. Different writers express themselves in different ways, and by reading them you will develop your own 'voice'. Reading also helps with more basic skills such as spelling, because if you see a word written down often enough, you will know when it 'looks right' when you write the same word yourself.

**Thinking skills** can be developed if you try to take a questioning attitude to the things you watch, hear and read. Do you agree with what's being said? If you watch a film where people have different attitudes towards something, which do you agree with most, or least, and why?

Here are some different activities and exercises for you try. Some of the topics can be quite sensitive, so if the activity involves an issue that might make you upset, choose a different one.

### Reading activities

Here are some books and some online resources you could try.

Reading *anything* of good quality, even if it's a novel or a book about an entirely different topic, is always helpful for improving your skills, because you are practising your comprehension skills as well as practising understanding different ways in which writers express their ideas. Your own writing will improve, the more you read.

1. **Read a quality newspaper** such as The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent. The only one that is free online is The Guardian. Look for articles relating to ethical issues. Consider the point of view of the writer and any of the different arguments and ideas expressed.

See one articles below.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/18/death-on-demand-has-euthanasia-gone-too-far-netherlands-assisted-dying>

## Books

2. **The Sage Train** – Nicky Hansell. This book explores in an imaginative way the lives and thought of some of the philosophers we will be studying.
3. **A Little History of Philosophy** – Nigel Warbuton. In short chapters, this book explores the philosophies of many different scholars.
4. **God Matters/Ethics Matters/Bible Matters Peter and Charlotte Vardy** – this series of non-fiction books is about issues in religion and philosophy, very readable and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy them. You can dip in and out of different chapters rather than having to start at the beginning and work through to the end.
5. **The Diving Bell and the Butterfly** -Jean Dominique Bauby. Deals with a man living with 'locked in syndrome' and his fight to live. We use him as a case study for the topic of euthanasia.
6. **History of Christianity** Nick Page
7. **The pig that wants to be eaten** – Julian Baggini
8. **The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy** – A novel by Douglas Adams
9. **Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life** by Clare Mac Cumhail and Rachael Wiseman
10. **Justice. What is the right thing to do?** Michael Sandal

## Some things to watch, listen and think about:

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing, rather than just sitting in front of them:

**The Good Place** – the students at Notre Dame really recommend this show to help them understand ethics.

**The Matrix** – Good to understand the ideas of Plato

**My Sister's Keeper** – useful in terms of many ethical issues

**The Truman Show** – Free will, relationship between a 'creator and the created'

**Jesus of Nazareth** – Youtube – entire series. If you are unfamiliar with Christianity, then watching this life of Jesus is will give you a good idea of the back ground.

Crash Course in Philosophy [ 10 minute explanation on Youtube]

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A\\_CAKYt3GY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKYt3GY)

Beyond Belief – BBC radio on belief – lots of different programmes to choose from

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s6p6/episodes/player>

BBC A History of Ideas <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04bwydw> Animated short clips exploring different philosophical ideas often with modern culture

Michael Sandal's famous Harvard lectures on Justice – interesting and interactive  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBdfcR-8hEY&list=PL30C13C91CFFEFEA6&index=1>