



What is fairness?

Fairness means behaving decently and treating others, often people who are not equal, in a just and honest manner.

www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Fairness#bedeutungen

Fair behaviour is important in almost every part of life. In sports, for example, following the rules (fair play) is very important. Fairness can be seen in sports competitions, where athletes always follow the rules and respect their opponents as partners. This shows the true spirit of fair play. However, unfair behaviour in sports – like doping, violent fouls, and insulting others – often appears in the media. In society, legal certainty, fairness, and a fair trial are essential and form an important part of democracy. Fairness is important in the workplace as well, particularly when weighing the interests of employers and employees. One worrying development in this context is, for example, wage dumping.

Rules can help to ensure fairness, but this is not always the case. That is why fair behaviour requires not only the ability to follow rules but also the ability to discuss and critically evaluate them. Whether the (game) rules are fair can, for example, be judged using a formal principle developed by the philosopher John Rawls for just solutions:

“A solution is just if all parties involved can agree to it, provided that no one knows which role they will assume in the negotiation process.”

C. Schmid, Fairness und Fairplay aus pädagogischer Sicht. [...], in: M. Dimitriou/G. Schweiger (Hg.), Fairness und Fairplay [...], Springer: Wiesbaden 2015, S. 167ff.

Fairtrade, Fairfood, Fairclothes

Fairness is put into practice through numerous initiatives and organizations. For example, in Austria, fairtrade towns have been established that support fair trade and actively contribute to the global fight against poverty (www.fairtrade.net/at-de/mach-mit/fairtradecommunity/aktiv-in-der-gemeinde.html). Likewise, large-scale events are sometimes promoted as ‘green events’, highlighting their commitment to sustainability (e.g., www.bmluk.gv.at/themen/klima-und-umwelt/nachhaltigkeit/green-economy-und-green-finance/green_events.html). Citizens also form cooperatives to promote the consumption of regional food and bring it back to local tables (<https://foodcoops.at>). Fairness plays a role in reducing food waste as well. For example, food that is no longer needed is often donated to social institutions (www.wien.gv.at/umweltschutz/abfall/lebensmittel/fakten.html). Raising awareness about the production conditions of goods from countries such as those in Asia – where workers frequently receive very low wages and work under poor conditions – is an important part of campaigns promoting eco-friendly clothing. <https://greenpeace.at/news/5-tipps-fuer-einen-nachhaltigen-modekonsum>

net/at-de/mach-mit/fairtradecommunity/aktiv-in-der-gemeinde.html). Likewise, large-scale events are sometimes promoted as ‘green events’, highlighting their commitment to sustainability (e.g., www.bmluk.gv.at/themen/klima-und-umwelt/nachhaltigkeit/green-economy-und-green-finance/green_events.html). Citizens also form cooperatives to promote the consumption of regional food and bring it back to local tables (<https://foodcoops.at>).

Fairness plays a role in reducing food waste as well. For example, food that is no longer needed is often donated to social institutions (www.wien.gv.at/umweltschutz/abfall/lebensmittel/fakten.html). Raising awareness about the production conditions of goods from countries such as those in Asia – where workers frequently receive very low wages and work under poor conditions – is an important part of campaigns promoting eco-friendly clothing. <https://greenpeace.at/news/5-tipps-fuer-einen-nachhaltigen-modekonsum>

No social peace without fairness?

Conflicts often arise in everyday life and in human interactions. Appreciative communication, respect for the person you are talking to, and tolerance of differing opinions can help creating more fairness and a fairer coexistence. Living fairness in social, economic, and legal spheres could change the world for better. It is founded on humanism and mutual respect.