

OFFLINE

The Use of Scenarios in Computer Ethics Studies²⁷

The following vignettes can be used in an open and frank discussion of computer ethics. Review each scenario carefully and respond to each question using a form of the following statement, choosing the description you consider most appropriate: *I feel the actions of this person were (very ethical/ethical/neither ethical nor unethical/unethical/very unethical).* Then, justify your response.

1. A scientist developed a theory that required proof through the construction of a computer model. He hired a computer programmer to build the model, and the theory was shown to be correct. The scientist won several awards for the development of the theory, but he never acknowledged the contribution of the developer programmer.

The scientist's failure to acknowledge the computer programmer was:

2. The owner of a small business needed a computer-based accounting system. He identified the various inputs and outputs he felt were required to satisfy his needs. Then he showed his design to a computer programmer and asked if she could implement such a system. The programmer knew she could because she had developed much more sophisticated systems in the past. In fact, she thought the design was rather crude and would soon need several major revisions. But she didn't voice her thoughts because the business owner didn't ask, and she wanted to be hired to implement the needed revisions.

The programmer's decision not to point out the design flaws was:

3. A student found a loophole in his university's computer system that allowed him access to other students' records. He told the system administrator about the loophole, but continued to access student records until the problem was corrected two weeks later.

The student's action in searching for the loophole was:

4. The student's action in continuing to access others' records for two weeks was:

4. The system administrator's failure to correct the problem sooner was:

4. A computer user ordered an accounting system from a popular software vendor's Web site. When he received his order, he found that the store had accidentally sent him a very expensive word-processing program as well as the accounting package he had ordered. The invoice listed only the accounting package. The user decided to keep the word-processing program.

The customer's decision to keep the word-processing program was:

5. A programmer at a bank realized that she had accidentally overdrawn her checking account. She made a small adjustment in the bank's accounting system so that her account would not incur a service charge. As soon as she deposited

funds that made her balance system.

The programmer's modification was:

6. A computer programmer bought a new computer. He would frequently go to his computer to use his employer's computer fact that he was entering the desk each time he entered.

The programmer's weekend use was:

7. A student in a computer class frequently used her class homework spreadsheet packages. Occasionally she used her part-time job during the student's use of the computer.

If the student had done her homework, her use of the computer was:

8. A university student learned to use the software to complete her assignment that copying software was forbidden anyway to complete her work assignment.

If the student destroyed her copy of the software, her action in copying the software was:

8. If the student forgot to destroy her copy of the software, her action in copying the software was:

If the student never intended to destroy the software, her action in copying the software was:

9. A university student found out that a "pirate" section of illegally downloaded software was distributed to several other students.

The student's actions in downloading the software were:

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10. An engineer needed a program to perform a task. He found a computer programmer who would only hire the programmer if he could find an error in the engineer's code.