

The Tech Company Dilemma

Role-Play Simulation

Skill: Ethical Reasoning & Technology Trade-offs

45–60 Minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 10–14 — This age group can grasp competing stakeholder interests and work through complex moral reasoning without needing simplified "good guy/bad guy" narratives.

WHAT YOU NEED

Index cards or paper slips

Markers or pens

Timer

Play money or tokens (optional)

ACTIVITY STEPS

01

Set the scene (5 min): Your family is now the leadership team of "FutureTech," an AI company that just received a government request to remove safety features for a weapons program. Each family member draws a role card: CEO (worried about employees' jobs), Chief Safety Officer (created the safety features), Head of Sales (needs the contract), Engineer (built the AI), or Investor (wants growth). Younger siblings can be "Company Values Advisor."

02

Stakeholder prep (10 min): Each person writes three reasons why their role would want to accept OR reject the contract. What matters most to someone in your position? CEO might worry about 500 employees losing jobs. Safety Officer might fear AI making life-or-death decisions without humans. Sales lead might know competitors will take the contract anyway. Be specific.

03

The board meeting (20 min): Hold a family meeting where everyone presents their perspective — 3 minutes per person, no interruptions. Then open discussion: What happens if we say yes? What happens if we say no? Are there compromises? Could we accept some government contracts but not others? Let real disagreement happen — there's no obvious right answer.

04

The vote and consequences (5 min): Take a family vote on what FutureTech should do. Then draw a consequence card: "You rejected the contract — three employees quit, but a university wants to partner with you" or "You accepted — you got \$10 million but hackers stole your AI code." Real decisions have unpredictable outcomes.

05

Reflection circle (10 min): Discuss: What was hardest about your role? Did anyone change their mind? What surprised you? If this happened to a real company, what would you want them to do? Would your answer change if it was medical AI instead of weapons AI? What if 5,000 jobs were at stake instead of 500?

THE DEEPER LESSON

This activity mirrors exactly what Anthropic faced — a real company with real employees choosing between financial success and safety principles they believed in. There's no villain in this story, just people with different priorities making difficult decisions. When your child encounters future AI controversies — and they absolutely will — they'll remember that companies are made of people weighing complicated trade-offs. Understanding this complexity transforms kids from passive technology consumers into thoughtful citizens who can evaluate and influence how AI shapes society.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“If you created something powerful — maybe a really effective studying AI, or a robot that could do any job — would you have the right to control how other people use it, even if they paid you for it?”