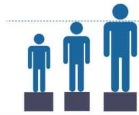


## EQUITY VS. EQUALITY



You may be familiar with the classic image of three kids of different heights trying to see a baseball game over a fence. One version of the image gives each of the three boys a crate to stand on.

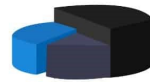
A second version of the classic image redistributes the crates so that the tallest boy does not have one, the medium-sized boy gets one crate, and the shortest boy gets two crates.



### The Explanation



The first scenario in which each kid receives one crate to stand on represents **equality**. Each boy is given **equal quantities** of the good—in this case, crates—without taking into account their individual needs.



The second scenario that results in all three kids being able to see over the fence represents **equity**. Each boy is given an **equitable share** of the goods based on their individual needs.

In both examples, three crates are available for distribution, but the way they are allotted results in different outcomes for each person.



### Equity Vs. Equality

**Equality** refers to the **uniform distribution** of a good or service to everyone. In other words, each person receives the **same amount** of whatever commodity is being distributed, regardless of their individual circumstances.

**Equity**, on the other hand, refers to the **fair distribution** of goods and services based on individual need. Those who start with less are given more of the commodity, while those who have more receive less of it.



### The History

The distinction between equity and equality dates as far back as the musings of **Aristotle** in the **300s BC**. Aristotle identified a key difference between what he called **proportional** and **numerical equality**.

#### Proportional Equality

Similar to the modern conception of equity—goods are **proportionally allocated** to individuals based on several factors contributing to their relative need for those goods.



#### Numerical equality

Goods are distributed in **equal numbers** to all individuals. It does not consider the relative need of the recipients of the goods. It simply distributes the same amount of the good to everyone irrespective of other factors.

### So What?



On the surface, numerical equality is appealing. If everybody is given the same amount of a good, nobody receives less of that good, which is fair. However, this does not eliminate any **inequality** that exists prior to the distribution of the good.

Equity aims to shrink that **initial gap** between those with more and those with less.



Equity and equality are both **desirable** for society, but which is **preferable** depends on what **good** or **resource** is up for grabs.



**Equity** is favorable in situations where **systemic injustices** place certain populations on an **uneven playing field**.

Equity and equality are not interchangeable, so it is crucial to analyze **social issues** carefully. In order to avoid **confusion** and the risk of appearing **misinformed**, be sure to identify whether **equity** or **equality** is the **end goal** of your social action.

