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Although these terms broadly cover the majority of atheists, they are not intended as comprehensive, and some of their definitions continue to be the subject of discussion.

Remember, too, that atheists may vary quite a bit in how they prefer to refer to their beliefs. Some agnostic atheists like to be called “atheist,” but some prefer “agnostic.” Some atheists, when asked, will say that they are “not religious” or otherwise avoid the word atheist because they think it brings with it too much cultural baggage.

When it comes to our personal philosophy and beliefs, it’s what we think and not what we call ourselves that’s important. Labels are useful, but don’t let yourself get hung up on them.

For more discussion of morality or to purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit [blog.iamanatheist.com](http://blog.iamanatheist.com)



## WHAT TYPES OF ATHEISM ARE THERE?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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atheist (not believing in deities although — or because — proof is impossible), or simply an agnostic (neither believing nor disbelieving in deities because it’s impossible to discover the truth).  
*Strong atheists* believe that there definitely are no deities. Some strong atheists believe that the non-existence of deities can be proven (because, for example, deities are logically impossible). Some people assume that all atheists are strong atheists, but this is not the case.  
*Reactive atheists* disbelieve in deities because they reject theism. A reactive atheist disbelieves in God not because such disbelief is logically required, but for more personal, emotional reasons. A reactive atheist is likely also be a strong atheist.  
*Practical atheists* do not see deities as useful concepts. *Noncoherent atheists* hold that one cannot even have a conversation about the existence of God because the word “God” does not have coherent meaning.  
*Atheists by default* are those who do not have belief in deities because they are incapable of having such a

AN ATHEIST is someone who does not have any religious beliefs. In a more narrow sense, an atheist is someone who does not believe that God — or any deities — exist. But not all atheists are the same.  
*Positive (or weak) atheists* disbelieve in deities because the existence of deities has not been proven.  
*Moral atheists* are positive atheists whose moral viewpoint is derived from a few basic logical principles, and who find that these principles also imply atheism. A moral atheist may see atheism as more of a side effect of his or her beliefs than the core of those beliefs. (This series of pamphlets was written from the point of view of a moral atheist.)  
An *agnostic atheist* is someone who does not believe in deities, but believes that the existence of deities cannot be proven or disproven. An agnostic atheist might say, “Theists have the burden of proof for the existence of God, and since such proof is impossible, there is no reason to believe that God exists.”  
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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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