

Prime Directive

[1]

The Prime Directive was introduced in the Original Star Trek series. This is how it was first defined:

“No identification of self or mission. No interference with the social development of said planet. No references to space or the fact that there are other worlds or civilizations.”
(from Episode “Bread and Circuses”)

[2]

Later the Prime Directive was defined more fully, becoming a very complicated Star Fleet Order with 47 known sub-orders. But we are not going to get that geeky ☺ The Star Trek website “Memory Alpha” describes it this way:

“The Prime Directive, also known as Starfleet General Order 1 or the Non-Interference Directive, was the embodiment of one of Starfleet’s most important ethical principles: noninterference with other cultures and civilizations. At its core was the philosophical concept that covered personnel should refrain from interfering in the natural, unassisted, development of societies, even if such interference was well-intentioned. The Prime Directive was viewed as so fundamental to Starfleet that officers swore to uphold the Prime Directive, even at the cost of their own life or the lives of their crew.”

[3]

Or another way of putting it...

The Prime Directive was put in place to protect the right of each sentient species to live in accordance with its normal cultural evolution. This right is considered sacred, no Star Fleet personnel may interfere with the healthy development of alien life and culture. Such interference includes the introduction of superior knowledge, strength, or technology to a world whose society is incapable of handling such advantages wisely. Star Fleet personnel may not violate this Prime Directive, even to save their lives and/or their ship unless they are acting to right an earlier violation or an accidental contamination of said culture. This directive takes precedence over any and all other considerations, and carries with it the highest moral obligation.