

Lesson 1 for Grades 3, 4 & 5

Physical Boundaries: Safe and Unsafe Touching Rules

PRINCIPLE

Children must learn tools to protect themselves from people who may harm them through physical touch (sexual or otherwise) to prevent / reduce the risk of sexual abuse and boundary violations.

CATECHISM/SCRIPTURE

God fashioned man with his own hands [that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form. —Catechism of the Catholic Church, #704 (1997)

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson the adult lesson leader reinforces the parent's message about touching safety and protecting private body parts. After Lesson 1, children should be better able to:

- Recognize that we treat private body parts as “special” by keeping them covered—to help keep them clean and healthy
- Stand up for themselves more effectively by repeating and understanding the boundary touching rules, and that it's OK to say “no” to an adult or older child:
 - Say “No!” when someone tries to touch them in an unsafe or uncomfortable way
 - Try to get away from the situation
 - Tell an adult as soon as possible
- Technology Component: Understand similar boundary rules apply for Online activities, too
 - Say “No!” if someone shares unsafe or inappropriate material/images
 - Leave the situation
 - Tell an adult as soon as possible
- Understand that if anybody does give them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault

Background for Lesson Leaders:

By this age, children should already know the names of their private parts as communicated by their parents. The Lesson Leader should not teach children the names of their private parts, but can explain that the areas covered by bathing suits are our “private parts” and are kept covered and private for a reason—to keep us safe and healthy. Also, the word “no” is an extremely powerful word in every language. Using our voice, and the word “no” are effective ways to establish a boundary. Sometimes children may not be aware that they're allowed to

say “no” to an adult. Children must also understand the importance of trying to remove themselves from any situation where they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or where their boundaries have been violated, and then tell an adult as soon as possible. During this lesson, it's extremely important that the Lesson Leader avoids saying that touches that *feel* good are “safe, loving or show someone loves you”. Rather, a safe touch is a touch that isn't intended to confuse, scare or deliberately harm the child.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “energy”

This age group is learning how to function independently of their parents. They know how to read and their comprehension levels are giving them a better sense of abstract ideas. Their writing skills are better as they learn proper grammar / punctuation, and become more refined with communicating their ideas.

Children of this age are away from home more often than earlier in life and need to start recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends, under the supervision of a 3rd party, or at other events / locations. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. This is the “gang” age with friends of the same sex. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. Although truthful about big things, they are less so about the smaller things, often making up alibis or shifting the blame to others. They have a strong sense of right / wrong, fair / unfair and are more able to discern the difference between safe / unsafe. They are able to use logic, can argue and hold strong debates. Caregivers can be more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules or guidelines.

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Play the (optional) introductory video as an icebreaker

The introductory video for children and youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The video is brief and is not intended to be a substitute for the lesson itself. It's merely an introduction designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition of completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. If the video is shown as an optional activity, please use in conjunction with one of the additional activity options, because discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children and youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing"; not just listening.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words

- **Private body parts**—those body parts that are covered by a bathing suit. [Add that only certain special adults can see or touch our private body parts, and only to keep us clean and healthy.]
- **Touching safety**—is about empowering children to resist the advances of child abusers and the lures of people who want to harm children or violate the touching rules/boundaries. [Let children know they have a right to protect themselves and be safe.]
- **Touching safety rules**—any time an adult tries to touch the child's private body parts, or tries to get the child to touch the other person's body parts, the child should say words that mean "No!," try to get away from the person, and tell a parent or safe adult as soon as possible.
- **Saying "No" or similar words**—to say "no" means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [Let children know it's OK to say "No!" to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if the person touches your private body parts.]

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Reviewing the boundary touching rules and boundary violations

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*. Here children will understand they have a say in what happens to their bodies and a right to be safe.

Directions: Have children write the Boundary Touching Rules on a blackboard or poster board. Language for the rules should vary somewhat from the language used for younger children, but not dramatically. This activity could be utilized as a discussion, or a discussion and writing exercise. The rules for this age group are:

- If someone tries to touch your private body parts, or wants you to touch theirs, you should say words that mean "No!"
- Get away as quickly as possible, and
- Tell a safe adult what happened right away—even if (or *especially*) if the person told you not to tell or told you that you would get in trouble for telling.

Discuss ways an adult or another child, might try to trap or trick a child. Write these examples on the board, or ask the children to write each one on the board.

- Warning Signs of a person with inappropriate boundaries:
 - Threatens to hurt a loved one, including a family member or pet if the child "tells" someone else.
 - Allows children to do things their parents would not allow (ask children to give examples).
 - Gives gifts without permission or oversight from the child's parents.
 - Asks/tells children to keep secrets from their parents or guardians
- Ask, how do adults or teens try to trick you into believing something that isn't true?

Note: Use this opportunity to talk about the grooming process and to point out that it is unlikely someone would start out by immediately trying to touch your private body parts. Child molesters / boundary violators take some time to gradually move toward increasingly abusive behavior. Remind kids that any time they feel uncomfortable with an adult, they have the right to ask the person to stop what they are doing and to walk away. It is important to talk about this subject in a way that gives the child the information needed but does not scare the child unnecessarily.

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Learning to say “No!” in an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation

Background: This is a role-playing practice exercise.

Directions: Start with life experience. Take turns sharing times when you have chosen to say “No”. Examples can include:

- I yelled “Stop!” when _____.
- I couldn’t stop crying when _____.
- I made sure to get away when _____.
- I hated it the day that _____.
- My friend said “No!” when _____.
- My dad said “Stop!” when _____.
- One day in school, I said “No!”, because _____.

Note: Role playing with the youth helps them have an arsenal of phrases and reactions they can use—since sometimes they know what they should do but don’t necessarily know how to put the words into action. Practice “what-if” scenarios with them, evaluate their answers and gently correct them until they know the protocol.

Discuss the types of touching or boundary violations that make you feel uncomfortable because it violates your personal boundaries. For example:

- Someone punches, kicks, scratches or pinches you.
- Someone taunts or teases you by saying mean things about you.
- A person you don’t feel comfortable with wants to give you a hug.
- Your aunt wants to kiss you on the mouth.
- The babysitter comes to the bathroom and offers to help you towel dry after a shower or bath.
- The coach pats you on the buttocks on your way out of the locker room.

Practice at least five different ways of saying “No!” Create different scenarios, and then have each child practice saying “No!” using different vocal pitches, facial expressions, body language, etc. For example:

- Say, “No! I don’t like that and I don’t want to be touched!”
- Yell, “Stop it!” very loudly.
- Say, “Don’t do that!” and get away from the person.
- With hands on hips, yell “No!”
- Say, “No!” and get away from the person.

ACTIVITY OPTION #5: Internet Safety—building a strong house

Background: This is a competition of who can build the strongest house—by drawing a strong, healthy and happy house that can weather any storm. Houses need a foundation, walls, a sturdy roof, a strong door, windows for sunshine, a fence with a gate, nice surroundings, etc. If the house is constructed based on answering the questions, but then demolished, the contents of the house become vulnerable and the other team automatically wins. You’re helping the youth to understand that they must also fortify their own personal boundaries in order to protect themselves and be healthy, much like how together you are fortifying the house.

SUPPLIES

Dry-erase board or chalkboard
Dry-erase markers or chalk
Eraser capabilities

Directions: Divide the room into two groups and explain the game to them. This is a competition of who has the strongest house—this means that you must have a drawing area big enough to sketch two large houses for everyone to see. You will ask each group a series of True / False questions (see questions below), volleying back and forth so that

each group is asked a different question. Each time the team answers the answer correctly, the house is fortified by adding a new, essential element to stand strong. Conversely, each time the youth answer the question incorrectly, you remove a key component of the house, and erase it from view. You can have them collaborate on each question or have a different team member answer individually for each round.

The youth should be able to visually see the comparison of houses. Add a key component of the house, such as the walls, roof, door, or the gate. The first group to build a full house of a foundation, walls, a roof, a sturdy front door, windows, and a surrounding fence wins.

Discussing the correct answers is an opportunity to help youth understand proper boundaries while using the Internet.

Process:

Below are the T/F Questions to ask for each game, with each round constituting a different part of the house:

Round 1 Q&As:

- If I see something bad on the Internet, or something that makes me feel uncomfortable, should I just leave the computer or do I also need to tell an adult?
 - Answer: The child should both leave the computer, and also go and tell an adult.
- T/F: If I know that someone is being mean to one of my friends on the Internet or through email or a cell phone, then I need to tell an adult right away.
 - Answer: True! Don't try to fix this on your own, involve a safe adult!
- T/F: It's "OK" to post pictures online with identifying information such as my school or pictures of my classmates with sport team colors.
 - Answer: False! It's not "OK" to post pictures with identifying information even if you have security settings on your account.
- T/F: It's "OK" to post pictures online with identifying information such as my school or pictures of my classmates with sport team colors IF I have security settings enabled on my account.
 - Answer: False! Even if you have security settings enabled on your account, it doesn't mean that all of your friends have the same types of security settings, which means your info could be vulnerable.
- T/F: If I post something on the Internet, I can always take it down and no one will know. It's not as if it will be there forever.
 - Answer: False! Once posted on the Internet, it will be available for someone to see forever!
- Does someone using bad language count as something I should communicate to a caring adult?
 - Answer: Yes!

HOUSE COMPOSITION—TO DRAW

Foundation with stairs
Walls
Sturdy roof
Strong door
Windows for sunshine
Fence with a gate

Note: If the group would like to do a Round 2, consider asking the kids to quietly have a powwow and come up with their own questions to ask the other team. Each round should have 6 questions, to match each item in the "House Composition" box needed for a strong house. They'll need to write a questions, the correct answer, and a referee (the Lesson Leader). You could have the best two houses out of three rounds and build a neighborhood!

End the lesson with a prayer

The Lesson Leader may invite the children to create their own prayer, he/she may lead a prayer, or may use the suggested prayer below.

*Dear God,
Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening. When I am confused or feel scared, help me remember what I have learned today. Help me remember that boundaries are good, and the physical boundaries I learned today so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like. Thank you for my parents or loved ones and my teachers who are teaching me how to keep myself safe and healthy. Remind me that I am special and that you are always with me.
Amen*