

PLAYING BY THE RULES



AGENDA

- Starter
- Pen Pass
- Not a Surprise
- Students' Court
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will discuss the importance of learning rules in order to participate successfully in school and in life.

Students will recognize that learning about and following rules are matters of personal responsibility.

Students will conduct mock trials in order to determine responsibility and resolve conflicts.

Materials Needed

- Two pens or pencils (Part I)
- One copy of the “Court Cases” activity sheet for each student, cut into four strips (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Begin class by presenting the following dilemma:

Suppose you belong to a drama group. One of the rules is that everyone must come to practices in order to take part in the performance. The “star” rarely shows up for practices, but some people think they need the “star” in order to be successful. Should this person be allowed to participate in the performance? What do you think?

Encourage a few students to explain their answers. Take a poll of students to see how many agree that it’s fair that the “star” shouldn’t be allowed to participate. Comment on the results.

Tell students that today they are going to discuss why learning about and following rules is important for everyone.

Part I Pen Pass (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students become aware of the importance of learning the rules in order to participate successfully in school and in life.

1. Students participate in a group activity.

Have students sit with you in a circle. Sit with your legs crossed in some manner, either at the knees or ankles. Don’t be obvious about this or call attention to it in any way.

Tell students that you are going to pass two pens around. Explain that the goal is for students to pass the pens on to the person sitting next to them correctly. Say, “Pay attention to what I do, because you have to copy it exactly in order to pass on the pens correctly.”

Take one pen between your thumb and middle finger and pass it to the left with the tip pointing away from the student. Then, pass the other pen in exactly the same manner to the right.

As each student passes on the pens, say whether or not they did so correctly. If students have passed on the pens in exactly the same manner and have their legs crossed as you do, then they have completed the task correctly. Don’t stop the activity to discuss right or wrong methods; just have students continue passing the pens.

2. Students discuss the activity.

Invite students who passed the pens correctly to explain the trick. Then, begin a discussion by asking:

- How did you feel when you didn't pass the pens correctly? (Students might respond that they felt confused or frustrated.)
- Why was it frustrating? (Students might mention not understanding what they were doing wrong.)
- Was it even more frustrating when you figured out what you were supposed to do? Why? (Students might say, "If I had known about crossing my legs in the first place, I could have done it correctly.")

Say, "Would you have crossed your legs from the beginning if you had known? Of course you would have. It's important to know the rules of a game if you're going to play it well, and it's frustrating to find out that the reason you failed is that you didn't know the rules."

Ask students what they needed to do in order to figure out how to pass the pens correctly. Prompt them to recognize that the rules were not explained in detail, nor were they written out; students needed to observe and follow what you and others were doing.

Explain that the same idea can be applied to school and to life in general. Point out that it's important to know what the rules are in order to follow them successfully. Say, "Let's talk about rules—ones that you know about and ones that you don't know about—and how you can figure them out."

Part II Not a Surprise (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that learning about and following rules are matters of personal responsibility.

1. Students discuss general rules they know.

Point out to students that they know about many rules and can anticipate many rules that are common sense.

Engage students in a discussion about "common sense" rules they know and how they can find out more about these rules. Prompt the discussion by asking such questions as the following:

- What about showing up for practices if you are a member of a drama group? Would you consider showing up for practices to be a "common sense" rule?
- How would you find out more about this rule? For example, how would you know what to do if you must miss practice for any reason?
- How would you find out about the consequences for not attending practices?

Invite students to give other examples of common sense rules and continue the discussion in a similar manner. Prompt them if necessary to point out common sense rules about such things as showing up for school; being on time; using appropriate language in school; not pushing, shoving, or fighting others; respecting others; respecting what belongs to others; and so on. Be sure to discuss ways that students can find out more about specific rules, and about the consequences for choosing not to follow them.

2. Students discuss responsibility and accountability.

Focus attention on personal responsibility and accountability by asking questions such as the following:

- Why do you think some people choose not to follow rules? Who is responsible for their decisions?
- Is it hard to follow rules when others are not following them? Why?
- What might happen if everyone did not follow rules? Give an example.

Guide students to acknowledge that if they decide not to follow a rule, they are personally responsible for the decision and must be prepared to accept the consequences.

3. Students reflect on the importance of following rules.

Remind students that rules are a necessary part of life at all ages—at home, at school, on the job, and when they are living on their own. Emphasize that it is their responsibility to learn more about the rules that affect them in order to follow these rules successfully.

Working with examples that the class has previously discussed, explain how playing by the rules will help students become successful:

- Being where you are supposed to be on time shows others that you are a reliable person.
- Using appropriate language and behavior shows that you respect yourself and others.
- Learning about and following rules show that you are a responsible person.

Part III Students' Court (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students conduct mock trials in order to determine responsibility and resolve conflicts.

1. Students prepare role plays.

Divide the class into four groups. Give each group one of the scenarios from the “Court Cases” activity sheet. Explain that each group is to read its scenario, and then prepare it as a mock court case for the class.

Tell groups to first choose members to play the roles of the people involved in the dispute. Explain that the rest of the group members will be the panel of judges.

Give groups about three to five minutes to prepare their role plays. Students involved in the dispute should work independently to prepare their arguments. At the same time, the judges will discuss the case among themselves and decide how they will resolve it.

2. Students role-play the situations.

When the groups are ready, invite the Case #1 group to perform its scenario. After it has finished, call on members of the audience to tell whether they agree or disagree with the judges' decision and to explain why. Prompt students to point to details of the case to support their opinions.

Continue in this manner with the remaining three cases. If time permits, engage students in a discussion about the similarity among the judges' decisions in all four cases.

Before dismissing students today, tell them to be sure to bring their folders with all of their work for this course to the next class session.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if they could relate to any of the people involved in the court case disputes. Invite a few volunteers to respond. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Rules are a necessary part of life.
- It is your responsibility to learn about rules that affect you.
- It is up to you to decide whether you will follow rules. You must accept the consequences if you decide not to follow them.

Student Assessment

1. List three rules that you follow every day.
2. List the consequences that you would suffer if you did not follow these rules.
3. Define "accountability." Why is it important?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Obedience is the mother of success and is wedded to safety.”

Ask students to describe the meaning of this quote. Ask students to give examples of how obedience can lead to success and security.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students read the “I Really Need a Job” activity sheet.

Have students create a list of jobs that would be in line with their values.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about what the world would be like without rules, and which rules they would like to abolish.

Have volunteers share their work with the class.

Using Technology

Have students visit <https://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/legal-notice/internet-safety-tips> for a list of internet safety rules. As a class, discuss the importance of following these rules, and have students add to the list.

Homework

Have students write a list of rules that they would impose if they were king or queen of a small country.

Allow students to stand and declare their rules.

Additional Resources

Have students review the school's code of conduct.

Have students discuss the code of conduct, the need for it, and whether they believe that students adhere to it.

COURT CASES



CASE #1

Kevin was babysitting one afternoon at a neighbor's house. He left his cell phone at home, and wanted to call a friend who was visiting relatives in another country. He asked if it was okay to use the phone, and the neighbor said yes. Kevin didn't say he would be making an international call.

Kevin ran up a big charge on his neighbor's phone bill. The neighbor says that Kevin owes him an afternoon of babysitting to pay for it. Kevin says that he doesn't owe anything because he had permission to use the phone.

CASE #2

Megan brought some firecrackers to school. She gave a few firecrackers to Julia and dared her to light one in class. Julia said that she would only set it off if Megan set one off too.

Julia set off a firecracker, but Megan didn't. Julia was suspended from school. Julia claims that Megan is the one who should be suspended, since she brought the firecrackers to school. Megan claims that since Julia lit the firecracker in class, she is the one who should be suspended.

CASE #3

Robert's soccer team supplies uniforms and shoes for the players. They are supposed to be worn to practices and games. Robert doesn't like them.

At the first practice, Robert said he forgot his uniform and shoes. The coach let him play anyway. At the second practice, Robert said his uniform was in the wash, and his shoes were in his mother's car. The coach benched him. When Robert showed up without his uniform and shoes the third time, the coach sent him home.

Robert claims that the coach didn't warn him and that the coach is unfair. The coach says that if Robert won't wear his uniform and shoes, then he can't play.

CASE #4

Keisha finished her math test early. She was bored and began drawing and writing on a page of her notebook. She kept looking at her friend in the next row. Her friend finally looked at Keisha and mouthed, "What are you doing?" Keisha held up her notebook and her friend bent toward her to look. The teacher gave both girls failing grades.

The teacher claims that the girls were cheating. The girls claim that they weren't doing anything wrong.

I REALLY NEED A JOB

I really need a job. The problem is, I'm only 14. Any ideas about how I can make some money?

M. F., 14, Georgia

It's almost impossible to get hired when you're under 16, but if you're really ambitious and a little creative, you can be the boss by starting your own business! Daryl Bernstein, who wrote a book about small-business ideas when he was 15 called *Better Than a Lemonade Stand* (Beyond Words Publishing), advises: "First, think about your skills and what interests you. Love animals? Maybe a dog-walking business would be right for you. Always wake up early? Start a wake-up service. Next,

map out what supplies you'll need (a pooper scooper and plastic bags for dog walkers, a phone for wake-up calls), what to charge and how much time you have to do it. Make some fliers to advertise with and you're set." Another tip? Listen when adults around you start complaining about things they never get done. Whether it's gift-wrapping, organizing photo albums or delivering dry cleaning, there's plenty to do if you really want to make money.

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