

Lessons 3 and 4 – Combined Lesson Plan for Grades K, 1 and 2

Preparation: Educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults should prepare by reviewing the entire lesson plan and by reading *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, follow the instructions to complete as many of the activities as possible in your allotted amount of time.

Activity #1: Play the introductory video to begin the lesson.

Activity #2: Review the vocabulary words and definitions with your students.

Activity #3: Discovering the boundaries in your life.

Activity #4: Learning to identify safe adults who will listen to you.

Activity #5: Complete the “Missing Words” puzzle.

Prayer: A suggested (optional) prayer is provided at the end of the lesson. If you wish, you may use this prayer to conclude this lesson with your students.

Preparation for completing this lesson:

Principle: Setting limits and honoring them can help keep children safe from harm.

Empowering children to tell a *safe adult* when something bad, uncomfortable, or confusing happens is an important aspect of child safety.

Catechism: Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The *right to the exercise of freedom*, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order. **#1738**

As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family. “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” (*Col. 3:20*; cf. *Eph 6:1*) Children should also obey the reasonable direction of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted the child. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so. **#2217**

Goal: To teach children some ways to help protect themselves from sexual abuse.

To assist parents, guardians, and other caring adults in teaching children how to know that they have the right to say “no,” to tell a trusted adult when they feel uncomfortable, and to help them recognize who to trust when they need to communicate their concerns.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lesson, children should be better able to:

- Identify the safe adults in the child's environment who can be trusted.
- Know some of the reasons why these people are considered trustworthy.
- Know that they should tell a trusted adult if anyone touches them inappropriately or makes them feel uncomfortable, confused, or yucky.
- To begin to give children the ability to identify, define, and honor appropriate boundaries in different types of relationships. For example:
 - They can say “no” when they feel uncomfortable or confused by how an older person is acting—even if the older person is someone they love and trust.

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- They should honor and respect the wishes of others who don't want to be touched—even if it hurts their feelings or they don't understand why the person said "no."

Dealing with this age group—key concept is “activity”

Small children have a natural curiosity, a lively and vivid imagination and are growing less self-centered and becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short, but they build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. However, they rely almost entirely on others to define good and bad for them.

When establishing the guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, parents and teachers should make every effort to create an environment where children are free to ask questions. This early experience of honesty and trust will set the stage for each child's life-long relationships with significant adults. In addition, creating an atmosphere of open inquiry—where questions are encouraged—invites children to begin to learn to trust their own instincts and to begin to learn how to evaluate the world around them.

At this age, children are beginning to differentiate between the positive and negative aspects of everyday life. They are beginning to question adults' expectations of blind obedience. At the same time they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies in terms of hygiene, eating, and activity.

Caregivers need to be open, honest, and available to answer questions correctly and with the type of language children can understand. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe touches to enable children to practice safety away from home. Avoid using slang or “pet” names to describe body parts, and stay with describing them by what is covered by a swimsuit. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe touches. A child can then practice the safety skills they have learned when he or she is away from home.

Children trust the adults who have cared for them. They also trust others that their parents trust such as teachers, ministers, daycare workers, neighbors, etc. They will look to their parents for confirmation that people are safe and trustworthy.

Supplemental information for teachers

Many things make each of us different from the person next to us. The more we know about these things, the more self-awareness we have. And the more we know about ourselves and how we operate, the more we can empower others. Boundaries are the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. A boundary promotes and preserves personal integrity. Boundaries give each of us a clear sense of self and how to function in relation to one another. Boundaries are unique to each individual and they are based on perceptions, personal histories, values, goals, culture, and concerns.

For the most part, we are not consciously aware of the personal boundaries in our lives. We don't think much about how they were established. We just *know* when someone steps over them. However, boundaries bring order to our lives and help us determine how others treat us. With clear boundaries, we are assured that we can protect ourselves from the ignorance, meanness, evil, or thoughtlessness of others.

Boundaries exist in the context of a particular relationship. For example, an appropriate boundary between a husband and wife is not necessarily an appropriate boundary between friends or acquaintances. And, an appropriate boundary between a parent and child is not necessarily the same as an appropriate boundary between a priest, teacher, or counselor and a child. Most people will accept and respect our boundaries if we are clear about them. But, with some people, we must actively defend our boundaries time and time again.

Most children will have difficulty with this concept at this age. They can see boundaries in a very literal and visual way (such as a fence around a yard), but they can also learn that words create boundaries. One boundary is created if, for example, a child says, “I don't need any help. I can do it myself.” Another boundary is created when the child says, “I want a hug,” or asks for a goodnight kiss.

Some other words and phrases that can create boundaries for children are “no,” “don't do that,” “let's play,” “give me five,” and “leave me alone.” Obviously, when you think about it, there are many examples of using words to create boundaries. By using as many examples as possible, you can help young children begin to develop an understanding of the more abstract meaning of the term boundary—and, obviously, that abstract meaning is the one most germane to helping children learn to protect themselves from sexual predators.

At this age, children are just beginning to develop boundaries and to recognize their impact in life. They become upset when a friend doesn't want to play any more, or when a sibling refuses to give them a hug or a kiss at bedtime. They are beginning to learn how to interact with parents to achieve the best mutual outcome for a particular situation. And they are learning what parents, teachers, neighbors, friends, and others expect of them. You can help them begin to recognize the boundaries in their lives and raise their awareness about the power and importance of *their words* in establishing their own appropriate boundaries with all the people in their world.

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Teacher preparation exercise

In our video introduction that you'll play for the children in your class, we talk about people who do things that make children uncomfortable or confused, or make them feel yucky. When we say "uncomfortable," for example, we're not talking about sitting in a chair that's not soft, or "sitting up straight" in class, or waiting until the end of class to go to the restroom. Instead, we're talking about the more abstract use of the term "uncomfortable"—where uncomfortable means "something isn't right."

Ultimately, we all must learn to listen to that guiding voice inside our head and to trust "that uneasy feeling in our gut." That little voice or uneasy feeling is a warning sign that something is wrong. It's one of the great gifts that God gave to each of us to help us live a safe, healthy, and happy life. That's what we're talking about when we tell children to respect their own feelings or when someone makes them feel uncomfortable, or confused, or yucky. It's a key distinction we must make clear to children. When we listen to that uneasy feeling—and treat it as if it is God talking to us—we are better prepared to pay attention to those around us and to take action to protect ourselves from those who may hurt us.

Activity #1: Play the introductory video to begin the lesson:

Note to Teacher: The introductory video for grades K through 5 is designed to open a simple discussion with children about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately five (5) minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the lesson itself. It is merely an introduction designed to "break the ice" among those in this age group and to get everyone talking about the relevant personal boundary and personal safety issues. Importantly, the video will get children focused on the topic matter, which will help the teacher to facilitate an easy transition into the interactive activities within the lesson. These interactive activities are the critical components where children have a real opportunity to learn how to protect themselves.

We recommend that you watch the video in advance at least a couple of times prior to showing it to your students, so you'll be able to more easily anticipate when the video will end. The video really needs no introduction. Just put it into the machine, and hit "play." If you're using a DVD version of the video, you'll select the English or Spanish version and the appropriate age group from a menu screen. If you're using a VHS version of the video, you'll need to "cue" the tape to the correct version prior to your class time.

Activity #2: Review and discuss the vocabulary words and definitions:

Boundaries—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our "personal space"). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.

Limits—The point or edge beyond which something cannot go. The furthest edge of something.

Secret—Something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.¹

Trust—To place confidence in or depend on.²

Safe adults and friends—People who won't hurt, confuse, or scare a young person intentionally or without a good or honorable reason.³ Safe friends and adults also respect young people's wishes and the rules of their parents and guardians.¹

Activity #3: Discovering the boundaries in your life:

Visual display: Children are very visual at this age. One way to demonstrate the effect of boundaries is by using a box of cereal. Remove half the cereal from the box and pour it into a large plastic bag.

Show the children how the box demonstrates well-formed boundaries that keep the cereal inside and other things outside. The box fits in a particular space and does not allow the cereal to spill out into other areas. Meanwhile, the bag of cereal has no definite form. It is hard to hold onto and the cereal can spill out unexpectedly and become contaminated by other things in or on the cabinet or table.

This is what boundaries do. They define the space that keeps things safe and predictable. They also let us know what is expected of children and adults, and that children have the same rights as adults to have their personal boundaries respected. And while weak boundaries—like the bag of cereal—are not always the best way to protect something, strong boundaries—like the box—provide a much better way to protect something.

¹ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

² The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition © 2000, Houghton Mifflin Company.

³ *Teaching Touching Safety Guide for Parents and Guardians*, National Catholic Services, © 2004.

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Activity #4: Learning to identify safe adults who will listen to you:

Preparation: Prior to delivering this lesson, make sure you have reviewed the *Teaching Touching Safety Guide* for identifying *safe friends* and *safe adults*. It is critical that you have an understanding of these terms.

Directions: Invite the children to sit in a circle. Review the information about safe adults. Begin by asking the children if they know how to tell whether an adult or friend is a *safe* person. Talk with the children about the four specific things that demonstrate that a person is safe. Those four details are listed below.

In each category, listen for characteristics that will help children to identify safe adults, such as: "They hug me, but they let go when I want them to stop." Or, "If I don't feel like hugging and kissing my aunt, she doesn't make me." These are some of the elements that can help children identify safe adults who can be trusted if something bad happens.

1. Safe adults touch other people in safe ways.
 - a. Have children identify some safe touches and unsafe touches.
 - b. Ask them to name some people in their lives who touch in a safe way, and ask them how they *know* that person's touch is safe.
2. Safe adults don't hurt people on purpose without a good reason (e.g., a nurse giving a shot, someone pushing you out from in front of a moving car, etc.)
 - a. Ask each child to share an experience when someone hurt him or her for a good reason. You should also listen carefully for any description that may actually be physical abuse or sexual abuse. Remember that child molesters justify their behavior by trying to convince their victims that the (sexual) touch is "good" and that nothing is wrong.
 - b. Emphasize that a touch that "feels good" is not necessarily a safe touch (e.g., scratching a mosquito bite feels good, but too much scratching can lead to an infection).
3. Safe adults don't confuse people or scare them on purpose.
 - a. Ask the children to describe some situations that are confusing.
 - b. Ask the children for examples of times that people scared them on purpose or by accident.
4. Safe adults respect your wishes and your parent's rules.
 - a. Invite the children to share some of their family rules that others need to follow.
 - b. Ask the children to think of ways that other adults might ignore their family's rules. Examples might include letting children stay up late on school nights, letting children ride in the car without their safety belt, or giving kids dessert before bedtime even when mom and dad said there should be no late-night snacks.

Talk with the children about what to do if someone is behaving in an unsafe way. Use the principles above and the comments the children make about the people they *trust* and the people that they think are *unsafe*. This helps clarify for children who they should tell if something bad happens to them.

Activity #5: Complete the "Missing Words" puzzle:

Supplies: The "Missing Words" puzzle (handout) that accompanies this lesson plan.
Pencils/pens or markers for completing the puzzle.

Directions: Give each child a copy of the "Missing Words" puzzle. Use the sentences on the puzzle to discuss the rules for telling a trusted adult when someone has done something bad, uncomfortable, confusing, or yucky to the child. Notice whether any of the children are having problems reading the sentences. If so, give those children extra attention as needed. For kindergarten students who, largely, may not yet know how to read, consider using one puzzle at the front of the room and asking the children, as a group, to help fill in the blanks.

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Go through each of the sentences, one at a time, with the children so that they can choose the right word to fill in each blank. Remind children of the following points:

- If someone does something that makes a child feel uncomfortable, he or she should say “no,” get away from that person, and tell someone he or she trusts about what happened.
- When a child tells a trusted safe adult about something bad, uncomfortable, or confusing that has happened, it helps keep the child safe because the caring adult is better able to protect the child.
- A child needs to tell even if the person who makes the child feel uncomfortable, confused, or yucky is someone he or she loves, or someone who has behaved safely in the past.
- A child needs to tell what happened even if the offender apologizes and asks him or her not to tell.
- A child needs to tell even if the unsafe person tells the child that other people will be upset with the child if the child reveals what happened.
- If the first person the child tells won't listen or act upon the information, the child should tell somebody else! The child must keep telling trusted adults until someone in the child's life listens and takes action to keep the child safe.

Use this discussion to help children understand that telling someone is the right thing to do. It is not tattling, and they are not getting someone in trouble. Rather, telling a trusted adult is the only way to be safe and to help keep other children safe.

Suggested (optional) prayer to end the lesson:

Teacher: “God wants us to be safe and healthy. God even gives us a special angel to help look after us. When we think about how hard it is to remember the touching rules and to be sure that others honor our boundaries, we can ask our Guardian Angel for help. So, let's pray together for our Guardian Angel to look after us and help keep us safe.”

Angel of God,
My guardian dear,
To whom God's love entrusts me here.
Ever this day be at my side.
To light, to guard,
To rule, to guide.

Amen

References:

Liberia Editrice Vaticana (1997). *Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.)*. Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference.

United States Catholic Conference (1990) *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services.



"Missing Words" Puzzle

secret tell lo
grownup safe s

If someone touches your private
body parts you have to
_____ your mommy and
daddy.

When something bad happens,
you have to tell a _____
you trust.