

Lesson for Pre-Kindergarten

Basic Rules for Safety

PRINCIPLE

Children must be equipped with basic safety rules in order to become empowered about how to protect themselves and others. They should understand the difference between safe and unsafe touches, and safe and unsafe individuals.

OBJECTIVES

Through safety activities for Pre-Kindergarten, the adult lesson leader reinforces the parent's message about basic rules for personal safety. After completion of the Lesson for Pre-Kindergarten, children will be able to:

- Develop personal safety knowledge
- Understand the meaning of safe vs. unsafe
- Communicate when they feel unsafe
- Follow basic safety rules

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

Respect for the human person considers the other "another self." It presupposes respect for the fundamental rights that flow from the dignity intrinsic of the person. —Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1944 (1997)

Background for Lesson Leaders: *

Before beginning this session, the Lesson Leader should read the *Teaching Boundary and Safety Guide*, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries and how to address them.

While adults are the chief protectors of children, there are still ways we can teach children to better protect themselves when faced with tough situations. To empower children with safety skills, they must be equipped with some basic safety rules. Personal boundaries are established during our early years, and adults must help children to create their own proper boundaries and respect the ones that are in place—understanding that children will model adult behavior. Some boundaries are “non-negotiables” for children (such as touching/physical boundaries).

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. An opportune time to insert the lesson could be during your normal safety lessons, such as those within fire safety, crossing the street, car seat safety, etc.

When possible, Pre-Kindergarten safety lessons should be taught in connection with other learning that is happening in the classroom. This can be the time to expand the conversation and discuss safe and unsafe touches and other behaviors, so children can practice safety when they are with anyone other than you.

Children who know they can ask their parents and safe adults questions are more likely to speak up if someone exhibits inappropriate behavior toward them, and are less vulnerable to potential predators.

The primary means of conveying information to children of this age is through the power of story telling. Picture books help to facilitate the lessons for preschool ages. In an effort to provide an avenue for ongoing support for Lesson Leaders, book suggestions are available at the end of the lesson plan (obtain through the public library, or purchase for Church/School or personal class/library use). However, these book resources can be omitted, or substituted, and are not endorsed by the VIRTUS Programs. They are simply a suggestion for a collection of resources that may help in the lesson.

This age group: Key concept is “movement”

Children this age need to be able to “move” around. Physical movement is essential for their development and allows them to connect concepts into action—and so, even the lessons should allow for movement. In their lives, the freedom of exploration and getting around could put them in danger. They are learning to make choices, and understand they need help when they have problems. They are capable of following a few simple rules. They seek approval of others and are overly curious about almost everything. They are capable of understanding the need for rules and following them, especially personal safety rules. People and the relationships they form are important to them. Teaching children of this age and developmental stage the skills for setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries is important. They should frequently practice control of their actions no matter what emotional state they may be experiencing. Repetition, reminders and active practice, involving movement, are keys to their success.

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

The introductory video for grades K-5 is designed to open a simple discussion with children 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 into completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. It must be used in conjunction with an additional activity option, since discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing," not just listening. This video may be helpful, too, for Pre-Kindergarten children.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Introduce safety vocabulary (discuss key vocabulary words)

- **Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit.
- **Rules**—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [For example, teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say "No!", try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]
- **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.
- **Saying "No"**—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 they touch your private body parts.]
- **Respecting boundaries**—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else. [Give children examples of respecting others, i.e. not calling people mean names, not hitting others, following rules at school or at home, stopping an activity when someone asks, letting an adult know when someone is in pain or hurt, etc.]
- **Safe friends and safe adults**—safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a child may have many safe friends and adults. Give children examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the child's safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]
- **Special safe adult**—special safe adults are those very few special adults who can see or touch a child's private body parts, but only for the purpose of keeping the child safe, clean and healthy. They have permission to help with bathing, restrooms, putting on clothes, and providing care when sick. Not every safe adult is a special safe adult, and sometimes special safe adults are only for specific occasions or reasons. [Give children examples of special safe adults who are always special safe adults, including a child's mother or father. Also, give an example of someone who is a special safe adult for specific reasons at a specific time, such as a doctor or nurse—but only for specific purposes and when a parent or caretaker is also present.]
- **Unsafe friends and unsafe adults**—unsafe friends and unsafe adults put a child at risk for emotional, spiritual and physical harm. These are people who place a child in danger for their own purposes without concern for the welfare of the child. They also do not consistently listen to the parents' wishes or the child's boundaries. [Tell children we can know when someone is unsafe if they do not follow the rules or listen to our boundaries.]
- **Safe touches**—touches that have a good purpose, aren't intended to hurt and should be familiar. They're safe and can also be meant to keep you healthy, even if the person isn't known well, as long as the touches are appropriate for the particular relationship, such as when mom kisses your forehead at night, when you high-five your teammate, etc. [Avoid saying safe touches that feel good are "safe, loving or show someone loves you" since sometimes touches are safe and necessary, but can also hurt—although they hurt for a good reason to keep children safe, such as stitches, a doctor shot or dental cleanings.]
- **Unsafe touches**—touches that are inappropriate, could be meant to hurt or scare, or are contrary to the touching rules. If unsure about a touch, ask a parent. [Provide examples of unsafe touches, such as hitting, punching, tripping, kicking, spitting, touching private parts, etc.]

- **Secret**—something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable. [For example, let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of “telling”.]

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Rules for personal safety echo

Background: In this activity, you are helping children to learn basic rules for personal safety.

Note: The Lesson Leader should ensure to begin / end each lesson with a prayer. See examples within the appendix.

Preparation: As preparation, the Lesson Leader should review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*. Review the terms *safe touch*, *unsafe touch* and *special safe adult* and review the physical boundary rules.

Directions: The Lesson Leader will gather the children together in a large group. Then, the Lesson Leader will read out a series of safe touches and unsafe touches, asking the children to listen carefully so they can be ready to “ECHO” the rules. Children will be provided with the opportunity to share examples of the rules as they understand them.

Activity: Introduce children to the Safety Rules and ask the children to ECHO each part of the rule back to you. (You may sing it or use a silly voice to keep it entertaining.) After each rule, ask children to give examples of when they use this rule. You can chart this on paper or the board. Draw pictures, as most children in Pre-Kindergarten will not be reading yet. Repeat this for each of the rules. Feel free to add movement into the exercise to make it more age appropriate.

Safe Environment Rule Statements—Use language most familiar to the children.

- Say: Say “No!” Then, wait for the youth Echo response
Ask: When have you heard someone say “No!”? Why did they say this?
Allow opportunity for the youth to answer. Acknowledge their answers, and then confirm the rule: You can say NO! to anyone who tries to touch you in an unsafe or uncomfortable way. Even an adult, even someone older than you. Even someone younger! Clarify meaning of unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Say: Get Away! Then, wait for the youth Echo response
Ask: When have you known someone to use this rule? What are some things we should stay away from? Allow opportunity for the youth to answer. Acknowledge their answers, and then confirm the rule: They can try to get away as soon as it is safe and another adult is there who can help them. Clarify meaning of unsafe.
- Say: Tell an Adult... Wait for the youth Echo response
Ask: When have you used this rule? What are some things we should always tell an adult? Allow opportunity for the youth to answer. Acknowledge their answers, and then confirm the rule: As soon as they can, tell a safe adult what happened. Clarify who safe adults are.
- Repeat this activity a few times, and then, periodically throughout the week and year to develop automaticity. (We seek to have the same automatic response that a child says when asked: “What do you do if you are on fire?” Reply— “STOP, DROP, ROLL”

Let the children know they have a right to say “NO” when they are uncomfortable, and that they have a right to be safe. Remind children that most people and most touches are safe.

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Rules for personal safety OK/Not OK Corners

Background: In this activity, you are helping children to learn basic rules for personal safety.

Note: The Lesson Leader should ensure to begin / end each lesson with a prayer. See examples within the appendix.

Preparation: As preparation, the Lesson Leader should review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*. Review the terms *safe touch*, *unsafe touch* and *special safe adult* and review the physical boundary rules.

Activity: Assessment using OK / Not OK Corners (also helpful for identifying differences). A statement is announced and students scramble to take a stand in one of two designated corners of the room (label them if necessary, as “red=Not OK” and “green=OK”). One Corner is the OK Corner, the other is the Not OK corner. Consider making it possible for children to incorporate more movement into the lesson, but if the group is large, or if this lesson is a reiteration of the initial full lesson, have students stand and point to the corner they are choosing.

Note: As an option, consider the book, *Please Stop! Go Tell!* By Michelle Brown, LCSW or other suitable book that you have in your school or parish library that illustrates safety rules. Read the story to them before the activity to provide prior knowledge, or wait until after, and perform the activity to assess growth in their knowledge of the material.

Teacher announces a statement, such as, “Ice-cream is good for you” or “It is OK to say No,” etc. Continue the activity using a variety of safe environment statements (below) to adequately assess student learning of the Safety Rules. Make notations of responses for future classes/discussion.

Call on OK / Not OK children to state why they think what they do. Acknowledge their answers, and then confirm the appropriate answer. The remaining students remain standing or can be asked to sit crisscross applesauce while the discussion is held. Teacher should guide the ensuing discussions validating statements children make while correcting any incorrect perceptions.

To help children feel safe with disagreeing, or better about having the answer that is “against the grain,” encourage a “scramble” where you invite every single person to get up again and have a second chance to go to the appropriate section of the room.

List of possible prompts for the activity:

Hugs from Mom
Push from a neighbor
Touch on your private parts
Shove at recess

Pat on your shoulder
“Fist Bumps” from a buddy
Kicked by a brother/sister
“High Five” from a friend

Kiss on the cheek from Grandma
Touch on your butt
Slap from a friend at school
Kiss on your mouth

Wrap up activity using **Choral/ECHO Response (Effective for memory work, 100% simultaneous participation.)** At a cue from the teacher, all students say a response aloud, in unison. Often the response is the answer to a question or sometimes it is just a repeat of what the teacher say. Listen for stray responses. This can be done with small groups if the class is large. Restating rules asking students to ECHO them back reinforces the rules.

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,
We are special and different.
We are made in your image.
I want to live like you want me to live.
Please help me respect myself, and others.
Please give me courage to speak up for myself, and my friends if we are being harmed.
Amen*

Book Suggestions (please see note about utilizing books in the “Background for Lesson Leaders” section)

Do You Have a Secret? Jennifer Moore- Mallinois B.E.S. Publishing
Please Stop! Go Tell! Michelle Brown, LCSW
No Means No! Jayneen Sanders, Upload Publishing

Theology of the Body Building Blocks for Tots by Monica Ashour, Pauline Books & Media:
Every Body is Smart (board book); *Every Body Is a Gift* (board book); *Everybody Has a Body* (board book)

Theology of the Body Building Blocks for Kids by Monica Ashour, Pauline Books & Media:
God Has a Plan for Boys and for Girls; *Every Body Has Something to Say*; *Every Body Has Something to Give*