

Lesson 4 for Grades 3 - 5

Partnering with Parents & Guardians for Safety:
Secrets, Surprises and Promises

PRINCIPLE

Children must learn how to respect their own health and safety, and that of others, by understanding the safety rules about secrets. They have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations that cause discomfort or violate the safety rules.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." —
Jeremiah 1:8, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV)

OBJECTIVES

After lesson 4, children should be able to:

- Identify the boundary differences between secrets, surprises, and promises
- Understand the safety rules with regard to secrets and promises
 - 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
- Begin to understand that if anybody does make them keep a secret, gives them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't their fault
- Understand boundaries can apply for Online activities

Background for Parents and Guardians:

In preparation for teaching this lesson and to lead the activities, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*.

Before sitting down with your child(ren) and beginning the activities, read through this entire lesson and view the video. Choose the activities that you are most comfortable with first and gradually moving to the others. You will find it is helpful to have the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* handy to navigate the lesson material. These activities are intended to empower young people to think about safety issues with you as their partner.

Considerations for the age group—

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 getting better as they become more refined with communicating their ideas. Children this age are away from home more often and are recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. 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. Parents and guardians can include them in discussions establishing rules or guidelines.

Activity #1: Introductory Video

Directions: View and discuss the introductory video with your child. The introductory video for all grades is designed to open a simple discussion with children about personal boundaries and touching safety. The video is approximately six minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the activities. It's merely an intro designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition into completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. It can be used in to introduce any of the following activities. Discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing"; not just listening or watching.

Grades K-2 Video links:

English K – 5: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/As5weSqt9Jw>

Spanish K – 5: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/-ELCTmNKsw4>

Activity #2: Review and Discuss Vocabulary words in an age-appropriate way with your child

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.]

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.]

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.]

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, fearful or sad. Secrets also send the message to children that they, or someone else, will get into trouble if the secret is shared [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”.]

Surprise—Surprises are typically happy. They cause feelings of happiness and joy. They are exciting, and temporary— meaning they will be revealed within a specific timeframe. As surprises are usually fun, they include activities like birthday surprises, gifts, trips and special treats. Surprises are inclusive and meant to be shared with others.

Problem—Problems can be big and small; they can be small, little things like puzzles or big things like emergencies—and often need to be solved. They can involve fears and emotions. Sometimes we put boundaries in place to prevent problems, or to be more prepared for them. Whenever we have a problem that we don't know how to solve, we should talk to a safe adult for help. If we have problems about safety issues, boundaries and secrets, we definitely need to talk to a safe adult. [For example, a house fire is a big problem for everyone who lives there, and for the people who live near that house. It's a problem because it's unsafe, and it could hurt people. When a house is on fire, help is needed help right away. How do we get help with the problem of house fires? As soon as it's safe, we “stop, drop and roll”, try to get out and call 911, and the fire department comes to help us fix the problem of the fire that's too big to fix on our own.]

Threat—When someone threatens you, they are stating that they are going to hurt, injure, damage or do something dangerous if you don't do what they want you to do. You never have to listen to threats, but you should be prepared in case you experience them. [For example, someone might threaten you and say if you tell about an unsafe secret, they're going to hurt your someone/something you know, and that you're going to get into trouble. When you hear someone threaten you about an unsafe secret, that is when we definitely need to tell a safe adult.]

Promise—When you make a promise, you are declaring that something specific will happen—that you will either “do” or “not do” something. Promises can be good! But, we should never make promises about keeping quiet regarding unsafe secrets.

Activity #3: Boundaries

Background: This activity involves providing boundary information, helping children to think about this subject, and then giving them specific scenarios to work out how they would respond to the situation if they are confronted with it.

Discussion: Children need to understand that there are significant differences between surprises and secrets, and that if someone is trying to make them keep a secret, then they must tell a safe adult. When a child knows the difference between secrets and surprises and that keeping a secret isn't OK, he/she's more likely to reveal boundary violations and/or abuse.

Directions: Talk to your child about secrets:

- A secret is something that is intended to never be told. They're unsafe, especially when they have to do with our boundary safety rules. Boundary safety involves rules like when we tell a safe adult when we're uncomfortable or scared, and how we tell a safe adult right away if someone tries to touch or see our private parts. Knowing about secrets are an important part of our boundary safety plan, because they impact our safety.
- When it comes to your safety and the boundary rules, it's not OK to keep secrets.
- When someone asks you to keep a secret, it can make you feel sad and scared, uncomfortable or yucky. Sometimes they might even make you feel special, because you might like the person who is asking you to keep a secret.
- It's wrong for an adult or another child to ask you to keep a secret about your safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt.
- If someone asks you to keep a secret about something unsafe, you have to tell a safe adult, even if the person told you not to.
- Sometimes people will try to scare you into making a promise about keeping secrets. The person might say that you'll get into trouble if you tell, or they might threaten you and say that they'll hurt your animal, or a friend or family member. If this happens, it's really important that you talk to your safe adult.
- Sometimes this is scary, but telling a safe adult is the right thing to do.
- It's OK to talk about the secret with one of your safe adults, even if you promised not to tell. You can always talk to your safe adults!
- If you've already kept a secret with someone, it is important to go to your safe adult and talk to them.

Talk to children about their safe adults:

Say/Ask: Let's talk about the safe adults in your life. Who are your safe adults?

Answer: Safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect your 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.

Say/Ask: Who are some of your safe adults?

Answer: Examples may include: teachers, someone at church, principal, aunt, uncle, mom or dad, police officer, firefighter, etc.

Ask: What are the differences between Secrets and Surprises?

Create two columns on a sheet of paper to record your child's examples. A helpful table is listed below.

Unsafe Secrets:	Safe Surprises:
Are hidden	Are revealed
Have potential to be kept forever	Are temporary
Are never told	Are meant to be shared with others (eventually, at the right time)

Exclude others .	Are inclusive .
Have potential to harm, or hurt someone's feelings .	Have potential to bring joy .
Might sound like they are fun	Are fun
May cause feelings of fear (scary)	Often cause feelings of confidence
May cause feelings of sadness	Often cause feelings of happiness, excitement
Might involve threats to loved ones, including animals	Never involve threats

Say: Listen to the examples I am going to give you. Think about whether the example is an unsafe secret or safe surprise? And, why?

1. If someone tells you about a gift they purchased for a friend's birthday party and asks you not to tell... Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise?

Answer: Safe surprise—one that you can still share with your safe adults at any time.

2. If someone tells you about a prank that is going to hurt someone's feelings, but told you not to tell anyone... Is it an unsafe secret or a safe surprise?

Answer: Unsafe secret—one that you have to tell a safe adult about right away because someone could get hurt.

3. When someone touches your private parts, and tells you not to tell... Is it an unsafe secret or a safe surprise?

Answer: Unsafe secret—one that you have to tell a safe adult about right away because it violates the safety rules.

4. When someone tells you something that makes you feel afraid and uncomfortable... Is it an unsafe secret or a safe surprise?

Answer: Unsafe secret—one that you have to tell a safe adult about right away because it violates the safety rules.

5. If someone tells you about a special dinner or treat to celebrate a friend's game win, and tells you not to tell... Is it an unsafe secret or a safe surprise?

Answer: Safe surprise—one that you can still share with your safe adults at any time.

Point to make: If you're in a situation where you don't feel right, or you feel scared or uncomfortable, or nervous, anxious, humiliated or embarrassed, listen to your intuition! If someone is asking you to keep a secret, it's ALWAYS OK to say "no" and it's very important to tell a safe adult.