

# **“Ignorance of the law excuses no one.”**

## **LawForKids.org -- Stay Out of Jail Free Cards**

### **Abstract:**

The Law is an important but complicated part of our lives. Professional Lawyers attend school and study for years before they can be certified to practice in specific areas of the law. Even highly trained lawyers with years of experience must convince judges and even members of a jury that their understanding of the law is correct. While it is nearly impossible for anyone to know every part of every law, we are nevertheless held accountable for our actions if we break any part of the law. And, the excuse "But I didn't know I was breaking the law" doesn't hold up in court.

Kids have submitted questions about the law over LawForKids.org during the past 2 years that have been answered by Arizona Attorneys. These questions and answers are posted in the Speak Up! section of LawForKids.org. LawForKids.org cards each feature five Speak Up! questions that kids must search the LawForKids.org site to discover.

### **Objectives:**

As a result of this lesson, students will:

1. Successfully navigate the internet to find LawForKids.org
2. Identify important Arizona youth laws
3. Search LawForKids.org to discover answers to 5 commonly asked questions about the law
4. Understand that “Ignorance of the law excuses no one”

### **Audience:**

The basic approach of this lesson using the Web Site LawForKids.org, can be used at any level from Elementary to high school. However, content on LawForKids.org is focused for kids ages 11-18.

### **Time required:**

- *Preparation* - 30 minutes to 1 hour for teacher to familiarize them self with LawForKids.org, reproduce worksheets, and reserve time in computer lab
- *Class time* - One Class Period

### **Materials Needed:**

1. Computer with a connection to the Internet and Internet Browser software enabled to view the website <http://www.LawForKids.org>. Optimally, each student should have a computer to work on, but in cases where there are not enough computers for each student, students can work two or three to a computer.
2. LawForKids.org Stay Out of Jail Free Cards worksheets (11) downloadable from the “Teachers Only” section of LawForKids.org (<http://www.lawforkids.org/DOCS/cardworksheets.PDF>)
3. Optional – LawForKids.org Stay Out of Jail Free Cards

**Procedure:**

1. Prior to this lesson, a teacher should familiarize them self with LawForKids.org and the legal terms used on the site and featured in the LawForKids.org glossary
2. Provide background into the U.S. legal system and the basis for law and order in society. Students should be familiar with legal terms, which are listed in the Youth Laws Glossary section of LawForKids.org.
3. Take students into computer lab, and instruct them to open the website <http://www.lawforkids.org> Give them each one Stay Out Of Jail Free Card worksheet. It is recommended to give out one of the 11 different worksheets to each student so that all students are NOT looking for the same questions.
4. At the beginning of the lesson, give a brief overview of the Youth Laws, Stories and Speak Up! section of LawForKids.org.
5. Explain that students will need to find the answers to the five questions on their worksheets, write them down and be prepared to talk about them with the group. Allow students to browse LawForKids.org for 10 to 15 minutes.
6. After students have written down their answers on the worksheets, have them get into groups by worksheet number. Allow students to discuss their answers.
7. Have groups report about one or more of the questions and answers they found (suggested to take answers "round robin" or one from each group at a time).
8. After each group has reported about their questions, discuss with the whole class whether any of the answers surprised them, or whether they thought the answers were fair and why.
9. Reward students with the LawForKids.org card that corresponds with their worksheet. Possibly provide awards to kids who have LawForKids.org cards.

**Alternate Procedure 1**

10. Challenge students to complete more worksheets and give them cards each time they complete a different worksheet. Establish a prize for students who complete all 11 worksheets and accumulate an entire set of LawForKids.org Cards.

**Closure:**

Students are likely to have more questions about the law after this exercise. Encourage them to learn as much as they possibly can about the law because "ignorance of the law is no excuse" Stress the fact that everyone is held accountable for their actions and there are consequences mandated by the law. Challenge them to be aware of the real consequences of their actions when they are confronted with a decision to break the law.

**Possible supplemental exercises:**

- Ask students to write poems, slogans, draw posters or even compose a song about what they have learned about the law on LawForKids.org.
- Have students trade their cards with others to expose others to information about the law
- Living opinion poll - read the answer to a select group of questions. Have students walk to a side of the room representing their viewpoint of whether a law is fair or not. Have students from both sides share their opinion with the class. Use this as a starting point for deeper discussions about the law.