

## Lesson 1 for Grades 6, 7 & 8

## Physical Boundaries

### PRINCIPLE

Children / youth must learn tools to protect themselves from people who may harm them through physical touch (sexual or otherwise) to prevent / reduce the risk of sexual abuse and boundary violations.

### CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

*Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.—Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2319 (1997)*

### OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the lesson leader teaches students specifically about physical boundaries. After lesson 1, youth should be better able to:

- Clearly state the physical boundary safety rules, recognizing it's OK to say "no" to an adult or other youth:
  - Say "No!" when someone tries to touch them in an unsafe or uncomfortable way
  - Try to get away from the situation if they feel uncomfortable
  - Tell an adult as soon as possible
- Describe safe / unsafe physical behavior and begin to practice keeping themselves safe and out of danger
- Technology Component: Similar boundary rules apply for Online activities, too
  - Say "No!" if someone shares unsafe or inappropriate material/images
  - Leave the situation
  - Tell an adult as soon as possible
- Understand that if anybody does give them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault

### Background for Lesson Leaders:

An important concept in teaching children about their boundaries is to identify safe and unsafe physical boundaries—some of which are non-negotiable. What to unpack during the lessons: children may not be aware they're allowed to say "no" to a behavior that makes them uncomfortable. They may make promises with their peers to keep secrets to protect them, not realizing it's most important to deliver knowledge about unsafe situations to safe adults. They'll also need to know that it's never their fault (nor will it ever be their fault) if they or someone they know has been abused, or is hurting.

Remember, children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It isn't always "cool" to say that you must tell someone if you're touched or approached (in person, or

online) in an inappropriate or sexual way. Situations of this nature may involve immense shame, guilt, threats, etc., for youth. So, do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescents in ways that has them actually hear you, rather than ignore you. It will be important for the adult to stress "healthy" behavior and boundaries, and the "right thing to do" when discussing boundaries to this age group. Remind them what feels "cool" may not be "safe" or "healthy."

These exercises are intended to empower young people to begin to think about safety issues and to be their parents' partners in making sure the child has the tools needed to resist the overtures of a potential abuser or an adult or other child with inappropriate behaviors.

### This age group: Dealing with pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is "transition"

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. Youth are often concerned about physical changes, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age, as youth complain of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an import role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person. Lesson leaders must carefully listen to children and observe what is happening in their lives. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know who they are with and what they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents.

## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE LESSONS—A MAP FOR LESSON LEADERS

1. **Complete the VIRTUS Children's Programs Lesson Leader Orientation and Certification Training.** This training module will provide the foundational knowledge necessary for any Lesson Leader to successfully lead a safe environment lesson. For access to this training, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.
2. **Review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*.** This document gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries. While adults are the main protectors of children, there are skills children can learn to better protect themselves and each other when faced with tough situations where caring adults aren't present. For access to this resource, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.
3. **Review the Key Vocabulary Words for Lesson Leaders to Know** (below). These key words and concepts should be woven throughout the entire lesson. The lesson leader should read through and understand these terms and apply them to each activity.

## Key Vocabulary Words for Lesson Leaders to Know and Be Able to Communicate

**Saying "No"**—to say "no" or "stop" 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, if they try to touch your private body parts, or if they touch you in any way you don't like or want.]*

**Peer Pressure**—The strong influence of a group, especially of young people, on members of that group to behave as everyone else does. We don't have to follow what others are doing—we have a right to be safe, and we have a say in what happens to our bodies.

**Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit. We keep these parts covered to keep them healthy.

**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.

**Note:** It is possible to demonstrate personal boundaries by having children stand close to one another.

When children live in metropolitan cities, talk about personal space boundaries on public transportation.

## DURING THE LESSON

Each lesson should begin with the Introductory Video. Following the video, you are able to choose which activity options you would like to do with your students. There are multiple activities from which to choose, and you may choose to do one or all of the activities. Each activity can also be tailored to the needs and grade level of your students.

### STEP 1: Play Introductory Video

The introductory video for youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The brief video 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 of completing the interactive Lesson Activity Options. If the video is shown as an optional activity, please use in conjunction with one of the additional activity options, because discussion and practice are critical components needed to teach youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing," not just listening. Please communicate with your coordinator to obtain video access.

### ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Review and expand the physical boundary touch rules

**Background:** In this activity, you are assessing children's recognition of personal physical boundaries by helping youth to learn basic rules for personal physical boundary safety and practice how they would handle different scenarios. In this way, they will be more likely to vocalize when they feel unsafe.

**Directions:** Talk with children about unsafe situations they might face with adults and other young people, and discuss appropriate ways to respond. Then, discuss key concepts.

**Say:** Kids always have a right to be safe.

**Ask:** what are different words or phrases that mean “no?”

- Examples can include “stop,” “don’t do that,” “I don’t like that,” “quit it,” “that’s enough,” etc.

**Say:**

- Saying words that mean “no” are all examples of placing a boundary. Kids are allowed to say words that mean “No” when they feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or when someone violates their boundaries. This is true even when speaking to an adult or another youth.
- When kids say “no,” even to an adult about matters of safety and boundary rules, the other person should listen and respect the boundary.
- If something has happened that violates your safety or boundaries, it’s important that we don’t keep it hidden and a secret. Secrets involving safety are always unsafe. And keeping unsafe secrets only really protects the person who did the wrong thing, and makes it possible for them to keep doing behaviors that might hurt others, too.
- When we are faced with situations where we feel unsafe or uncomfortable, we need to speak to an adult about what has happened. This is the right thing to do for ourselves and our friends—to take the situation to someone who can help.

**Note:** Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult or other youth’s actions are safe or unsafe. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of inappropriate behavior and identify things that are “red flags.” As you look at the situations, you will see that some aren’t always clear-cut examples, which is exactly what can happen to youth when they are struggling in these real-life situations. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to practice standing up for themselves and learn about ways to communicate. It also helps them to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of peer pressure and the child’s real need to “fit in” and be part of the group.

Next, discuss difficult situations that show inappropriate behavior, and ask children what they should do.

**Say:** These are examples of inappropriate behavior that unsafe adults or older youth might do. Talking about them now helps us to be more prepared to know what to do—and it could help us to be able to protect ourselves better, or get help when something unsafe or uncomfortable happens.

**Say:** I’m going to read a scenario to you, and ask what makes these examples inappropriate, unsafe or wrong. Then, I’m going to ask what we should do when we experience these types of situations.

1. **Scenario:** When adults or older youth allow young people to do something their parents don’t allow. If the situation is one parents have forbidden, and the other adult tells the child to keep it a secret, that adult’s action becomes more concerning.
  - **Ask:** *Why is this inappropriate, unsafe or wrong?*
    - Answer: It’s never OK for an adults to do something with a youth that they know the parents won’t like. And, asking children to keep unsafe secrets isn’t safe. Youth have a right to be safe, and have a right to stand up for themselves. Adults should never ask you to keep an unsafe secret, and they shouldn’t try to come between you and your parents, either.
  - **Ask:** *What can we do about it?*
    - Answer: When we are faced with situations where we feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or that we know are against the rules, we need to speak to an adult about what has happened. This is the right thing to do for ourselves and our friends—to take the situation to someone who can help. We might be afraid that we will get into trouble, but it’s important that safety and having courage to do the right thing is more important.
2. **Scenario:** When adults or other youth tell dirty jokes or show pictures or videos of naked people, share them with youth, or leave them out so youth can see or find them. And, it is especially concerning if the adult blames the youth and makes it seem as if it were the youth’s fault.
  - **Ask:** *Why is this inappropriate, unsafe or wrong?*
    - Answer: This violates the safety rules. Safe adults and older youth should never show pornography, naked images of people or dirty jokes with youth—and they definitely shouldn’t say it’s the youth’s fault.
  - **Ask:** *What can we do about it?*
    - Answer: Say words that mean “no,” try to get away, and speak to safe adult right away.

3. **Scenario:** When an adult or older youth does something unsafe to a youth's body—like touching the youth's private parts, or forcing the youth to touch their own private parts.
  - **Ask:** *Why is this inappropriate, unsafe or wrong?*
    - Answer: This violates the personal boundary safety rules. Adults should only ever look at or touch your private body parts for health and safety reasons.
  - **Ask:** *What could we do about it?*
    - Answer: Say words that mean “no,” try to get away, and speak to safe adult right away.
4. **Following the previous scenario,** when the youth says, “Stop,” the adult or older youth might agree to “back off,” but then asks the child not to tell anyone what happened and to keep it a secret. What if the adult or older youth threatens the youth and says they'll hurt them or someone they know if they don't keep quiet?
  - **Ask:** *Why is this inappropriate, unsafe or wrong?*
    - Answer: This violates the personal boundary safety rules. Safe adults and safe youth should never ask you to keep an unsafe secret. Also, threats involving safety are never OK.
  - **Ask:** *What could we do about it?*
    - Answer: Say “no,” try to get away, and speak to safe adult right away. Talking to a safe adult about what has happened is the right thing to do, even if you've already promised to keep a secret.
5. **Scenario:** A friend confides in you that someone has violated their physical boundaries by messing with their private parts, or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person. They ask you to keep it a secret, and you agreed because you didn't know what else to do.
  - **Ask:** *Why is this inappropriate, unsafe or wrong?*
    - Answer: This violates the personal boundary safety rules. Adults should only ever look at or touch your private body parts for health reasons. It's unsafe to keep secrets about safety.
  - **Ask:** *What could we do about it?*
    - Answer: The best way to help our friends is to speak to safe adults when something is wrong or unsafe. Even if we make a promise or say that we will keep something a secret, when it comes to safety, sharing this information with someone who can help is more important. We have a right to keep ourselves safe, and we can help our friends, too.

**Conclusion:** **Say:** Learning about different situations that show other people's inappropriate safety behavior helps us to look carefully at challenges that we might face, and helps us to think through scenarios to come to a safe and healthy decision.

Tell an adult you trust, like a teacher, a family member or someone else, when something is wrong or when you feel your boundaries have been crossed. If you aren't taken seriously, tell another caring adult, and keep telling until someone pays attention to you.

### ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Personal Space Bubble / Safety Rules Word Puzzle

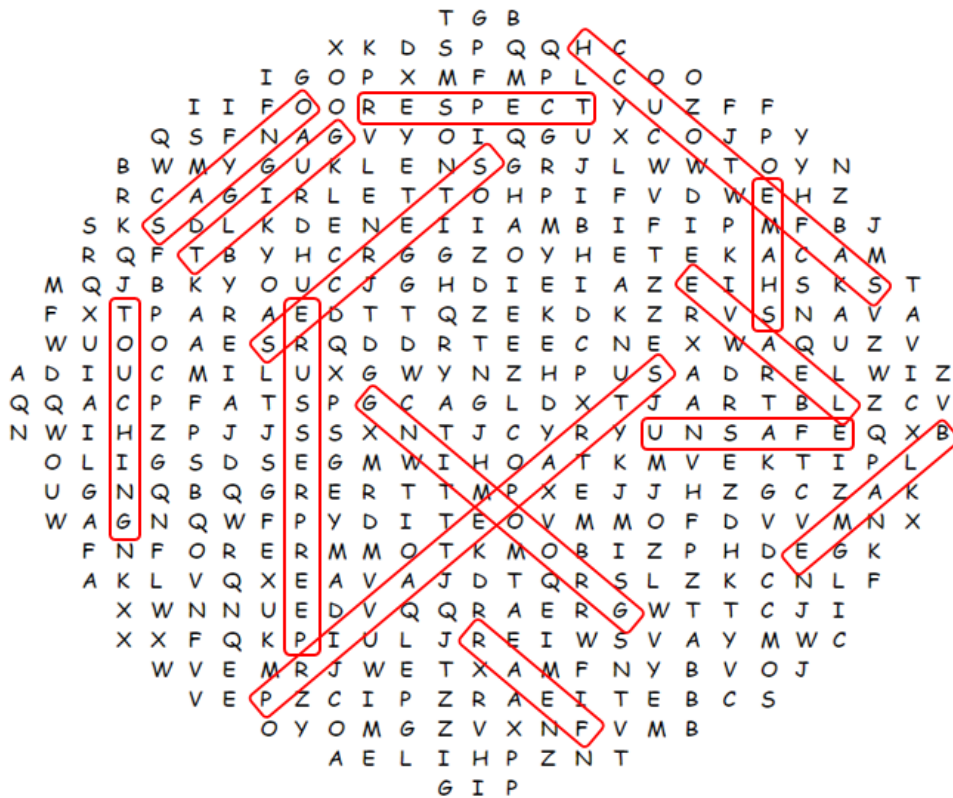
**Directions:** Hand out the word puzzle and instruct the children to find the words on the list related to the topic of “Touching and Boundary Safety,” and to outline / highlight each of those words.

Consider having the activity be a race to see who can finish first with finding all of the words. Then, invite the children to communicate about how they feel regarding the words within the puzzle. Ask them to define / explain each of the words as a review.

**Example:** The words are spelled out in a straight line. There are no spaces between letters or words in two-word phrases (i.e., “SAY NO” will appear as “SAYNO”). Words may be upside down, backwards or at an angle. Some letters may be used by multiple words.

**WORD PUZZLE ANSWER KEY:**

|               |          |          |       |
|---------------|----------|----------|-------|
| SAFE TOUCH    | GROOMING | LEAVE    | SHAME |
| PRIVATE PARTS | BLAME    | TOUCHING | GUILT |
| PEER PRESSURE | RESPECT  | UNSAFE   | FEAR  |
| SECRETS       | SAY NO   |          |       |



**Note:** The Word Puzzle worksheet template is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet. Print sufficient copies of that particular page for the entire class.

**Note:** It is important the youth recognize that shame and guilt might be natural reactions to boundary violations. Sometimes a person with bad intentions might tell the youth they did something wrong. However, it is extremely important for them to know that when they or someone they know is abused, it is never the child's fault.

**ACTIVITY OPTION #3: "Who / What / Where" Safe Behavior Interviews**

**Preparation:** The youth may start this activity during this lesson and complete it during the same session, or it may be stretched to cover two class sessions.

- If intended to be completed within one class session, the Lesson Leader should recruit several adults (consider the DRE, Faith Formation employees, approved volunteers, other Church employees such as a parish secretary, cleaning services, Youth Minister, Clergy, etc.) to be available during the class time as potential interviewees. The youth can then interview these individuals as part of the activity. Interviews should last for 10 minutes.
- Children can host the interviews in the same classroom or class setting (and should not be in isolated areas to interview). All safe environment procedures should be followed, and children should not be unattended.
- If the activity is intended to be completed over two class sessions, other potential interview persons could include family members, friends or classmates.

**Note:** While this activity can be completed in one class session, it may be most helpful to stretch this across two sessions—which will largely depend on your individual circumstances and the preferences of your organization. You might consider simply taking a few minutes and following up during the next "class period" or "meeting" to discuss the results if there isn't enough time to gather everyone together after the interviews to address the conclusion. Read through the activity to see how you can best accommodate this activity with the schedule allotted to you.

**SUPPLIES**

Electronic recording device (such as a phone, iPad, etc.), or,  
Note pad / paper  
Writing utensil  
Volunteers / People the youth know



As you prepare before the students are present, write the following questions on a board for youth to see (note that there may be some overlap in the questions):

What is a safe friend or safe adult?  
Who is a safe friend or safe adult?  
What does a safe friend or safe adult do?  
When does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?  
Where does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?  
Why does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?

**Note:** Some individuals may not have an electronic recording device. If this is the case, then simply instruct them to use the notepad and writing utensils to record the interview.

**Directions:** Tell the youth they are news reporters who will be interviewing someone (i.e., someone they know well, someone they see as an acquaintance, a person you make available to them through the parish or school, or a figurative “person on the campus”, etc.) for his / her opinion about this question:

“What is a safe friend or safe adult?”

**Say:** As news reporters, they will need to obtain a response to each of the five “w” questions, including: “Who?”, “What?”, “When?”, “Where?” and “Why?” So, replace the underlined word “What” in the above question with each of the other “w” words, and ask each person you interview all of the “w” questions. Ask them

**Process:** Instruct the youth to do the following:

- Conduct interviews with friends, family members and classmates using a recording device or notepad. Address each of the “w” questions with each person interviewed.
- After completing the interviews, play it back or review the notes. Create a quick summary of what was mentioned.
- Each youth should ask him / herself: Was anything left out of the interview? If so, what?
- Compile a closing paragraph to “wrap it up,” like legitimate reporters in the field generally do.
- Record (or write) closing remarks.

**Conclusion:** Children will return to class prepared to share the general consensus of what they have learned after writing a quick summary.  
**Ask:** what is a safe adult? (answers will vary, but are specifically outlined here for you to articulate after gathering the “intel” from the class).

**Note:** When sharing the results of this experiment with the whole group, simply have youth verbally recap some of the points from the interview.

**While everyone’s answers will vary, these are the answers in context of this activity. You will be able to share these specific answers with children at the conclusion of the session, after they have shared their findings with the group:**

What is a safe friend or safe adult?

- Answer: A safe friend or safe adult prioritizes safety.

Who is a safe friend or safe adult?

- Answer: Most people are safe and behave in ways that show they are safe. Examples of safe adults could include your parents, educators, family members, or other adults in your orbit.

What does a safe friend or safe adult do?

- Answer: a safe friend or safe adult behaves in ways that are appropriate and safe. They follow the rules of the organization. They listen to my boundaries. They don’t touch me or do things to me that make me feel unsafe or uncomfortable. They participate in healthy and safe relationships.

When does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?

- A safe friend or safe adult prioritizes safety in relationships all the time!

Where does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?

- A safe friend or safe adult prioritizes safety everywhere, and especially in ministerial environments.

Why does a safe friend or safe adult do these things?

- A safe friend or safe adult does these things because they care about your welfare, they want you to be healthy and successful and their actions are for your good.

Bonus question to ask: How can you tell that someone is safe?

Answer: You can tell that someone is safe by the things they say, and the way that they behave.

Encourage the students to go home and discuss their findings with people in their home, asking the adults in their lives to reflect on what their own responses would be if asked them to answer all five “w” questions regarding safe adults.

#### ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Internet Safety Worksheet—Is it true or false?

##### Directions:

Hand out the worksheet and instruct the children to read each statement and select whether the statement is “True” or “False.” They can circle or highlight each answer.

After completing the exercise, go through the examples one by one and ask the youth to articulate why they chose the specific answers. Help them to understand the correct answers by looking at the Internet Safety Answer Key below. Explanations are listed for “False” answers on the right of the page.

**Note:** The Internet Safety T/F worksheet template is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet. Print sufficient copies of that particular page for the entire class.

##### INTERNET SAFETY WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY:

1. If you're aware that a friend is being cyberbullied or harassed, or has experienced abuse, it is OK to keep the matter private without telling an adult—especially if you promised that you wouldn't tell.

**False**

**Note:** If something bad happens to a friend, it is important to communicate that person to a caring adult. It is NEVER ok to keep silent when another friend is in trouble.

2. You can always know the exact identity of people with whom you meet on the Internet.

**False**

**Note:** It is not possible to know the exact identity of people whom you meet on the Internet.

3. It's OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep an unsafe secret.

**False**

**Note:** It is not OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep a secret.

4. If you see inappropriate images on the Internet, it is important to stop looking and tell a safe adult as soon as possible.

**True**

**INTERNET SAFETY WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY (cont.):**

5. Even if you have great security settings on your accounts, sometimes people can see the material you share because of a lack of security settings on a friend's account.

**True**

6. The best policy is to refrain from posting personal/identifying information on the Internet.

**True**

7. It's OK to say something online, even if you wouldn't say it in person.

**False**

Note: If you wouldn't say or do the action in person, don't say it online.

8. Once material is shared on the Internet, the information can be easily deleted and removed.

**False**

Note: Even if you can no longer see the information that was posted on the Internet, it doesn't mean it's been completely removed. Once information is shared, it will always be available for someone to find on the Internet.

9. If you're unsure of whether an action is inappropriate, you should just keep quiet and not tell until you know for sure.

**False**

Note: If an action makes you feel uncomfortable, do not keep silent! Speaking out protects you and others. Even when unsure, communicate your concerns to a caring adult who will protect you.

**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,*

*Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening. When I don't know where to turn, help me remember what I have learned today. Help me remember to uphold my boundaries so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like. And, help me to protect my friends as well by delivering safety information to people who can help when they are in unsafe situations. Thank you for my parents or loved ones and my teachers who are protecting me. Remind me of your love for me and that you are always with me. Amen*



**Lesson 1 for Grades 6—8**

**Physical Boundaries**

**ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Personal Space Bubble / Safety Rules Word Puzzle**

**Instructions:** Find the following words in the puzzle and outline / highlight each word. The words are spelled out in a straight line. There are no spaces between letters or words in two-word phrases (i.e., "SAY NO" will appear as "SAYNO"). Words may be upside down, backwards or at an angle. Some letters may be used by multiple words.

**Always remember, if you or someone you know has been abused or if your boundaries have been violated, it is never your fault—even if there are feelings of guilt and shame. Help yourself and your friends by taking any unsafe or unhealthy situations to a safe adult.**

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          T G B
        X K D S P Q Q H C
      I G O P X M F M P L C O O
    I I F O O R E S P E C T Y U Z F F
  Q S F N A G V Y O I Q G U X C O J P Y
B W M Y G U K L E N S G R J L W W T O Y N
R C A G I R L E T T O H P I F V D W E H Z
S K S D L K D E N E I I A M B I F I P M F B J
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F X T P A R A E D T T Q Z E K D K Z R V S N A V A
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N W I H Z P J J S S X N T J C Y R Y U N S A F E Q X B
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SAFE TOUCH

SECRETS

RESPECT

UNSAFE

PRIVATE PARTS

GROOMING

SAY NO

SHAME

PEER PRESSURE

BLAME

LEAVE

GUILT

TOUCHING

FEAR

Lesson 1 for Grades 6—8

Physical Boundaries

**ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Internet Safety Worksheet—Is it true or false?**

**Instructions:** Read each question and circle / highlight the correct response. You'll be evaluating whether each statement is True or False, and discussing the answers at the end with your whole group, and later with people in your home.

1. If you're aware that a friend is being cyberbullied or harassed, or has experienced abuse, it is OK to keep the matter private without telling an adult—especially if you promised that you wouldn't tell.

True False

2. You can always know the exact identity of people with whom you meet on the Internet.

True False

3. It's OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep an unsafe secret.

True False

4. If you see inappropriate images on the Internet, it is important to stop looking and tell a safe adult as soon as possible.

True False

5. Even if you have great security settings on your accounts, sometimes people can see the material you share because of a lack of security settings on a friend's account.

True False

6. The best policy is to refrain from posting personal/identifying information on the Internet.

True False

7. It's OK to say something online, even if you wouldn't say it in person.

True False

8. Once material is shared on the Internet, the information can be easily deleted and removed.

True False

9. If you're unsure of whether an action is inappropriate, you should just keep quiet and not tell until you know for sure.

True False