



# Kids Speaking Up for Road Safety

Distracted Driving Lesson Plans for Grades 2–6

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**Lesson Plan:** A Lesson on Distracted Driving

**Grade Level:** 2–3

## Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- understand what it means to be distracted in a variety of situations.
- identify environmental distractions and internal distractions.
- understand what distracted driving is.
- understand and use “I” statements.
- recognize behaviors of passengers that might distract a driver.
- recognize distracted driving when it is occurring/recognize what activities can distract their drivers

## Materials

- A large screen or monitor for presenting the videos
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**Introduce the Lesson/Define and Discuss Being Distracted**

Say: *In this lesson, we're going to talk about what it means to be distracted. We'll talk about how being distracted in different situations can affect us and other people around us.*

Tell students they are going to watch a short video about being distracted.

 Show **Video 1: Defining Distraction.**

After the video is finished, ask: *What does it mean to be distracted? (Possible response: You aren't paying attention to what you're doing.)*

Note that distractions can come from outside ourselves and from inside ourselves.

Ask: *What are some distracting things that come from outside? (Possible responses: brothers or sisters or other kids playing, a baby crying, sound of the TV or radio)*

Ask: *What are some distractions that come from inside? (Possible responses: being hungry, being upset or angry or excited about something, thinking about something you're going to do later, daydreaming)*

Some students may connect distraction with the inability to focus and concentrate. Show appreciation for what they share, but maintain the focus of the discussion on being distracted.

Ask: *How might you be distracted at school? At home? While playing sports or participating in clubs like scouts? With your family?* Allow for a variety of responses while keeping the focus of the discussion on ways students can be distracted.

**NOTE:** You may choose to pair students and have everyone in the class perform the following exercise.

Invite a volunteer to the front of the room and have him or her recite the alphabet from A to J. Then have the student count from 1 to 10. Direct the student to start again, but this time he or she will recite the alphabet while counting, alternating letters and numbers (A, 1, B, 2, C, 3, D, 4 . . .). The student is likely to have some difficulties with this task. Point out that counting distracted him or her from the job of saying the alphabet and that we can distract ourselves if we try to do too many things at once.

Note that, sometimes, when others are distracted, it can be annoying to us or place us in danger. Ask: *Have you ever been annoyed when someone else was distracted? What was going on? Have you ever felt disrespected because you were talking with someone and they were distracted?* Solicit responses from several volunteers.

Then write the following questions on the board.

- What could happen if someone gets distracted when he or she is walking? Playing soccer (or any game)? Biking?
- Have you or someone you know ever had an accident (crash) that was caused by distraction? What happened?
- Have you ever felt scared or worried because you noticed that someone else was distracted?

Pair students and read the first question aloud. Gives pairs a minute or two to share answers. Repeat with the second and third questions. Then ask volunteers to share some of their responses with the class. If no one mentions distracted driving, this can be the right time to say that it can be very dangerous to drive while distracted and that the class will now talk about this subject.

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### **Define Distracted Driving**

*Say: Sometimes, grown-ups can be distracted when they're driving the car. We call this distracted driving. You're a long way from being able to drive, but you all ride in cars, so this is a safety issue for you, too. It can be scary to think about or talk about a topic like this. The purpose of our discussion is to help you be safer when riding in cars.*

*Ask: What is distracted driving? (Possible response: Distracted driving is when the driver is paying attention to anything that is not related to driving the vehicle.)*

*What could happen if a driver is distracted? (Possible responses: He or she might get lost, get in a car crash, or hit something or someone.)*

Students' answers to these questions may reflect fears or anxiety caused by situations they have experienced. In that case, use calming language that acknowledges their feelings, such as "That must have been scary" or "I'm glad you're okay." Students may also express concern about their parents or loved ones breaking the law. Reassure them that this lesson will give them some tools to help any driver they know be safer.

Note that any driver can be distracted, including older siblings, friends' parents, carpool drivers, and bus drivers. Distracted driving isn't just a problem within one's own family.


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## Introduce the SAM Framework

**A note to teachers:** The core lesson focuses on what it means to be distracted and the idea that being distracted can be a problem and even dangerous. This part of the lesson empowers students to speak up by providing a strategy for addressing behaviors that make them uncomfortable using nonconfrontational language. The strategy can be useful in a wide range of situations. As written, the lesson encourages students to use the SAM framework in distracted driving situations. This is an optional extension of the content. You know your students and you can determine whether encouraging them to speak up to parents or other adults at the wheel is appropriate.

Write "I feel . . ." and "I think . . ." on the chart paper or board.

*Say: Sometimes we want to tell other people how we feel. You might be riding in a car and notice that the driver is distracted. Maybe he or she is talking on the phone, or looking at the map on the dashboard, or trying to calm your crying baby sister or brother. That could make you feel nervous or scared. You might not get a great reaction if you say, "Hey, stop driving like that!" But you could try saying how you feel. An "I" statement is when we say how we're feeling by saying "I feel" at the beginning of the sentence. This is a great way to let someone know how you feel without blaming him or her. Let's look at how you could use an "I" statement when you see a problem like distracted driving.*

 Show **Video 2: SAM Framework.**

After students have watched the video, reinforce the strategy. Write **SAM** vertically on the board and ask volunteers what each of the letters stands for. Fill out the framework on the board as you elicit the steps from students.

See a problem.

Address the problem using an "I" statement.

Make an action plan together.

*Say: So, the first step is seeing a problem. Here are some examples of seeing a problem. Write the examples on your chart paper or the board.*

Your friend wants to ride skateboards on a very steep hill. You think it is too dangerous.

You notice that your mom, who is driving, turned to check on the baby in the back seat, and the car swerved.

Ask volunteers for more examples.

Review the use of "I" statements with students. Say: *The second step is addressing, or speak about, problems with "I" statements. An "I" statement allows the speaker to say how he or she feels without blaming the other person. Using an "I" statement shows that you respect the other person, even when you don't like what they're doing. "You" statements, on the other hand, often come across as critical or blaming, and we try to avoid making these kinds of statements.* Give some examples of "You" statements—"You're not paying attention to the road," "You're texting, when you should just be driving," "The car is swerving back and forth because you're talking on the phone," "You scare me when you drive like this"—and ask volunteers for examples of their own. "Write Then write these examples of "I" statements on the board:

"I feel scared when you look at your phone instead of the road."

"I don't feel safe when you're using your phone and driving."

Then ask volunteers to come up with "I" statements they could use if:

- a friend borrows something, and when it is returned, it is broken.
- your classmates are playing a game at recess, and you are left out.
- two of your friends are fighting, and you want to help calm things down.
- you're riding in the car, and the car swerves as the driver tries to give a snack to a baby in the back seat.

Say: *The third step is making a plan.* Explain that every problem has a solution and that kids can be problem solvers. It is helpful to think through some potential problems before they happen, so that you know what to do if the situation comes up.

Write these examples on the board of how to make an action plan and work together to solve the problem of distracted driving:

"Let's pull over to get my water bottle from under the seat. We're not in a hurry."

"Can I answer the phone for you?"

"I'll text Grandma and let her know we're almost there."

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### **Discuss Being a Safe Passenger**

Explain that everyone has a responsibility to be good passengers and not distract the driver. Say: *We are going to talk about things that you might do that would be distracting, and then list ways that you can be good passengers.*

Ask: *How can passengers cause a driver to be distracted? (Possible answers: arguing with other passengers or the driver, not sitting still, asking the driver to hand them things, tapping the driver or kicking the back of the driver's seat, yelling or being noisy)*

Say: *When you are riding in a car, you need to make safe choices. You need to do your best to not distract the driver.* On the board or chart paper, begin a list of things students can do to be safe passengers. Ask: *How can passengers avoid being a distraction to a driver?* Write the answers to this question on the chart. Make sure the following tips are included:

- *I will not make loud noises in the car.*
- *I will not argue or fight in the car.*
- *I will not ask the driver to turn around to look at something or hand me something.*
- *I will not tap, touch, or kick the driver while he or she is driving.*
- *I will buckle my seat belt and sit quietly. I will not unbuckle your seat belt while the car is moving.*

If students put the blame elsewhere—for example, on a sibling or a friend—for distracting behavior, remind them that we are each in control of our own behavior. We can be in control of ourselves, even when others aren't.

If a student brings up feelings of guilt or anxiety over past behaviors or experiences, reassure him or her that past experiences are in the past and he or she is learning how to make better choices in the future.

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## **Conclude the Lesson**

Close the lesson by recapping main points:

- We're distracted when we give our attention to something other than what we're doing.
- The things that distract us can come from inside ourselves and outside ourselves.
- Sometimes, being distracted can be dangerous for ourselves and others. Sometimes, when others are distracted, it can be dangerous for them and for us.
- Distracted driving is when a driver's attention is on something other than driving.
- When you're in a car and the driver is distracted, you can use an "I" statement to say how you feel about it.
- Passengers in vehicles can help make rides safe by not distracting the driver.

Give students a few minutes to write or draw something they learned from the lesson. Hand out the Activity Sheets for students to work on now or at home if no time. Students can share their drawings in small groups or with the whole class to bring closure.