

## **Lesson 1 for Grades 3, 4, and 5: Touching Safety Rules**

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### **Getting started with Lesson 1:**

**Principle:** Children must guard against those who may harm them through touch (sexual or otherwise).

**Catechism:** *“God fashioned man with his own hands [that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form.” — #704<sup>1</sup>*

**Goal:** To assist educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults in teaching children how to prevent or reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

**Objectives:** Through this lesson the catechist, teacher, or youth minister reinforces the parent's message about touching safety and protecting private body parts. Upon completion of this lesson, children should be better able to:

- Recognize that we treat private body parts as “special” by keeping them covered. One reason is to help keep our private body parts clean and healthy.
- Stand up for themselves more effectively.
- Say “No!” when someone tries to touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.

### **Dealing with the intermediate age—key concept is “energy”**

These children are away from home more often than earlier in life and they need to start recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends or at other events and locations.

They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. This is the “gang” age with friends of the same sex. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend to confide in. Although truthful about big things, they are less so about the smaller things, often making up alibis or shifting the blame to others. They have a strong sense of right and wrong or fair or unfair. They can argue and hold strong debates. Caregivers can be more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules or guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Liberia Editrice Vaticana (1997) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Washington D.C. United States Catholic Conference.

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### Activity #1: Play the (optional) introductory video to begin the lesson:

**Note to Teacher:** The introductory video for grades K through 5 is designed to open a simple discussion with children about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately six (6) minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the lesson itself. It is merely an introduction designed to “break the ice” among those in this age group and to get everyone talking about the relevant personal boundary and personal safety issues. Importantly, the video will get children focused on the topic matter, which will help the teacher to facilitate an easy transition into the interactive activities within the lesson. These interactive activities are the critical components where children have a real opportunity to learn how to protect themselves.

We recommend that you watch the video in advance at least a couple of times prior to showing it to your students, so you'll be able to more easily anticipate when the video will end. The video really needs no introduction. Just put it into the machine, and hit “play.” If you're using a DVD version of the video, you'll select the English or Spanish version and the appropriate age group from a menu screen. If you're using a VHS version of the video, you'll need to “cue” the tape to the correct version prior to your class time.

### Activity #2: Review and discuss the vocabulary words:

- **Private body parts**—those body parts that are covered by a bathing suit.
- **Touching safety**—is about empowering children to resist the advances of child abusers and the lures of manipulative, controlling people who would exploit children for their own selfish purposes.
- **“No!” or other words and phrases that mean, “No!”**—a child needs to know that any time someone tries to touch his or her private body parts or tries to get the child to touch the private body parts of the other person, the child should say words that mean “No,” run away, and then should tell the child's mother or father or another safe adult as soon as possible.

### Activity #3: Reviewing the touching rules and violations

**Directions:** In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Help children to see that they have a say in what happens to their bodies. Have children write the Touching Rules on a blackboard or poster board. Language for the rules should vary somewhat from the language used for younger children, but not dramatically.

For example, the rules for this age group could be: “If someone tries to touch your private body parts, or wants you to touch theirs, you should:

- Say words that mean “No!” and get away from them as quickly as possible.
- You should also tell a safe adult what happened right away—even if or *especially* if the person told you not to tell or told you that you would get in trouble for telling.

**Note:** *Teachers should use this opportunity to talk about the grooming process and to point out that it is unlikely someone would start out by immediately trying to touch your private body parts. Child molesters take some time to gradually move toward the abusive behavior. Remind kids that any time they feel uncomfortable with an adult, they have the right to ask the person to stop what they are doing and to walk away. It is important to talk about this subject in a way that gives the child the information needed but does not scare the child unnecessarily.*

- Discuss the ways an adult might try to trap or trick a child:
  - Use the warning signs of a child molester as the basis for this discussion:
    - Allows children to do things their parents would not allow.
    - Gives gifts without permission from the child's parents.
    - Asks children to keep secrets from their parents or guardians.

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**Activity #4: Learning to say "No!" in an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation**

**Directions:** This is a role-playing exercise. Start with life experience. Take turns sharing times when you have chosen to say no. If you can't readily think of any, look at the list below of incomplete sentences to help get you started.

- I yelled "Stop!" when \_\_\_\_\_.
- I couldn't stop crying when \_\_\_\_\_.
- I ran away when \_\_\_\_\_.
- I hated it the day that \_\_\_\_\_.
- My friend said "No!" when \_\_\_\_\_.
- My father said "Stop!" when \_\_\_\_\_.
- One day in school, I said "No! because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Directions:** Discuss the types of touching that make you feel uncomfortable. Start by making a list:

- For example, someone punches, kicks, scratches, or pinches you.
- Someone taunts or teases you by saying mean things about you.
- A person you don't feel comfortable with wants to give you a hug.
- Your aunt wants to kiss you on the mouth.
- The babysitter comes in to the bathroom and offers to help you towel dry after a shower or bath.
- The coach pats you on the buttocks on your way out of the locker room.

**Directions:** Practice at least (5) five different ways of saying "No!" Create different scenarios, and then have each child practice saying "No!" using different vocal pitches, facial expressions, body language, etc. Here are just a few samples to get you started:

- Say, "No! I don't like that and I don't want to be touched!"
- Say, "Stop it!" very loudly.
- Say, "Don't do that!" and run away.
- With hand on hips, yell "No!"
- Say, "No!" and run away.

**Suggested prayer to end the lesson:**

Dear God,

Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening.

When I am confused or feel scared, help me remember what I have learned today.

Help me remember the touching rules so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like.

Thank you for my parents or loved ones and my teachers who are teaching me how to keep myself safe and healthy.

Remind me that I am special and that you are always with me.

Amen