



Teacher's page

Fun lesson plans from Learn Hot English

Ridiculous health and safety rules!

Level: Intermediate (B1) to Upper Intermediate (B2)

Audio: Yes

In this fun lesson, your students will discuss the topic of health and safety. This practical class will get your students using lots of useful language and all the essential skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Here are some ideas for doing it in class. Good luck!

1 Warm-up

Safety at school – scroll down for the student pages

Print off or write up the recent health and safety rules for schools in the UK. In pairs or small groups, students try to answer the questions about the rules. Students discuss this. Then, bring the whole class together to hear their opinions.

2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities. You could do this lesson as a *listening* activity. In order to do this, tell your students to turn over the sheet so they can't see the text as they do the exercises.

Remember, for the first listening you should play the recording once without stopping so students get the gist of it.

For the second listening, if your students' listening level is low, stop the recording after each paragraph and check their understanding.

After finishing that, and if you've done this as a listening activity (not a reading), let your students read the text as you play the recording again. This is good for developing their listening skills as they can see the connection between the written and spoken language.



3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

Assign a paragraph (or paragraphs) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible. This works well in pairs, with you monitoring the language.

New rules!

In pairs or small groups, students come up with a list of 4 new health and safety rules for their office or place of work, or school-college-university. They should include descriptions of these new rules and reasons for them. Tell your students to make the rules as silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to present their new rules. Other students listen and ask questions, then vote on the best or most ridiculous rules.



E-mail

Individually or in pairs, students write an e-mail to a manager in an office or head teacher complaining about some health and safety hazards at work or school. These could include any of the following (or anything else): dangerous cables, slippery floors, poor lighting, sharp furniture, spillages, a lack of handrails, wobbly furniture, a lack of fire extinguishers, plugs and switches in poor repair, blocked fire exits, locked doors, a lack of fire evacuation procedures, poor ventilation, heating or lighting...

When they're ready, students exchange e-mails and either respond to them in writing, or orally, acting out a little scene (see next task). After they've done this, ask for volunteers to either read out their e-mails or act out their dialogues.

Dialogue

In pairs, students write up notes for a dialogue between a health and safety inspector and a manager in an office or a head teacher in a school. The health and safety inspector could make comments on potentially dangerous things in the school or office. This could be based on the e-mail task from the previous activity. The teacher or employee should try to defend his/her position. Tell your students to make the dialogue as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to act out their dialogues (from memory or by using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones.

Discussion: health and safety

Ask and answer any of these questions.

- What health and safety rules are there at your office, place of work or school-university with regard to any of the following areas: food, drink, seating, lighting, electricity, movement, light, space, furniture, technology...?
- What health and safety rules should there be at your office, place of work or school-university with regard to any of the following areas: food, drink, seating, lighting, electricity, movement, light, space, furniture, technology...?
- Have you heard of any ridiculous health and safety rules from your country? What are they? What do you think of them?
- Have you heard any stories of people being injured in an office or school-university? What happened? What could have been done to prevent the injury?
- How important are health and safety rules?
- What's the primary objective of health and safety rules?
- In what way do you think modern health and safety rules have changed society?
- To what extent could health and safety rules make people less likely to do things they might have done previously?
- Has a health and safety rule ever prevented you from doing something? What was it? What was the rule?





Student's page

Ridiculous health and safety rules!

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1 Warm-up

Safety at school

Read over the rules below. Then, in pairs or individually, answer these questions: *Why do you think these rules were created? Which ones are the most reasonable? Which ones are the most ridiculous? In what way are the rules designed to protect pupils or staff? What could be done to reduce the potential dangers involved?*

For example: *Students were probably banned from bringing in cakes because other pupils may have allergies. / Students probably aren't allowed to sing Happy Birthday because of copyright issues.*

Students aren't allowed to...

- ...wear Santa hats.
- ...bring hot drinks to class.
- ...dance in the playground.
- ...watch a solar eclipse.
- ...use knitting needles in class.
- ...sing Happy Birthday in class.
- ...play with yo-yos in the playground.
- ...wear hairbands around their wrists.
- ...play football in the playground.
- ...bring any Harry Potter books to school.
- ...bring cakes from home to share in class.
- ...play games such as "cops and robbers" and "hide-and-seek" in the playground.
- ...throw their mortar boards in the air during graduation ceremonies.
- ...bring in mangoes, kiwis, chocolate or nuts as snacks.
- ...wear Halloween costumes to school, or bring accessories such as brooms and devil's tridents.



Objective To improve your reading and listening skills.

Think about it What rules or regulations are there where you work or study? Do you think schools in your country are safe for children? How could they become safer? Have you heard any examples of ridiculous health and safety rules? What were they? Do you think toy guns should be banned? Why? Why not? What other toys should be banned?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as PET and TOEFL.

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THIS IS RIDICULOUS.



RIDICULOUS HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES!

VIDEO

YouTube

Watch this news report on some health and safety rules. Search YouTube for "Health and Safety law review, let school children have fun".

GLOSSARY

a fatal injury *n*
if someone has a "fatal injury", they've been hurt in an accident and it will kill them

the Health and Safety Executive *n*
a UK organisation that makes sure the workplace is safe and that rules are followed

to draw up *phr vb*
if someone "draws up" a law, they write that law

to ban *vb*
to prohibit; if you "ban" something, you say that people can't do it

to bake *vb*
to cook food in an oven (a machine in the kitchen)

a food and hygiene certificate *n*
a formal document that says that you have permission to cook food for the public

bonkers *adj informal*
crazy, ridiculous, insane, mad, stupid

to go mad *exp*
if you say that something has "gone mad", you're saying that it's stupid or ridiculous

a trident *n*
a long object (that looks like a big fork) with three sharp points at the end

a broomstick *n*
an object for cleaning the floor. It has a long stick with thin sticks at the end

a prop *n*
an object an actor uses when acting in a theatre play: a toy gun, a mobile, etc.

to wrap someone up in cotton wool *exp*
to protect someone. Literally, "cotton wool" is a soft mass of cotton

joy *n*
happiness. The "joy" of childhood refers to the nice things during your childhood that made you happy

the playground *n*
an outside area in a school where children can play and run around

cops and robbers *n*
a game that children play: the cops (the police officers) have to catch the robbers

to discourage *vb*
if you "discourage" someone from doing something, you try to stop them doing it

outrage *n*
anger

over the top *adj*
if you describe something as "over the top", you're saying that it's exaggerated and too much

pretend *adj*
a "pretend" game is one in which children "pretend" (act) as if they are a certain person (a soldier in this case)

a huge overreaction *exp*
if you describe something as a "huge overreaction", you're saying that it's too much and not appropriate

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

What rules should exist to ensure that children are safe at school? Think about the following: food, parties, the playground, games, the science laboratory, uniforms, excursions, travel to and from school, clothing, the weather... other?

2 Reading I

Read or listen to the article once. Which rule is the most ridiculous? Why?

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, answer the questions.

1. What do parents in the school in Sheffield need in order to sell cakes at the Christmas fair?
2. What word did one dad at the school use to describe this new rule?
3. Where was the school that prohibited "dangerous" Halloween props at parties?
4. What game has a school in London banned?
5. Why have they banned it?
6. What words did one parent use to describe this new rule?

How safe is it where you work? Since the introduction of the Health and Safety Act in the UK in 1974, **fatal injuries** to employees have fallen dramatically. And the **Health and Safety Executive** (HSE) works hard to enforce any existing rules, as well as **drawing up** new ones. However, at times, it seems that some of these regulations are just ridiculous. Here are a few related to schools.

Cakes

A primary school in Sheffield has **banned** parents from **baking** cakes to sell at a Christmas fair unless mum or dad is a qualified food operator. Headteacher of Sheffield's Gleadless Primary School, Valerie Fowles, wrote, "Due to new regulations we can only accept donations of homemade cakes and buns from people who have a **food and hygiene certificate**." One dad, who was collecting his seven-year-old son, said, "It's absolutely **bonkers**, it's another classic example of health and safety **gone mad**."

Broomsticks

A school in North Wales has prohibited plastic devil's **tridents** and witches' **broomsticks** from school

Halloween parties for health and safety reasons. The **props** were banned because of fears that youngsters could injure themselves. One angry parent said, "Anything and everything could be classified as dangerous. Are we going to **wrap them in cotton wool** or let them live their lives? Are we protecting our children? Or simply killing the **joys** of childhood?"

Cops and robbers

A primary school in London has put a ban on **playground** games such as **cops and robbers** because of the "harmful effects of imaginary weapons on young minds". In an interview with the press, the headteacher said, "We **discourage** children from playing violent games. Some children can be easily frightened by violent play which is often influenced by computer games." However, parents at the 470-pupil school have reacted with **outrage**. "This is just completely **over the top**. We all grew up playing cops and robbers and my son loves playing **pretend** army games – all kids do. This just seems like a **huge overreaction**."

Is it right to protect children from every possible danger? 🍀