

Railroad & Pedestrian Safety Lesson Plan

Grades K-3

Goal

The purpose of this lesson plan is to help children understand the dangers and risks around railroad tracks and crossings, and how to safely cross railroad tracks. Upon completion of this lesson plan, children will better understand the significance of signs, lights and gates at railroad crossings, and demonstrate an increase in knowledge of railroad safety and safe crossing behaviors.

Age level

Recommended for children in kindergarten to second grade (ages 4 – 8)

Background

Children see, hear and process information differently than adults. Younger children, for example, do not have the developmental skills to correctly judge how fast an object is moving, putting them at greater risk for injuries. Trains are exciting and fun for many reasons: The size, the speed, and the sounds. However, railroad tracks and train crossings can be dangerous, too. Every five days a child is killed in a rail-related incident. Between 2008 and 2017, nearly 800 children ages 0-19 years died in rail-related injury incidents in the United States. For every fatality, there were nearly three non-fatal injuries reported.

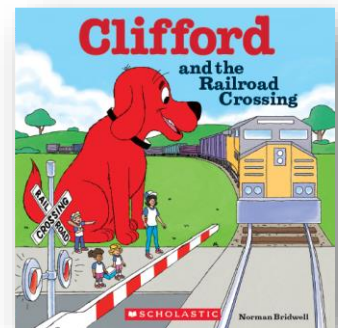
Book Reading and Lesson Plan Steps

Before Giving the Lesson

1. Before giving the lesson, review rail safety tips and discussion topics below and have a clear understanding of the material.

During the Lesson

1. Read *Clifford and the Railroad Crossing*, making sure to highlight the safety tips presented in each scene.
2. After reading the book, use the “Discussion Topics” below to open a dialogue on the topic with the students/youth group – explain the risks related to railroad tracks and crossings. Explain how the issues affect them and the people in their lives.
3. Review the “Railroad Safety Key Messages and Tips” making sure children have a clear understanding of the information.



Discussion Topics

- Ask children if they have railroads in their neighborhood, or if they cross railroad tracks on their way to school or a family member's house.
- Ask children for examples of unsafe behavior around railroad tracks.
 - What are some dangerous things that they have seen people do around railroad tracks and railroad crossings?
- Discuss the different types of railroad crossing signs and ask the children which ones they have seen or may have in their neighborhood.
- Discuss how signs, signals and laws are used to keep people safe while they are crossing railroad tracks.

- Explain why school buses must stop at railroad crossings before crossing them, even if the lights or gates are not active.
- Explain why it is important that we don't try to hurry across the tracks when the train is approaching.
- Explain that kids should always cross railroad tracks with an adult.
- Discuss the importance of not walking alongside railroad tracks and not using railroad tracks as shortcuts.
- Ask the students to:
 - List things that they will do (or not do) to be safer around railroads and railroad crossings.
 - List one thing they will tell their parents/caregivers about being safe around railroads and railroad crossings.
- Discuss with the children why they should not cross train tracks alone until they are at least 10 years old.
 - Explain to the children that it is difficult to judge the speed of trains, how far away they are, and which direction train sounds are coming from.
- Discuss why younger children may need to walk with an adult and/or to hold a grown-up's hand while they cross railroad tracks.
- Ask children who in their lives can help them cross railroad tracks safely and have them make a list or say it out loud.
 - Parent, guardian, older sibling, crossing guard etc.
- Explain to the children how long it takes, and why it takes so long for a train to come to a complete stop.
- Discuss with children the significance of multiple sets of railroad tracks, and the importance of checking all tracks in both directions.

Railroad Safety Key Messages and Tips

Top Tips for Kids

- Only cross railroad tracks at a designated crossing.
- Look both ways before crossing railroad tracks.
- If lights are flashing or the gate is down at a railroad crossing, wait for the train to pass completely, and the gate to come up, before crossing.
- Don't rush to beat the train.
- If you are using a cell phone, head phones or a game, remember: Heads up, devices down when crossing the tracks.
- Don't walk along railroad tracks. It's unsafe, and it's against the law.

Top Tips for Parents

- Talk to your kids about how to be safe around railroads, and to respect the laws with regards to crossings and trespassing.
- Only cross at designated crossings where there are signs, lights or gates.
- Children under 10 should cross railroad tracks with an adult. Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for kids to judge speed and distance of trains until age 10. This is especially important where only signs are present at crossings, and there are no lights or gates.



- Teach children that it is unsafe to walk along railways and that they should not be used as shortcuts.
- Remind children that railroad tracks are private property and that walking along them is considered trespassing.
- Teach kids at an early age to put down their devices and look both ways when crossing railroad tracks.

Additional Resource

Chuggington: Tales from the Rails

Safe Kids and Union Pacific Railroad partnered with Herschend Entertainment Studios (the franchise owner of preschool TV series Chuggington) on a railroad safety campaign for younger children. The campaign includes a fun, new video featuring the animated series Chuggington: Tales from the Rails, a Rail Safety Pledge, classroom posters, and free, downloadable activity sheets. In addition to the Clifford book reading, you can also:



- Utilize the www.chuggington.com/railsafety website to download games, coloring and activity sheets that children can do. On the website, you will also find a variety of Chuggington videos, including the new [Rail Safety PSA](#).
- You can suggest that the parents/caregivers watch the PSA at home with their children and print out some of the activities, coloring and game sheets for the children to do. This is a great way to continue to reiterate the key messages.

For more information visit www.safekids.org.