

Instructor Prep Guide

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- This topic is tough. As you facilitate discussion, students may not be eager to speak up. Your job is to “live with the silence” and wait for those brave enough to talk. Listen (even to silly questions) and help people think through various points of view.
- Change requires BOTH individual and structural/ community response. Law enforcement and citizens must BOTH admit mistakes and actively listen to one another. Trust takes time and demonstrated action, but we are often impatient!
- The content aims to be fair, but not all will agree.

Unit Description:

Interacting with law enforcement can be tense and stressful. This stress and discomfort can be reduced if the citizen is aware of his or her rights and how to appropriately exercise them. The goal is to have a functional, safe interaction with an officer.

This unit addresses topics related to:

- Current issues faced in our society.
- Your constitutional rights.
- Types of interactions with law enforcement.
- Ways to respectfully engage in community efforts to build trust between citizens and law enforcement.

Additional Included Resources:

- **National Night Out:** <https://natw.org/>
- **Pew—Behind the Badge (PDF)*:** From the Pew Research Center. This detailed report investigates how police view their jobs, key issues and recent fatal encounters between blacks and police, all amid protests and calls for reform.
- **USDOJ—Collaboration Toolkit for Law Enforcement (PDF):** A resource detailing practical information to help law enforcement personnel initiate partnerships with community stakeholders and execute a successful collaboration.

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1. Introduction to the Lesson

Today we are going to learn about how to interact with law enforcement. We’ll talk about current events.

We’ll talk about your rights in an interaction, and how to appropriately use them. We’ll talk about some specific types of

interactions and practice what we’ve learned. Lastly, we’ll talk about how to begin building trust between law enforcement and citizens in your community.

We’ll watch video lectures, have discussions, and complete a roleplay activity.

:90 Minute Class Flow	
:05	Introduction
:20	Video Segment 1
:05	Discussion Questions
:20	Video Segment 2
:05	Discussion Questions
:10	Quiz
:20	Activity
:05	Transitions

Current Events

Unfortunately, there is a breakdown of trust between law enforcement and citizens in many communities.

A national debate reignites every time there is possible police overreach (whether warranted or not). Many people feel like police officers are biased or prejudiced against African Americans and minorities (whether true or not).

In turn, law enforcement feel they cannot do what it takes to protect their communities. Officer morale is low. Like most people, they just want to get home safely to their families at night.

A push towards accountability is evident as law enforcement moves towards dash cams and body cams, but many situations still devolve into “he said, she said” and communities are polarized in the process. Police resort to force when it may not be needed. Citizens react to law enforcement in ways that contribute to escalation. Trust takes time and demonstrated action, but we are often impatient.

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/is-civilian-oversight-the-answer-to-distrust-of-police/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/17/community-policing-police-trust_n_6607766.html

5. Imagine that you are talking to your child about the role of law enforcement. What are some positive things you can say? How would you tell them to interact with law enforcement?

6. How are some ways that you could be a positive influence when it comes to repairing the breakdown between citizens and law enforcement?

Potential responses to question 5: (responses will vary)

- Law enforcement protects us
- Law enforcement can help you if you're lost or need to find an adult
- You should be respectful and polite to law enforcement
- The majority of law enforcement do their jobs well, we just don't hear about the good stuff

Potential responses to question 6: (responses will vary)

- Meet the officers in my community and get to know them
- Join groups that are already working with law enforcement to repair or improve the relationship
- Attend your community's National Night Out, or help plan it if there isn't one already
- Promote understanding, patience, and humility on all sides

6. Quiz (Grade during activity, then review/return. Comment on optional essays)

7. Activity

Description of the activity: Students will pair up into groups of two and work through the following scenarios. There are two roles in each scenario, the role of Law Enforcement Officer and the role of Citizen. Partners should take turns portraying each role.

The goal is to make sure that students understand how to exercise their rights while staying calm, cool, and collected.

After completing each scenario they should work through the "debrief" section at the bottom of each sheet. Each page should take about **five minutes** to work through.

Directions:

1. Pair up with another student.
2. You will work together to role play through four scenarios. You should get up and act it out, **but DO NOT touch** the other person.
3. There are two roles, Officer and Citizen.
4. Each student should be the Officer twice and Citizen twice.
5. The student portraying the Officer will read the scenario out loud to the other student. The person portraying the Officer will then read the "Instructions for Officer" section to themselves (not out loud!).
6. The students will then act out the scenario as described, using what they have learned in the videos. (3 mins)
7. After acting out the scenario, the students should work through the debrief section to review the best practices for interacting with law enforcement. (2 mins).
8. After all roleplaying is complete, spend some time discussing and debriefing with the class. Reiterate that when you're interacting with a law enforcement officer, your job is to assume the officer's intentions are good. You need to know your rights, and make it through the interaction safely. Then, if there is a problem or concern, take action after it's over.

