

NRSF Drive2Life Teacher Lesson Copy
Impaired Driving

Think Before Taking the Passenger Seat

This lesson introduces students to the concept of impaired driving and encourages them to think about how they can stay safe as a passenger if a friend who is supposed to drive them is impaired. Students will practice speaking up for safety by assessing a set of scenarios and evaluating what they would say and do in each situation.

While drinking alcohol is illegal for people under 21 years of age, students in grades 6–12 may encounter a situation in which friends or older siblings are under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription or over-the-counter medication. This activity provides students with the opportunity to develop and practice strategies so they're prepared to make smart choices and handle these situations safely if they do experience them.

GOAL

Students will analyze impaired-driving scenarios and identify ways to get out of or avoid a dangerous situation if a friend seems to be impaired and is driving or is about to drive.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org>

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to:

- Identify impaired-driving situations and characteristics an impaired driver may exhibit.

- Develop and practice strategies to prevent, avoid, or get out of dangerous impaired-driving situations.
- Participate in collaborative discussions in small and large groups about impaired driving.

MATERIALS

- **Think Before Taking the Passenger Seat** student activity sheet
- *“Road Buzzed”* video

DIRECTIONS

Introduction (10–15 minutes)

Use this lesson with your students before they create their PSAs to introduce the concept of impaired driving and provide students with the opportunity to brainstorm strategies for preventing, avoiding, or getting out of these situations as a passenger.

To start, ask students:

- Have you ever been concerned or afraid to get into a car or have you ever asked to get out of a car when one of your friends or a sibling seemed impaired? Why?
- As a passenger, has a driver ever made you feel unsafe because he or she was really tired? What did you do?
- Did you say anything to the driver to let him or her know you were concerned or afraid?

Invite students to share their stories, but remind them not to share names.

Next, ask students:

- Do you know what impaired driving is?

Explain to students that impaired driving involves anything that can alter your judgment or abilities, such as when a driver is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or is extremely tired. Alcohol, some prescription or over-the-counter medicines, illegal drugs like marijuana, and fatigue can interfere with or impair the brain's ability to function properly, which impacts the driver's ability to drive.

As a follow-up, ask students:

- How might you be able to tell if a driver is impaired?

Explain that everyone is different and it may not always be easy to tell if someone is impaired, but some characteristics include:

- Physical traits such as slurred speech, shaking, stumbling or tripping, glossy or drooping eyes, and frequent yawning
- Driving behavior such as changing lanes frequently, passing improperly, overshooting or ignoring traffic signs and signals, hugging or driving on the shoulder of the road, straddling the center line, tailgating, turning widely at intersections, or failing to dim high beams to oncoming traffic

Tell students that in this activity they are going to talk about what they would do if they were in a situation in which a friend they're relying on for a ride is impaired.

Small Group (5–10 minutes)

Before students review the impaired-driving scenarios, have them work in small groups to brainstorm answers to two questions:

- What might prevent a passenger from saying something to a friend who is an impaired driver?
- What are the potential consequences if the passenger does not speak up?

Have each group share their answers with the class.

Possible reasons passengers don't speak up may include:

- Passengers don't recognize the warning signs, or don't realize their friends are impaired.
- Their friends tell them that they're okay to drive.
- They trust that their friends won't hurt them.
- They may be afraid to be judged or not accepted by their peers.
- The passenger doesn't have a license and doesn't feel like he or she has an option.

Potential consequences for not speaking up and riding with an impaired driver could include:

- A serious or fatal crash
- Severe or minor injuries
- Losing a parent's trust

Emphasize to students that it is not worth the risk to ride with an impaired driver. They always have options and they need to choose a safe alternative—they could call a parent, take a taxi, or get a ride with someone else.

Share these facts with students to reinforce the seriousness of the issue:

- In 2011, 24% of young drivers (ages 15 to 20) involved in fatal crashes were drinking. ([National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#))

- Young people ages 16 to 29 (especially males) are at high risk for drowsy-driving crashes. These crashes cause about 40,000 injuries each year. ("Drowsy Driving and Automobile Crashes: Report and Recommendations," [NHTSA](#))
- Prescription and illegal drugs can impair a driver's motor skills, reaction time, and judgment. This is drugged driving. ([National Institute on Drug Abuse](#))
- 1,612: This is the number of passengers killed in 2011 while riding with drunk drivers. ([NHTSA](#))
- Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America. ([NHTSA](#))

Small Group (15–20 minutes)

Distribute the **Think Before Taking the Passenger Seat** activity sheet to students and review the introduction together. Then have students work in small groups to analyze and discuss the scenarios. Students should anticipate the driver's responses and how they will address these reactions. Remind students to keep in mind the facts and consequences discussed and make safe decisions. When students are done, reconvene and have the groups share their responses.

Next, call on each group to act out a scenario and have the others assess whether they feel the strategy used to avoid or get out of the dangerous impaired-driving situation would work for them.

Emphasize to students that it is not always easy to speak up in these situations, but the consequences for not saying anything can be serious.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Ask each group to share suggestions on how they would respond to an impaired driver to keep themselves and their friends safe.

LESSON EXTENSION

View the "*Road Buzzed*" video about impaired driving and discuss it as a class.