

Law for Kids

<http://www.lawforkids.org/>

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Abstract

“Law for Kids” is the name of a website, which was born as a project of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education and with funding from the Arizona Supreme Court.

Its main aim is to familiarize kids with law, by offering them, among other things, stories about legal issues, toons, law docs, laws, games, links, and the possibility of posting comments and asking questions.

I have chosen this website because, apart from having a very attractive outline, especially for young people, it contains a lot of information regarding legal issues and students can learn a lot of the legal English language by browsing its webpages.

1. Analysis

The different sections on the site are labelled as “LFK Home”, “Speak up!”, “Stories”, “Toons”, “Laws”, “Justice for all”, “Law docs”, “Change it!”, “Games” and “Links”.

In the *LFK Home section* you can see everything this website is going to offer you.

In the *Speak up! section* you can find 5 records grouped into the topic of “arrested”, 1 record into the topic of “curfew”, 109 records grouped into the topic of “driving”, 114 records grouped into the topic of “family”, 67 records grouped into the topic of “illegal substances”, 257 records grouped into the topic of “other”, 83 records grouped into the topic of “school”, 1 record into the topic of “sexual assault and misconduct”, 3 records grouped into the topic of “trouble”, 63 records grouped into the topic of “violence” and 25 records grouped into the topic of “work and employment”.

In this section students can browse questions about the different topics and read the corresponding answers (there is a special link to the latest questions). At the same time, they are given the possibility of posting and reading comments. They are also offered several links to read about the specific topics, such as links to related laws and to related stories (if available).

Students can browse, search and ask questions. They can also check the status of their questions.

In the ***Stories section*** students can read and listen to stories which deal with legal issues. There is a special link to the latest stories. Story topics are classified into “driving”, “illegal substances”, “other”, “sexual assault and misconduct”, “trouble”, “vandalism and property damage” and “violence”. Students are also given the possibility of posting and reading comments. As in the previous section, there are links which allow the student to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related laws and to related Speak up! questions (if available).

Students can browse, search and also share stories.

In the ***Toons section*** toons are grouped into key areas of the law. The student must follow the links to see the toons. Toon topics are classified into “arrested” (3 records), “driving” (7 records), “family” (1 record), “illegal substances” (4 records), “other” (5 records), “school” (8 records), “trouble” (6 records), “violence” (6 records) and “work and employment” (1 record). Some of the cartoons are animated (the student can listen to what the different characters are saying) but some are strip. There is a special link to the latest toons.

Students can also post and read comments. As in the previous sections, there are links which allow the student to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related laws and to related Speak up! questions and related stories (if available).

In the ***Laws section*** students can browse laws classified according to the topics of “arrested” (6 records), “curfew” (1 record), “driving” (9 records), “family” (2 records),

“illegal substances” (7 records), “new laws” (3 records), “other” (3 records), “school” (1 record), “trouble” (8 records), “violence” (5 records). There is a special link to the latest laws.

Students can post and read comments. As in the previous sections, there are links to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related Speak up! questions and related stories (if available).

In the ***Justice for All*** section students can follow Jay, a resident at the South East Facility Juvenile Detention Centre in Mesa, Arizona. On each page, when they click on the listen icon, they will be able to listen to Jay telling about the different areas of the Detention Facility. They can read at the same time what they are listening to, and also write a letter to Jay letting him know their feelings about life in detention.

In the ***Law Docs*** section students have access to the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, Amendments, Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers and more law documents.

In the ***Change it!*** section, because the American system of government allows citizens and their representatives to change the law and create new laws through a legislative process, even though students may not be old enough to vote, they are still able to share their opinions with elected officials who make and change Arizona laws.

In the ***Games*** section students can play different games such as “A day in the life of Tommy”, the “LawForKids.org Quiz” (an interesting quiz on legal issues), “8-Ball”, “Checkers”, “Jigsaw”, “Tic Tac Toe” and “Tiler”.

Its worth commenting on the game “A day in the life of Tommy”, where the student has to play the role of Tommy, who is an “average school kid who comes across some tough situations where he faces decisions about breaking the law”. After each situation, the student will have to choose what Tommy should do (one choice being against the law, and the other one being legal). If the student answers incorrectly he will be given information on the law. If the answer is right, he will continue on to the next situation.

If the student answers all to ten situations correctly, he will be even given a certificate that he can print out.

In the *Links section* you can find a list of telephone hotline numbers, many interesting different links for kids, parents and teachers, law links and the “out of AZ section”.

2. Final considerations and conclusion

I have chosen this website thinking of my first year legal English (LE) students. Even though this webpage is intended for kids, and my students are over 18, I have found here very interesting links which could be very useful for them.

We should keep in mind the important fact that LE classes are usually mixed-ability ones, and student language levels may range from "lower-intermediate" to "advanced". On this website they can have access to very simple legal language (see game “A day in the life of Tommy”, as an example), but also to more advanced legal language (see section on Law Docs, as an example). I would leave aside, though, games such as “8-ball”, “Checkers”, “Jigsaw”, “Tic Tac Toe” and “Tiler”, as they do not involve legal issues.

The *Toons* section is very interesting, as they can listen to what the characters are speaking (the animated ones). The same happens in the *Justice for All section*, where they can follow a character showing them the different areas of the Detention Facility and read what he is saying in a simultaneous way.

On the other hand, I consider this website to be highly motivating, one of the reasons being that it allows students to post and read personal comments on the contents of any of the Website sections.

It is also worth mentioning the availability of an online dictionary, as well as a Spanish version of this website.

