

LESSON 3: EYEBALLS!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

This lesson introduces the concept of “sightlines” to students, and the importance of having a clear line of sight between pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers when crossing or sharing the road. It teaches the game “Eyeballs,” with concepts that middle school students will be able to generalize and recognize when they are outside in later lessons.

“Eyeballs” is modeled after a simple touch-and-go soccer drill. Many ball sports and other PE activities depend on clear sightlines to make successful plays. Consider using other games throughout the school year to remind students and reinforce the importance of sightlines for staying safe as pedestrians.

WHY THIS LESSON IS IMPORTANT:

Having a clear sightline between drivers and pedestrians is critical for preventing collisions. In this lesson, we teach students to “see and be seen” by making eye contact with drivers, and give them practice with several situations that can impede sightlines.



Sightlines can be impeded in many ways. Hills or curves in the road, overgrowth and improperly parked cars are a few common conditions that compromise sightlines.

In this crosswalk near an elementary school, the sightline to traffic is seriously impeded by the curve and slope in the road. Unfortunately, it is a direct route to a housing complex where many school families live. The school improves the situation by placing a crossing guard at the left point of the crosswalk, where sightlines are opened up to the road below.



This car is illegally parked because it is too close to the corner. It blocks the sightline between pedestrians wanting to cross here and oncoming traffic from the left. Better practice (and Washington State Law) is to park 30 feet away from crosswalks to keep sightlines clear between pedestrians and moving traffic. Sightlines issues also arise with this car because of the tinted windows, which make it difficult for pedestrians to make eye contact with anyone behind the wheel.



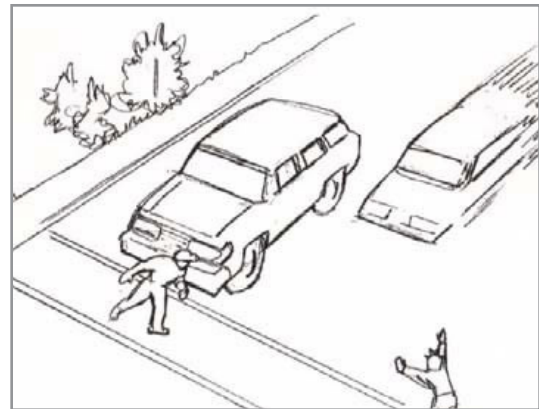
Sightlines can be impeded by school buses and other large vehicles. In this case, a school used this area as an overflow bus load area when attendance boundaries grew. By parking too close to this marked crosswalk, the students crossing this street are blocked from traffic to the right until they are nearly half way into the roadway. This school was advised to move the bus zone much further to the right.

Sightlines issues are common in parking lots, where people – especially small children – can be blocked by parked cars. Similarly, when pedestrians enter the roadway between parked cars, they have no sightlines to drivers until they are in the street. Driveways are another common hot spot, with hedges or fences often extending all the way to the property edge and blocking the sightline to the sidewalk.

One common and extremely dangerous sightline scenario is known as the “multiple lane threat.” This is a situation in which a pedestrian, crossing a road with two or more lanes of traffic from one direction, has the sightline to the second lane of traffic impeded by a driver who stops in the first lane to let the pedestrian cross. (See image) This situation is particularly hazardous as the 2nd car is approaching from the faster lane.

The way to prevent this situation as a driver is to stop for pedestrians 30 feet before the crosswalk, opening up the sightline between the pedestrian and the 2nd lane of traffic. Pedestrians in this situation should proceed with extreme caution, stopping at the edge of the parked car to look left, right, and left again before going further.

Understanding sightlines is important for students and adults alike. With clear sightlines and communication between pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers, cars will have the time and space necessary to stop safely when needed.



(image: Federal Highway Administration)

LESSON PLAN: EYEBALLS!

Goal: To reinforce pedestrian rules, especially the need to see and be seen when crossing a road. Students will explore the concept of sightlines between drivers and pedestrians so that they will be able to examine sightline issues when they go on a walking audit in a later lesson.

OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL:

- Practice making eye contact before crossing a simulated road.
- Practice continuing to look while crossing a simulated road.
- Consider factors that can impede sightlines in real life.

MATERIALS:

- Tape and/or cones for marking the crosswalks
- 10-20 white wiffle balls or similar ball for throwing and catching
- A pair of dark sunglasses
- 2 floor mats or similar large objects to impede sightlines
- 2 to 4 low scooters if desired for “driver” role

PREPARATION:

- With cones and/or tape, mark a simulated road down the length of your gym and 2 simulated crosswalks across the gym’s width. (See illustration at right)

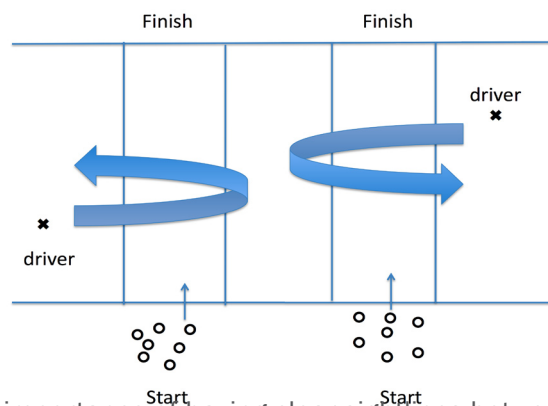
INSTRUCTIONS:

5 MINUTES

1. Explain to students that this is a game to practice the importance of having clear sightlines between drivers and pedestrians when crossing the road. It is important to both see drivers, and to know that you have been seen by them by making eye contact before crossing the road. The phrase we use in pedestrian and bicycle safety is “See and be seen.”

15 MINUTES

2. Before playing this game competitively, demonstrate the rules for basic play (steps 3 and 4) for the entire class by playing a full round of the game on one of the simulated crosswalks.
3. Designate one student to be the “driver.” The other players are pedestrians. Explain that the goal is to cross each pedestrian safely from one side of the road to the other while the driver moves in a counter-clockwise path across the crosswalk.



4. The driver uses a scooter to move counterclockwise across his or her team's crosswalk. Take time to have the driver practice staying to the right, turning, and stopping at the crosswalk. An alternative option is to use 2 students in a wheelbarrow formation to represent the driver, making it extra challenging when it comes time to catch and throw the eyeballs.

BASIC PLAY / ROUND 1: The basic way to cross from start to finish is for the driver to "catch the eye" of the pedestrian and vice-versa. The pedestrian waves to the driver, and when the driver stops at the intersection, the pedestrian tosses a ball to the driver. The pedestrian crosses to the other side of the gym and waits for the driver to toss the ball back. Once the exchange is complete, the driver drives on in a counter clockwise motion, keeping to the right. The team that gets all of its pedestrians to the other side first wins.

ROUND 2: This round will practice the rule to keep looking for cars while crossing the street. Players need to continue tossing the ball back and forth between pedestrian and driver while they cross the street.

5. Explain that it is possible in round 1 and 2 to "catch the driver's eye" because there is a clear SIGHTLINE between the driver and the pedestrian. The next rounds become more challenging as they simulate sightline issues and other challenges similar to what we experience when walking outside.

15 MINUTES

6. Divide the class into 2 teams and designate 1 driver per team. Students begin using Round 2 rules, and then the teacher can call out any of the variations below as the game continues:

Variations

SUNGLASSES: The driver wears sunglasses to simulate tinted windows, making it harder for the pedestrian to know whom he/she will throw the ball to.

PARKING LOT: The driver drives backwards to simulate cars leaving a parking space or backing out of a driveway.

TRAFFIC: Assign extra students to be drivers so that pedestrians need to catch the eye of more than one driver before crossing, sometimes from both directions.

RUSH HOUR: Tell drivers that they are in a rush and should jog or run their course.

MULTIPLE LANE THREAT: Change the roadway so that 4 drivers drive the entire length of the gym, with 2 lanes in each direction.

PARKED CARS: Use a mat or other large piece of equipment to simulate a car parked next to the crosswalk. It should be large enough to block the sightline to the street so that pedestrians need to reach past it to catch the eyeball.

BIG CARS/SMALL CHILDREN: The same as "parked cars," above, but the pedestrian walks on knees to simulate being a small child blocked by the car.

Note: While this is a speed competition, it is important and fun to play up the comparison with real life pedestrian safety situations. Like in real life, students need to walk (race walk is okay for the game) across the street, and practice the pedestrian skills they learned in the “Captain Barclay” lesson. The teacher may choose to send a student back to the start if they are caught running or missing other basic pedestrian rules.

10 MINUTES

7. If time remains, you can revisit the Captain Barclay clue cards and have students act out using the rules on the simulated roadway.