NO PREP

Dating, Boundaries, and Consent

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

Name: Period: Date:

Dating, Boundaries, and Consent

Why This Belongs in a Family and Consumer Science Course

Family and consumer science exists to teach the practical skills of running a life, and few skills are more practical than knowing how to set a limit and how to respect someone else's. This reading covers boundaries and consent as information, in the same way a unit covers a lease or a nutrition label. It is not advice about whether or when to date. Every state sets its own laws in this area, families hold a wide range of values, and neither of those is settled by a worksheet. What is not a matter of opinion is the definition of consent, the legal weight it carries, and the specific communication skills that let a person state a limit clearly and hear one without punishing the person who said it. Those are teachable and testable, which is why they belong in a

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What a Boundary Is and How to State One

A boundary is a statement about what you will do or accept, not a demand that controls another person. That distinction is the whole thing. I am not comfortable sharing my location is a boundary; you are not allowed to have friends is a control attempt disguised as one. Boundaries come in several kinds. Physical boundaries cover your body and personal space. Emotional boundaries cover how much you share and how much of someone else's distress you take on. Time boundaries cover your schedule and your obligations. Digital boundaries cover passwords, photos, location sharing, tagging, and how quickly you are expected to reply. Material boundaries cover money and belongings. Stating a boundary works best when it is specific,

direct, and unapologetic. I do not share my passwords is clearer than I would rather not, probably. Adding a reason is optional and often backfires, because a reason invites negotiation, and a boundary is not an opening bid. Expect that stating limits will feel uncomfortable at first, especially for someone used to keeping the peace. The most important thing to know is how the other person responds. In a healthy relationship of any kind, a boundary is met with some version of okay, even if there is disappointment attached. Repeated pushing, sulking, guilt, or renegotiating the same limit weekly is information about the relationship, and it is information worth taking seriously.

Consent, Defined Plainly

Consent is a clear and voluntary agreement to a specific activity. Educators and legal materials generally describe several features, and it helps to learn them as a set. Consent must be freely given, meaning it is not produced by pressure, guilt, threats, or the use of authority. It is reversible, meaning any person may change their mind at any point, and agreeing earlier does not obligate anyone later. It must be informed, meaning it is based on honest information rather than a lie. It must be specific, since agreeing to one thing is not agreement to something else, and agreement on one day is not standing permission. And it must be clear, expressed through words or unmistakable behavior. Several conditions make consent legally impossible regardless of what was said. A person who is asleep, unconscious, or incapacitated by alcohol or drugs cannot consent. Every state sets an age of consent, below which the law does not recognize agreement at all, and the specific age and its exceptions vary by state. Many state laws also refuse to recognize agreement when there is a significant difference in power, such as between a student and an adult in authority. Two common myths are worth retiring. Silence is not consent, because consent is something given rather than something assumed from an absence of objection. And a previous relationship does not create ongoing consent. When there is any uncertainty, the correct action is to stop and ask, which costs nothing.

Pressure, Coercion, and the Digital Version

Pressure is what turns an agreement into something that is not consent, and it is often verbal rather than physical. Repeated asking after a no is pressure, because it is designed to wear down a limit rather than to hear an answer. Guilt is pressure, including framing a limit as proof that someone does not care. Threats are pressure,

including the threat of ending the relationship, of telling people something private, or of self-harm. Using alcohol or drugs to lower resistance is coercion. The identifying feature in every case is the same: the goal is to change the answer rather than to accept it. Digital boundaries deserve specific attention because the stakes are permanent in a way people underestimate. Sharing images can be requested and then screenshotted, forwarded, or posted, and material once distributed cannot be reliably recalled. Pressure to send images is pressure like any other. There are also serious legal consequences: producing, possessing, or forwarding sexual images of anyone under eighteen can be a criminal offense in every state, and the law can apply even when both people are minors and even when the image was sent willingly. Sharing anyone's private images without permission is separately illegal in nearly every state. Demanding passwords, tracking location, or requiring instant replies belongs in this same category of digital control, and each of those is a boundary question, not a proof of trust.

Hearing No, and Where to Get Help

The other half of this skill is being the person who receives a limit well, and it is the half that gets less practice. Respecting a boundary means accepting it the first time, without sulking, arguing, going quiet for two days, or bringing it back next week to see whether the answer has changed. Applying a cost to someone for saying no is a way of removing the no. Checking in is also part of the skill and it is genuinely simple, since asking is this okay or do you want to keep going takes three seconds and removes the guesswork entirely. Learning to say no is a matched skill; a clear no thank you or I do not want to needs no justification, and a person who requires one is negotiating rather than listening. Two additional facts are worth knowing. First, if something happens that was not consented to, it is not the fault of the person it happened to, regardless of clothing, location, alcohol, or a prior relationship. Second, help exists and it is confidential in most cases. The National Sexual Assault Hotline is 1-800-656-4673 and offers online chat; loveisrespect at 1-866-331-9474 handles dating relationship questions by phone, chat, or text. School counselors and nurses are also a starting point, though students should know that school staff are mandated reporters and may be required to pass on disclosures involving a minor. That is a rule worth knowing before a conversation, not during one. One final point ties the whole reading together. Every skill described here is reciprocal, meaning it

works only when both people are practicing it, and no single person can produce a respectful relationship by communicating well enough. A person can state a limit clearly, hear a limit without penalizing the person who said it, and check in rather than assume, and all three of those are entirely within their own control. How the other person responds is not. Judging a relationship by that response, rather than by how well you managed to phrase something, is the most useful habit in this unit.

Key Information: Boundaries and Consent

Detail	Information
Boundary	A limit about your own body, time, information, or belongings
Types of Boundaries	Physical, emotional, time, digital, and material
Consent Definition	A clear, voluntary agreement to a specific activity
Features of Consent	Freely given, reversible, informed, specific, and clear
Consent Not Possible	Asleep, unconscious, incapacitated, underage, or (in many states) under someone's authority
Silence	Not consent; agreement is given, never assumed from no objection
Digital Risk	Images can be screenshotted and forwarded; minors' images are illegal
Help Lines	1-800-656-4673 national hotline; loveisrespect 1-866-331-9474

Case Study: Jordan Says It Once

Jordan and Casey have been together since October. In January Casey starts asking for Jordan's phone password, framing it as a trust question. Jordan says, I am not sharing my password, that is not a trust thing for me. Casey drops it that night, brings it up again the next weekend, and then a third time by text with the line, if you had nothing to hide it would not be a big deal. Jordan takes the question to a family life class discussion without using names and realizes something specific: the issue is not the password. The issue is that a boundary stated clearly has been renegotiated three times in two weeks. Jordan writes in a journal entry, I keep thinking about whether to explain it better. But I did explain it. The problem is not that Casey does not understand me. Jordan decides to state it one final time without a reason attached, and to pay attention to what happens next rather than to what gets promised.

1. Jordan concludes the issue is not the password. Using the reading's definition of a boundary, explain what the repeated asking actually reveals.

_____

_____

2. Jordan decides to restate the limit without adding a reason. Using the reading, explain why leaving the reason out can make a boundary stronger.

_____

_____

Multiple Choice

1. Which statement is a boundary rather than an attempt at control?

    a) You have to tell me where you are going after school

    b) You are not allowed to text other people at night

    c) I do not share my passwords with anyone

    d) You cannot spend Saturdays with your other friends

2. The reading says consent is reversible. What does that mean?

a) Consent given once carries over to later occasions

b) A person may change their mind at any point

c) Consent can be given by a parent on a minor's behalf

d) Both people must agree before anything can change

3. What identifies pressure in every example the reading gives?

a) It happens only in relationships longer than a few months

b) It requires alcohol or another substance to be present

c) It always involves a spoken or written threat

d) The goal is to change the answer rather than accept it

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ boundary	A) A limit covering passwords, photos, location, and reply expectations
2. ___ consent	B) Asking directly whether something is okay instead of assuming
3. ___ coercion	C) A clear and voluntary agreement to a specific activity
4. ___ digital boundary	D) Using pressure, guilt, threats, or substances to change an answer
5. ___ checking in	E) A limit a person sets about their own body, time, or information

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. Consent must be freely given, reversible, informed, specific, and _____.

2. Silence is not consent because agreement must be _____, not assumed.

3. Adding a reason to a boundary can invite _____.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. Explain the difference between setting a boundary and trying to control another person.

_____

_____

_____

2. Why does the reading say respecting a no means accepting it the first time?

_____

_____

_____

3. Why are digital boundaries treated as a serious category rather than a minor one?

_____

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