**No Vehicles In The Park**

This lesson engages students in the interpretation of a law. Working in groups, they decide whether citizens engaged in various activities violate the law “No Vehicles in the Park.” Students can roleplay judges deciding whether the law has been violated or citizens requesting variances from a city council which would exempt them from the law.

**Objectives:**

Students will understand that laws and rules can be interpreted differently.

Students will understand the purpose and function of law.

Students will analyze practical applications of a law.

Students will be introduced to the concept of “equal protection of the law”

**Grade Level:**

Grades 5-12

**Time to Complete**

One class period (approximately 50 minutes)

**Materials Needed**

Student Handout No Vehicles in the Park for each student

No Vehicles in the Park Chart

**Procedure**

1. Introduce the law by explaining how laws are made and how they are subject to different interpretations if they are not clear. Sometimes, judges must decide what the law means. When they do this they try to determine the legislative intent and purpose of the law. Stress that the goal is to determine what the lawmakers intended, not what the judge thinks the law should mean.
2. Also discuss how the laws are enforced by cities, counties, law enforcement and that they must be applied fairly to people who are in similar situations. In this activity, different applications of the law require good reasons.
3. Ask students to read the first two paragraphs. Discuss the language of the law and the basic legislative history before moving on to the individual cases. Check by asking questions such as:
   1. What law is being applied?
   2. What exactly does it say?
   3. What is the law designed to do?
   4. What is the purpose of the law?
   5. The definition of vehicle can be shared at this time. A vehicle is “s*omething with wheels that carries people or things.”* For more advanced students, do not discuss this in advance. Instead let the students discuss this in their small groups.
4. Divide the students into small groups and tell them they will work in groups to consider the situations. For each hypothetical situation, ask each group to decide if the law has been violated or if they will interpret the law to allow an exception. Remind them to keep in mind the letter and spirit of the law. Tell them they will be expected to give their reasons for each of their answers. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the groups to work.
5. Read each situation and have the groups report what they decided. Record the responses on the chart. Analyze and compare their reasoning.
6. Ask the students whether or not the law creates more situations with problems and exceptions than no law at all. Discuss whether laws should be written in great detail or if laws should be flexible to adapt to changing situations? Can they be both?
7. Explain to students how judges review laws like this and how they try to determine legislative intent. Share with students the difficulties inherent in this duty.
8. Have students switch their roles and become legislators. Ask them how they would write the law to address the concerns and exceptions discussed. Also discuss alternative ways to solve the problem.

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| **Party wishing to drive through the park** | **Group 1** | **Group 2** | **Group 3** | **Group 4** | **Group**  **5** |
| **John Smith** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Trash Collector** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Police Cars** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Ambulance** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Bicycles** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Baby Stroller** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **War Monument** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Skateboards** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Wheelchair** |  |  |  |  |  |