

Unit 5 (Primary school, Class 5)
We make rules for our classroom

A Lesson Plan

	Key question/lesson topics	Main activity	Resources
Lesson 1	What rights does every person in this classroom have?	Working in groups, the pupils prepare a list of suggestions for class rules.	Sheets of A3 paper (one per group).
Lesson 2	What makes a rule a good rule? Why can rules be a nuisance? Why can they be useful?	The pupils think about the concept of order and rules.	Hand-outs on basic principles of rules in democracy; blank sheets of A4 paper.
Lesson 3	How can children's rights be brought to life in the classroom?	Working in groups, the pupils work out rules that harmonise with children's rights.	Hand-outs, either copied or written by the pupils.
Lesson 4	Working out rules in groups and agreeing on rules in class.	The pupils compare their ideas and try to reach a unanimous decision on the rules for their class.	—

B Background and educational objectives

When we link classroom rules with human or children's rights, these rules gain implications that go far beyond merely ensuring peace and quiet in the classroom.

Human and children's rights are not a body of cold legal standards. If they are to become meaningful, they must serve as instruments and guidelines in our efforts to bring equality and justice to everyday life. For pupils, school is an important element, in some ways even the centrepiece of their everyday lives. But school is even more than that: school is almost the only place where pupils may learn - within the boundaries of a safe space - how to act in society. School, in other words: the classroom, the school building and its premises as a whole, but also the structure of school and school leadership make up a miniature model of society - a micro-society. What the pupils have learned, developed and tested here, be it beneficial or not, will more likely than not be transferred to the world beyond the classroom and school community. To make pupils aware of this fact and to use it in terms of children's rights education is an important objective of Unit 5.



Rights and duties form a complementary pair of concepts. They belong together like day and night or summer and winter. Rights and duties depend on one another. Human and children's rights may

not be fully understood without appreciating this interdependence.

This project will focus on the following articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 12, having our opinion heard;
Article 13, freedom to express ourselves;
Article 28, the right to education;
Article 31, the right to leisure and recreation.

C Key questions for reflection in children's rights classes

Experiencing children's rights	Getting to know children's rights	Implementing children's rights
Teacher		
In what way have the principles of children's rights been observed in the classroom and school community?	What do the children know now about children's rights?	Learning how to take action outside school: What have the pupils learned for their future lives?
In this unit, the pupils experience concretely that we need rules to live together and they understand that children's rights define such a system of rules.	Articles 12, 13, 28, 31 (see appendix: Convention on the Rights of the Child)	The pupils understand how rules are made in a democracy. They are able to take part in democratic processes of decision-making.
Pupils		
How did I experience children's rights in class?	What have I learned about children's rights?	What kind of action am I able to take now?
The pupils understand that rights and duties belong together. They realise that rules have been made by humans for humans, that they may be changed, and that it is not easy to agree on binding rules for everyone within a group.	I now know that I have the right to take part in working out rules for our class. I am aware that the development of the children's rights convention was a similar kind of process.	Now I can try to find similar rules on how to live together in my family, our sports club or together with my friends. We should make sure that as many people as possible take part in defining such rules and are able to agree on a compromise.

D Procedure

Lesson 1

The teacher gives an informative introduction to the project and the plan for the next four lessons.

The teacher begins by moderating a discussion on the issue of “rights and responsibilities” with the pupils. As a possible inspiration:

- Name some rights that you have in the classroom, schoolyard or in your family. Remind yourselves of the children's rights that you have already heard a lot about!
- These rights will only work if others respect them too. To each right there belongs - for others and for us - a duty! Now let's think of other examples that you have mentioned.

The class is divided into three, six or nine groups depending on the class size. Try to have no more than five pupils in each group. Each group is either A, B or C.

Each group appoints a spokesperson. After this, short feedback is given - how did you choose your spokesperson?

Each group has a sheet of paper divided into thirds. Using the top third of the paper, they record what they believe to be the rights of every individual (including the teacher) in their class. They should record every suggestion and each suggestion should be numbered.

Give feedback - how well do you think you have completed the task? What were you all doing that helped? What hindered?

The paper is given to the next group (A to B, B to C, C to A).

Each group evaluates the list of rights generated by the previous group. They discuss the following questions: Which responsibilities correspond to which rights? Which responsibilities do we have to uphold in order to respect those rights? What do we need to do, how do we need to behave? E.g. “Everyone has the right to be heard” corresponds to “We have a responsibility to listen”.

Using the same numbers as used in the rights section, the groups now write down corresponding responsibilities in the middle third of the paper.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher collects all the contributions made by the pupils to review them before the next lesson.

Lesson 2 (Duration approx. 1½ Lessons)

The teacher moderates a discussion on the theme of “rules” using basic questions concerning rules, illustrated with references e.g. to rules in sport, in the classroom or in traffic. Inspiration:

- What is the good thing about having rules? What can be irritating about having rules?
- When am I glad that there are rules? What annoys me about rules?
- Who sets up rules in various contexts? Who has the power to enforce rules and sanctions if these rules are broken?

As a stimulus to begin this lesson phase, or to summarise afterwards, the following text (or an abridged version), “Discipline and order in democracy - and in school” can be used.

Discipline and order in democracy - and in school

1. Order is necessary under all circumstances. A group without order and basic rules cannot be democratic.
2. Limits are necessary. Rules may be wrong or inappropriate. But as long as they have not been replaced they must be respected. It must, however, be possible to change them.
3. From the very beginning, children should participate in setting up and enforcing rules. Only in this way is it possible for them to identify with the rules.
4. A classroom community cannot function without mutual trust and respect for one another. In some cases it may prove difficult to create such an atmosphere.
5. Team spirit must replace competition in the classroom.
6. A friendly classroom atmosphere is of vital importance.
7. The social skills of the teacher have an essential contribution to make in the development of democratic leadership, developing a feeling of belonging to the group, building up relationships, etc.
8. Group communication is a permanent reality in a democratically led class.
9. Pupils, both boys and girls, must be encouraged to explore something new and to learn from their mistakes.
10. Within the limits set, it must be possible to exercise liberties. Only in this way is it possible for individual responsibility to develop.
11. Discipline and order will be accepted and complied with most willingly if they help each individual to express himself or herself, and if they support the group in developing satisfying relationships and working conditions.

"A group without order and basic rules cannot be democratic."

The class is divided into the same groups as in the previous lesson. The teacher hands out the sheets of A3 paper from the previous lesson and gives the following instruction:

- Look at what you have written so far. Think of rules that you feel are particularly important for us to live together and that you would like to present to the class afterwards.

Write these rules on the bottom third of your sheet of paper according to the following guidelines (optimally, the teacher gives one or two examples):

- They should be positively phrased rather than prohibitive.
- They should describe the responsibilities as well as the rights e.g. using a "because" wording: "We have the responsibility to listen when other people speak, *because* we have the right to be heard."

The groups do their work according to the instructions. Following this, larger groups are formed by joining two groups together. Each group presents their rules to the other group, and there is discussion

and feedback on the chosen rules, their wording and comprehensibility, with possible reworking and optimisation.

Each group has to select a maximum of three rules. These are then written in thick, bold writing on large strips of paper (cut lengthways out of A3 paper).

These three rules (per group) are attached to the board in the classroom. There is a class discussion on each set of rules: a speaker from each group explains the chosen rules to the class.

Synopsis: Final editing with a view to creating a collection of rules that we want to make binding for our class:

- Which rules are identical or similar? Which may therefore be omitted or amalgamated?
- What needs to be re-worded so as to make the phrase more succinct or comprehensible?

A vote is then held to determine which rules are to be kept. Each pupil has five “tokens” to spend on the five rules that they believe should be included in their class. They may choose these by making a little line on the board, or by placing a little sticker next to their preferred rules. The rules (up to but no more than ten) with the highest number of votes are written up as a new set of class rules or included in the pre-existing set of rules for the class. They can be written up as a special document, signed by each pupil and prominently displayed in the classroom.

Reflection on learning (where at the same time, the new rules are applied and reinforced): What helped, what was obstructive? How did you contribute to the activities? Did you notice anyone else in class whose contributions were helpful? Why? What did they do?

Lesson 3

The teacher activates prior knowledge on children’s rights and recaps the most important points (see Unit 3, lesson 2 and Unit 4, lesson 1): the creation of children’s rights, the most important children’s rights, possibly also linked to human rights.

Now the teacher introduces the following selection of children’s rights, this time using the original text from the original Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child (see appendix):

- Article 12, Expressing our views and interests;
- Article 13, Freedom to express ourselves;
- Article 28, The right to education;
- Article 31, The right to rest and leisure.

The pupils are divided into groups (the same as in lesson 1 and 2, or new groups of between three and four children). Each group receives an A4 sheet of paper and with it they prepare a worksheet with two columns as shown below. In the narrow column on the left, they enter the four rights, spacing them evenly down the page. In the wider column on the right, they collect their thoughts on the rights and obligations that these rights carry, both for them and for others. As a point of reference, they could ask: “If my neighbour, a friend or my classmate claims this right, which obligations and duties result for me and for the others?” Or (for Article 28): “Which duties must society and school fulfil, to ensure the right to education? How can I as a member of this class contribute to upholding this right?” The results will be discussed in the following lesson.

Names of group members	
Rights	Rules and duties
<p><i>Article 12</i> <i>Expressing</i> <i>our own views and interests.</i></p> <p>What is it about?</p>	
<p><i>Article 13</i> <i>Freedom</i> <i>to express ourselves.</i></p> <p>What is it about?</p>	
<p><i>Article 28</i> <i>The right to education.</i></p> <p>What is it about?</p>	
<p><i>Article 31</i> <i>The right to rest and leisure.</i></p> <p>What is it about?</p>	

Lesson 4

The pupils present their results (i.e. the completed worksheet from lesson 3) to each other in class. There is one spokesperson per group. They could address aspects such as the following:

- How did we approach our task (the process of group work and decision-making)?
- What was important for us (criteria and values)?
- How can we make sure that the rules are respected (attitudes towards rules and their enforcement)? Who is responsible for the enforcement of these four children's rights?

Possible conclusion: Collaborative final editing, agreement on a final collaborative edition of the rights and responsibilities in connection with the four elementary children's rights that have been looked at. One group could receive the task of creating a document depicting the rules as a work of art. All the pupils and teachers sign this document. The rules are in force until they are replaced by a new document. The document could be displayed on Universal Children's Day as an example of how to practise democracy in class.