




Weird Laws


Law & Order

- Teacher's Insights -

At a Glance

-  45-60 minutes
-  B2, C1
-  collocations, speaking, creativity

Preparation

-  0-5 minutes
- Print one worksheet for each student.
- Print the Teacher's Insights or keep them at hand as they contain which laws are true and false.

Exercise Summary

- Kickoff:** speaking intro
- Reading & Speaking:** decide if weird laws are true or false
- Odd One Out (Collocations):** identify which word is not a correct collocation with "law" and "crime"
- Speaking II:** make up funny laws in pairs or groups

Kickoff: Have you ever heard of any really weird laws? Share them with your classmates!

① Open up the class by engaging students in a light discussion about the weirdest laws they have ever heard of. This activity is designed to warm up students and make them more receptive to the activities that follow.

Reading & Speaking: Read the laws and follow the instructions.

① This activity combines reading comprehension with critical thinking and speaking skills. The answers are given below as well as references and extra information where relevant.

You are going to read about twelve laws from around the world. Some of them are real, but others are made up (not real). As you read, talk about each of the laws with your teacher or classmates and decide which you think are real and which you think are made up.

Singapore: To maintain cleanliness and combat crime (vandalism), Singapore's law prohibits the sale of chewing gum, except for medicinal use. Those who flout this law can be fined up to \$1,000.

① TRUE. It is illegal to sell and import chewing gum as vandals used it to sabotage public transport systems (etc.). Reference: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32090420>

UK: It is illegal to die within the walls of the UK Parliament. To comply with this law, you must leave the Parliament building before dying or else you will be committing a crime.

① FALSE. This is an old wives' tale apparently stemming from the fact that anyone who dies in a Royal Palace is eligible for a state funeral.

Madrid, Spain: Asking the time between 3:29 p.m. and 6:47 p.m. in Madrid is prohibited. If you wish not to violate this law and be driven to crime, check your own watch or any public clocks instead.

① FALSE. This appears all over the Internet but there is no reliable evidence that it is true.

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France: Owning a cat and a dog simultaneously in France is illegal. In order to fight crime, French police must ensure that all French residents adhere to the law and keep only one of the two animals.

❶ FALSE. This law is totally made up

Iceland: A 17th-century Icelandic decree permits the killing of Basque people in the Westfjords region. This means that to murder is not to perpetrate a crime, as long as the victim is Basque.

❶ TRUE. At least, it was until 2015 when the decree was repealed and the law abolished. The Icelandics note that abolishing the law is symbolic, as there are laws which overrule this one which prohibit killing anyone in Iceland (including Basque people). Reference:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/basques-safe-iceland-district-repeals-decree-kill-on-sight>

UK: British common law authorises pregnant women to urinate anywhere they like, even in a police officer's helmet. This petty crime does not apply to them and they are, in this sense, above the law.

❶ FALSE. Unfortunately, this law does not exist, but you will find it cited on many, many websites. Also, many British people will tell you that this is true, but there isn't a lot of reliable evidence online to suggest this. However, the police may be more lenient with pregnant women than others who may be spotted urinating on the street.

Catalonia, Spain: In Catalonia, sex workers must comply with the law and wear high-visibility safety vests to ensure safety on the job. Those who don't abide by the law face minor penalties.

❶ TRUE. This refers specifically to Lleida, where local law prohibits prostitution. These workers are therefore obligated to operate outside of the limits of the town, where they are technically on public highways. For this reason, they are forced to wear high-vis safety vests. Reference:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11627351>

Italy: Singing in public while wearing a hat is outlawed in Italy, in order to maintain an orderly atmosphere. A violation of this law is seen as a lesser crime.

❶ FALSE. Although humorous, this law is completely made up.

London, UK: Tasteless Christmas decorations are banned in London, and so is keeping them up after the 3rd of January. To break this law is to carry out a minor, yet punishable, crime.

❶ FALSE. Although humorous, this law is completely made up.

France: Fear of extraterrestrial activity led to a law in Châteauneuf-du-Pape that bans UFOs from flying over the town. To break this law would be an alien offence!

❶ TRUE. For the last 62 years, a law has prohibited the "flying over, landing, or taking off of flying saucers" in the area - and the mayor of the town has refused to overturn it. Reference:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/france/articles/no-ufos-allowed-french-mayor-refuses-to-overturn-extraterrestrial-ban/>

Denmark: Danish law mandates parents to choose from an approved list of names for their baby. To do otherwise is against the law and requires special permission.

❶ TRUE, there about 7,000 pre-approved names. Reference:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/08/world/europe/jens-and-vita-but-molli-danes-favor-common-names.html>

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Oklahoma, USA: Oklahoma's law strictly outlaws bear wrestling to tackle the crime of animal cruelty. To stay within the law and avoid harm, do not engage in bear wrestling in Oklahoma!

① TRUE. It is also illegal to participate, engage in, or be employed at a horse tripping event. <https://law.justia.com/codes/oklahoma/2014/title-21/section-21-1700>

Odd One Out (Collocations): Find the odd one out in each of the rows:

① In the previous exercise, students have read a lot of collocations including “the law” and “crime”. In this exercise, students must identify the odd one out; that is, which of the four options is not a correct collocation with the word on the right. Students should try to do this without checking the previous exercise, but if it is difficult for them, they can use the previous page as a reference. The answers are given below.

In language, collocations are words which commonly go together (like “take a walk”). In the previous exercise, you read lots of collocations with the words “law” and “crime”.

In the table below, there are four words in each row before the words “law” or “crime”. Three of the four words are correct collocations, but one of the words is not. Can you identify which of the four words is not a correct collocation?

	A	B	C	D	
1	adhere to	comply with	carry out	abide by	the law
2	break	violate	flout	smash	the law
3	over	above	against	within	the law
4	combat	attaek	fight	tackle	crime
5	do	perpetrate	commit	carry out	a crime
6	lesser	lower	minor	petty	crime

*If [students] find it difficult, check the texts on the previous page.

Speaking II: Create Your Own Weird Law

① This is a fun and creative exercise aimed at promoting collaboration, creativity, critical thinking. Split the remaining class time into three: creating the law, sharing laws, and voting/feedback. Remember to encourage the use of collocations from the previous activities.

Split into pairs or small groups.

In your pair or small group, you have to create a fictional law. You can choose where your law would be enforced, but make sure not to be offensive and to avoid stereotypes!

Be creative and have fun making your law. Remember to use the collocations you have learnt!

When you have created it, if you have time, make up the backstory for your law. Why does it exist? What problem does it aim to solve?

When you have finished, share your laws with the rest of the class. You can vote for the funniest law.