
Ask Before You Taste!

Classroom Guide

Some things look like treats but aren't — always ask first

CASEL Competency: Responsible Decision-Making

Grade Level: Pre-K–2

Duration: 35–45 minutes

Category: Safety Magic

Learning Objectives

- Understand that some dangerous things LOOK like food or candy (medicine, cleaning products, berries)
- Learn the #1 rule: NEVER taste, touch, or smell something without asking a grown-up
- Know what to do if someone swallows something dangerous: tell a grown-up, call Poison Control
- Practice identifying look-alikes and asking before touching

Overview & Preparation

Key Vocabulary

Poison • Look-alike • Medicine • Cleaning products • Ask first • Poison Control • Dangerous • Label • Safe • Emergency

Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Look-alike picture cards (candy vs. medicine, juice vs. cleaner)
- Poison Control number cards
- Paper and crayons
- Optional: Mr. Yuk stickers

Before Reading

Connection Question

Has something ever LOOKED like food but wasn't? What was it?

Background Building

Some things look EXACTLY like treats but are actually dangerous. Colorful medicine looks like candy. Cleaning spray smells like lemons. Pretty berries on bushes look delicious. In this story, the hero learns that the ONLY safe rule is: ASK BEFORE YOU TASTE (or touch, or smell). If you find something and you're not sure what it is — DON'T touch it. Ask a grown-up. And if someone accidentally tastes something dangerous: TELL immediately and call Poison Control.

During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the hero sees something that looks like candy but isn't** — It looks just like candy! But it's medicine! Why do dangerous things sometimes look like treats?
- **When the hero asks a grown-up before touching something unfamiliar** — The hero ASKED first instead of just grabbing it. Why is asking the smartest thing to do?
- **When the hero learns the Poison Control number** — There's a special phone number just for poison emergencies! Why is it important to know this number?

Discussion Questions

1. Medicine can look like candy. Cleaning products can look like juice. Why do dangerous things sometimes look safe?
 - ↳ What are some "look-alikes" you know about?
2. The #1 rule is ASK BEFORE YOU TASTE. Why is this better than trying to figure it out yourself?
 - ↳ What if no grown-up is around? What should you do?
3. What should you do if a friend eats or drinks something they shouldn't have?
 - ↳ Why is TELLING immediately so important? What happens if you wait?
4. Where in your house are dangerous look-alikes? Under the sink? In the medicine cabinet?
 - ↳ What can families do to make sure these things are out of reach?

Facilitation Tips

Use PICTURES only for look-alikes — never bring actual dangerous substances. The lesson should feel empowering, not frightening. The key message: you have the POWER to stay safe by asking one simple question.

Emotional Payoff

The hero discovers that the simplest rule — ASK FIRST — is also the most powerful. They don't need to be a scientist to know what's safe. They just need to ask. That one question is a shield against every look-alike danger.

After Reading Activities

Look-Alike Card Sort

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Picture cards of look-alikes (candy/medicine, juice/cleaner, berries/poison berries)

Show pairs of look-alikes. Can children tell the difference? (Often they can't!) Discuss: since we CAN'T always tell by looking, the ONLY safe choice is to ASK. Sort into "I know it's safe" and "I need to ask."

Poison Control Practice

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Play phones, number cards (1-800-222-1222)

Practice calling Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222. Practice saying: "My [friend/sibling] ate/drank something. It was [description]. They are [age]." Repeat until every child can do it calmly.

Ask Before You Taste Poster

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Paper, markers

Create a safety poster with the rule: "If you didn't put it there and you don't know what it is — DON'T TOUCH IT. ASK." Illustrate with look-alike examples. Display at home near the kitchen or bathroom.

Writing Prompts

- Draw two things that look alike — one safe, one dangerous. Can you tell the difference? What should you do?
- Write the #1 rule in big letters. Why is this rule so important?
- Draw yourself asking a grown-up before touching something you found. What are you saying?

Home Connection

Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we practiced poison safety through "Ask Before You Taste!" Your child learned that some dangerous things look exactly like treats (medicine/candy, cleaner/juice, wild berries/food). The #1 rule: NEVER taste, touch, or smell anything without asking a grown-up first. They also practiced calling Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222. Please secure medicines and cleaning products and reinforce the "ask first" rule at home.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Walk through your home together: identify where dangerous look-alikes are stored
- Practice: "What would you do if you found a colorful pill on the ground?"
- Post the Poison Control number (1-800-222-1222) on the fridge

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

Related Books

- Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- My Body Belongs to Me by Jill Starishevsky
- Officer Buckle and Gloria by Peggy Rathmann