LAW FOR KIDS (http://www.lawforkids.org/)
Reviewed by María Victoria Fernández
Universidade de Vigo
Vigo, Spain
victoria@uvigo.es

Site URL: http://www.lawforkids.org/
Language: English/Spanish

Introduction

"Law for Kids" is the name of a website, which was born as a project of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education and with funding from the Arizona Supreme Court. Its main aim is to familiarize kids with law, by offering them, among other things, stories about legal issues, toons, law docs, laws, games, links, and the possibility of posting comments and asking questions. This website has been chosen because, apart from having a very attractive outline especially for young people, it contains a lot of information regarding legal issues and students can learn a lot of the legal English language by browsing its webpages.

Description

The different sections on the site are labelled as "LFK Home", "Speak up!", "Stories", "Toons", "Laws", "Justice for all", "Law docs", "Change it!", "Games" and "Links".

In the LFK Home section you can see everything this website is going to offer you.

In the Speak up! section you can find 5 records grouped into the topic of "arrested", 1 record into the topic of "curfew", 109 records grouped into the topic of "driving", 114 records grouped into the topic of "family", 67 records grouped into the topic of "illegal substances", 257 records
grouped into the topic of "other", 83 records grouped into the topic of "school", 1 record into the topic of "sexual assault and misconduct", 3 records grouped into the topic of "trouble", 63 records grouped into the topic of "violence" and 25 records grouped into the topic of "work and employment".

In this section students can browse questions about the different topics and read the corresponding answers (there is a special link to the latest questions). At the same time, they are given the possibility of posting and reading comments. They are also offered several links to read about the specific topics, such as links to related laws and to related stories (if available).

In the Stories section students can read and listen to stories that deal with legal issues. There is a special link to the latest stories. Story topics are classified into "driving", "illegal substances", "other", "sexual assault and misconduct", "trouble", "vandalism and property damage" and "violence". Students are also given the possibility of posting and reading comments. As in the previous section, there are links that allow the student to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related laws and to related "Speak up!" questions (if available).

In the Toons section toons are grouped into key areas of the law, classified into "arrested" (3 records), "driving" (7 records), "family" (1 record), "illegal substances" (4 records), "other" (5 records), "school" (8 records), "trouble" (6 records), "violence" (6 records) and "work and employment" (1 record). Some of the cartoons are animated (the student can listen to what the different characters are saying) but some are strip. There is a special link to the latest toons.

Students can also post and read comments. As in the previous sections, there are links that enable learners to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related laws, "Speak up!" questions and stories (if available).

In the Laws section students can browse laws classified according to the topics of "arrested" (6 records), "curfew" (1 record), "driving" (9 records), "family" (2 records), "illegal substances" (7 records), "new laws" (3 records), "other" (3 records), "school" (1 record), "trouble" (8 records), "violence" (5 records). There is a special link to the latest laws.
Students can post and read comments. As in the previous sections, there are links to read more about the topic chosen and also links to related "Speak up!" questions and related stories (if available).

In the **Justice for All section** students can follow Jay, a resident at the South East Facility Juvenile Detention Centre in Mesa, Arizona. On each page, when they click on the listen icon, they will be able to listen to Jay talking about the different areas of the Detention Facility. They can read at the same time what they are listening to, and also write a letter to Jay letting him know their feelings about life in detention.

In the **Law Docs section** students have access to the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Amendments, the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers and more law documents.

In the **Change it! section**, because the American system of government allows citizens and their representatives to change the law and create new laws through a legislative process, even though students may not be old enough to vote, they are still able to share their opinions with elected officials who make and change Arizona laws.

In the **Games section** students can play different games such as "A day in the life of Tommy", the "LawForKids.org Quiz" (an interesting quiz on legal issues), "8-Ball", "Checkers", "Jigsaw", "Tic Tac Toe" and "Tiler".

It's worth commenting on the game "A day in the life of Tommy", where the student has to play the role of Tommy, who is an "average school kid who comes across some tough situations where he faces decisions about breaking the law". After each situation, the student will have to choose what Tommy should do (one choice being against the law, and the other one being legal). If the student answers incorrectly, s/he will be given information on the law. If the answer is right, s/he will continue to the next situation. If the student answers correctly all the ten situations, s/he will be even given a certificate that s/he can print out.
In the **Links section** you can find a list of telephone hotline numbers, many interesting different links for kids, parents and teachers, law links and the "out of AZ section".

**Evaluation**

**Accuracy**

Considering the authority of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education (AZFLSE) and, on the other hand, the funding from the Arizona Supreme Court, it is a fact that materials are accurate and interesting. There are neither grammatical nor spelling errors found.

**Authority**

As already mentioned, the site is authored by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education (AZFLSE), which is a non-profit corporation that serves as a statewide non-profit organization and operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes. According to the aim mentioned in the "About Page", its mission is to improve Arizona's legal system through programs that promote equal access to justice, strengthen the legal system and build public understanding of the law.

**Currency**

The site was originally launched in 1998. Some sections are regularly updated, though others are updated only occasionally. Anyway, teachers can join the Teacher Update Email list to get weekly updates about Law-Related Education and new resources posted to LawForKids.org. Contributions provided by users are also added on a regular basis.

**Objectivity**

The goal of the site is clearly stated in the "About Page": "The Site was created by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education with the specific goal of educating Arizona's youth, their parents, communities and schools to increase their knowledge about youth laws and to encourage law-abiding behavior". Educational contents, rich in information, definitely achieves the aim claimed.

**Style and Functionality**

The layout of the content is well-organized. It has highly intuitive navigation bars both at the top and the bottom. Links to other sections are also included on each page. There is also a pull down left-side menu which provides access to all subsections. Elements can be loaded quickly. Pages
are not overloaded and fonts allow a perfect level of readability. The site is very easy to navigate and its graphic design highly appealing.

These facts, together with the interesting learning materials, encourage visitors to work on the site.

**Learner fit**

Learners can use this site for self-study. Most materials focus on reading, but students can also listen to stories or watch toons or videos which deal with legal issues. They can share their own stories, post and read comments and ask questions. In the Justice for All section they can follow Jay, a resident at the South East Facility Juvenile Detention Centre in Mesa (Arizona), and they can even write to Jay letting him know their feelings about life in detention. It is worth commenting on the Change it! section, where students can share their opinions with elected officials who make laws.

This site offers plenty of motivating language activities, allowing students to learn while amusing themselves. Activities are self-correcting so students can try them as many times as they want to. It is worth mentioning again the possibility of asynchronous interaction to foster real language practice.

Although this website is dedicated mainly to teaching children about the law, it was created with the specific goal of educating not only Arizona's youth, but also their parents, communities and schools to increase their knowledge about youth laws and to encourage law-abiding behaviour. So, most learning materials are not marked, which is not considered to be a serious drawback, since each learner can try by him/herself which activities suit him/her best.

**Teacher Fit**

Though mainly suitable for self-study, most activities may be carried out in the classroom using the website as a source of materials and/or support. Apart from reading activities, the site can be used for listening activities, since it provides audio and video recordings. Teachers can use the materials for speaking activities such as debates, role-plays or mock trials and for writing activities such as writing stories, posting comments or asking questions, to cite some examples.
Furthermore, the site contains 600 downloadable lessons and Mock Trials from the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education which can be used in the classroom. They are classified according to several categories and have been written by different authors. Teachers can also have access to the specific LawForKids.org lessons.

Even though this website is intended mainly for kids, one can find here very interesting links that can be useful for any beginner, no matter how old s/he is. One should keep in mind the important fact that LE (Legal English) classes are usually mixed-ability ones, and student language levels may range from "beginner" to "advanced". On this website students can have access to very simple legal language (see game "A day in the life of Tommy"), but also to more advanced legal language (see the section on Law Docs or some specific lesson plans).

Apart from the search engine, it is also worth mentioning the availability of an online dictionary, as well as a Spanish version of this website.

**Recommendation**

This website is recommended because of the appropriate and highly motivating materials. The language is easy enough to be comprehended by beginners and students are allowed to post and read personal comments on the contents of any of the website sections, something which fosters real language practice. On the other hand, the site provides special pages for teachers, giving them very interesting ideas and additional resources. It is also very important that you can use the site for any kind of language activities, as it contains audio and video recordings.

To sum up, this website is highly recommended, though I would include some kind of synchronous interaction.