

UNIT 6

Jail for Parents of Absent Students?



Who is responsible?

Exercise 6.1

Read this passage about students who do not follow rules.

“Cutting school”* is a common practice for many students. Rather than going to school, students go to the mall, the beach, or a nearby friend’s house. Some students cut class a lot, and teachers and administrators are worried. In particular, teachers are worried because when students get low grades, teachers are often blamed. However, teachers are saying that the responsibility of coming to class belongs to the student. Teachers are saying that they are not responsible for the poor grades that these students are getting.

*Other common expressions for this are “playing hookey” and “skipping school.”

There are disagreements as to where the responsibility for poor attendance lies. Some parents believe that it is the responsibility of the school to make sure that students attend school every day. At the same time, some teachers feel it is the parents' responsibility to make sure that the children attend school. However, parents say that they do not have the power to force their high-school-age children to go to school. Parents say that their children leave the house for school but just go somewhere else instead.

The state of Illinois has enacted a law that offers a controversial solution to this problem.

Exercise 6.2

Think of three possible answers for this question: What solution did the state of Illinois offer? Write your three answers on the lines below. Circle the number of your best answer. Be prepared to explain why you think your answer is a good solution to the problem of class absences.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Exercise 6.3

Work in small groups. Take turns presenting your three ideas. Tell which one you think is your best answer. Then each group should choose its best answer (or two) from exercise 6.2 and tell it to the class. Be ready to give reasons to support your answer. Which answer do most people think is the best one? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion. When you finish, read the state's real decision in communication activity 25.

Exercise 6.4

What do you think about the State of Illinois's decision? Write your opinion and one or two reasons for your opinion here.

Exercise 6.5

Work in small groups. Discuss your opinion and your reasons from exercise 6.4. What is the general opinion of the members of your group?

Exercise 6.6

Some people say that parents of misbehaving teenagers should be held responsible for their children's actions. These people believe that making parents responsible will make parents take a more active role in their children's lives. This will build better values and teach the children to know right from wrong. Write three (or more) reasons why it is correct to hold parents responsible for their children's actions.

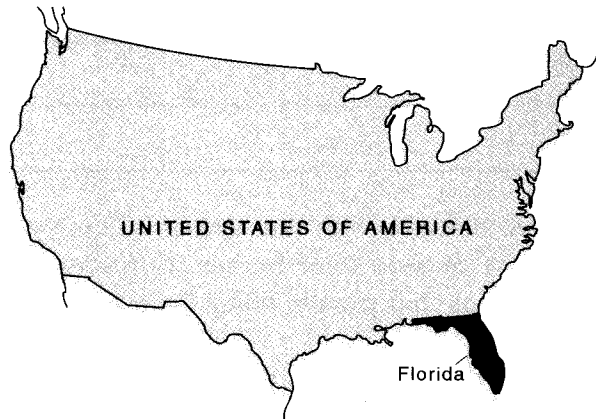
However, many people disagree with the idea of holding parents responsible for actions that happen outside their homes. Consider this opposing view. Write two or three reasons that people might have for disagreeing with what you have written above.

Exercise 6.7

In small groups, discuss your answers and opinions given in exercise 6.6. Is your group able to agree? In the end, are parents responsible for their children's actions?

Exercise 6.8

Read this story about a student and her parent in Florida.



In 1999, Kimberly Barbey of St. Petersburg, Florida, was put in jail because her third-grade daughter, age nine, missed 161 days (of 180) in the 1998–99 school year and missed 9 days of the first 19 school days of the 1999–2000 school year.

A county judge, Patrick Cadell, decided to put Barbey in jail because Barbey's daughter had too many absences. The judge believed that the number of absences was an abuse of the system. It was a violation of Florida law.

The school principal, Terry Krasner, said, "The intent was never to see a mother in jail." The school tried to help Barbey and her child. The school sent a guidance counselor, a social worker, and a nurse to the home several times.

Ron Stone, a spokesperson for the school district, said, "Most parents, once you talk about legal action, they get the child in school." Barbey received warnings about this matter in court several times.

Some people in the area were shocked that a parent was sent to jail for something that the child did, but two years earlier, there was a similar case. Near Tampa, Florida, a mother was put in jail for two months for letting her daughter miss 315 days of school between 1995 and 1998.

Exercise 6.9

What do you think of this Florida case? Do you agree or disagree with the judges' decisions to put the mothers in jail? Why?

Exercise 6.10

Work in small groups. Discuss your opinion of the Florida judge's decision in the Barbey case. Is this case similar to or different from the problem that the Illinois law was designed to solve?

Exercise 6.11**Your Childhood**

Answer these questions about how your parents treated you in terms of responsibility.

1. Were your parents strict with you? _____

2. If you made a mistake or misbehaved, what did your parents do? Give specific examples.

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3. Did they give you specific responsibilities when you were a child? If so, give examples.

4. Compared to your brothers or sisters, did your parents give you more or less responsibility?

5. Why do you think this is true?

6. When you compare it to the situations of other people in your culture, do you think your situation with your parents and responsibility was usual? If not, what was different?

Exercise 6.12

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss your answers about responsibility when you were a child.

**Language Review**

Read the key word or phrase (in bold) in the left column. Circle the letter of the choice that is related to the key word or phrase.

1. **occasional** a. often b. always c. sometimes
2. **strict** a. rules b. classes c. lines
3. **attend** a. stay away from b. go to c. look at
4. **misbehave** a. behave badly b. behave politely c. want to see
5. **practice** a. repeated effort b. natural ability c. knowledge
6. **rather than** a. in addition to b. because of c. instead of
7. **administration** a. employees b. management c. teachers
8. **cut class** a. not do well b. not understand c. not attend
9. **blame** a. "You did it!" b. "I love you!" c. "He is great!"
10. **make sure** a. be angry b. be certain c. be patient
11. **too many** a. a few b. some c. too big a number
12. **shocked** a. believed b. warned c. surprised
13. **this matter** a. situation b. people c. transportation
14. **daughter** a. son b. sun c. some
15. **earlier** a. after b. now c. before



Be sure to visit <www.press.umich.edu/esl> for ideas on related Web sites, videos, and other activities.
