

## Mindwalk - "Ten Things I'd Rather Be Doing" (and other variations)



**Grade Level:** All Grades

### **Academic Standards:**

This activity involves proposed standards 5.1.B and 5.3.C, which focus on the importance of and reason for rules and laws. Proposed standard 5.1 covers principles and documents of government and 5.3 explores how government works.

The Mindwalk begins by saying to students, **"I'm now going to ask you the hardest question you will ever be asked. What would you rather be doing than listening to me?"**

Ask the students to create a list (choose one or two students to write the ideas on the board until you have a list of 10 activities).

Now challenge the students with the statement that "everything is connected to the law and that is why studying the law is so important."

Go through how the ideas they listed can be connected (sleeping involves the little pillow tags that say "Do Not Remove Under Penalty of Law"; eating costs money, which gets its value by law; winking at someone could be sexual harassment). Ask them to come up with things they think are not connected to the law in any way. Let the group work through the connections.

One presenter who has used this lesson a number of times said he only was stumped once, when a student brought up the notion of pure thought - eventually, the group decided that you had an absolute right in America to think whatever you want, a right that certain nations - the "1984" world comes to mind - do not protect.

### **Variations of this exercise are numerous.**

You may use a newspaper, what a student or teacher did the previous weekend or even what documents can be found in your wallet (driver's license, credit card).

For an older audience, you may wish to use the approach described below:  
Tell students that you are going to narrate a "story" and that they should stop your narration when they think you have mentioned something that pertains to the law. Begin to narrate your daily activities. For example, "This morning, I awoke at 6:00 a.m. I took a shower, got dressed and ate a breakfast of cereal and coffee. I got in my car and drove to school (or office). I picked up my paycheck" etc.

The students should have stopped you at a number of places to mention points such as the following:

1. Your name is a legal device that cannot be changed without court approval.
2. Time is regulated by law. The official clock in Washington, D.C. is set in accordance with Greenwich Mean Time.
3. Water for bathing is inspected by city officials and must meet health, safety and environmental regulations enforced by local and national governmental agencies.
4. Clothing and furniture must have contents and cleaning instructions listed on a label.
5. Cereal boxes are required by law to list ingredients. Milk must be pasteurized and meet health standards. The price of milk often is regulated, as well.
6. Cars must have safety and pollution control devices that are regulated by law. The car must be licensed and insured.
7. Drivers must be licensed and must obey traffic laws.
8. Streets are built and maintained under standards regulated by law.
9. Income tax and social security taxes are withheld from paychecks by law.

As an extension of the Mindwalk exercise, you might ask the students to **generate a list of all the legal documents they will be required to have during their lifetimes.** Among them could be included:

- birth certificate
- school registration/ ID card
- driver's license
- graduation diploma/transcript
- marriage license
- Social Security card
- draft registration
- income tax return
- Passport
- work permit
- rental/lease agreement
- mortgage or other loan papers