

# Universal Lesson Plan: The Etiquette of Personal Space and Boundaries

## Materials Needed

- Paper and writing implements (pens, markers)
- Masking tape, chalk, or string (to mark physical space zones)
- Tape measure or ruler (optional, for precision)
- Index cards or sticky notes (for boundary scripting)
- Scenarios Worksheet (provided in activities)

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Define personal space (Proxemics) and identify the four primary physical zones.
2. Differentiate between the three main types of personal space: physical, verbal, and digital.
3. Explain the difference between setting healthy personal boundaries and displaying weakness.
4. Formulate and effectively communicate clear, kind, and firm personal boundaries using 'I' statements.

## Introduction (10 Minutes)

### Hook: The Invisible Bubble

**Educator Action (I Do):** Start by telling a brief, relatable story or presenting a question.

"Imagine you are sitting quietly doing your homework, and someone leans over your shoulder to read what you are writing, or touches your arm without asking. How does that make your body feel? Does it make you want to lean away?"

This feeling is caused by someone entering your 'invisible bubble'—your personal space. We all have one, and knowing how to respect others' bubbles, and protect our own, is called etiquette.

### Sharing Objectives

Today, we are going to explore this invisible bubble. We will learn how close is too close, how to protect our time and feelings online and in conversations, and most importantly, how to communicate our needs without being mean or rude.

## Body: Content Presentation and Practice

### Segment 1: Defining the Physical Bubble (I Do / We Do - 15 Minutes)

#### Concept: Proxemics (The Science of Space)

**I Do (Modeling):** Explain that personal space isn't just a feeling; it's a social science called Proxemics, which defines predictable zones of closeness, though these zones can vary based on culture.

### Activity: Mapping the Zones (Kinesthetic Practice)

1. Use masking tape (or string) to mark four circles radiating out from the learner, with the learner standing in the center.
2. **Intimate Space (0 to 18 inches):** For embracing, whispering, touch. (Close family, partners, pets).
3. **Personal Space (1.5 to 4 feet):** For friends, close conversational partners. (Arm's length).
4. **Social Space (4 to 12 feet):** For acquaintances, group conversations, coworkers, public interactions. (Most comfortable distance for strangers).
5. **Public Space (12+ feet):** For public speaking, large gatherings.

**We Do (Discussion):** Have the learner stand in the center. The instructor steps into each zone, asking the learner (Nashwa) to describe how they feel in that zone, and who they would permit to enter that space. Discuss: "When is it okay to enter someone's intimate space? (Example: crowded bus, emergency)."

**Success Criteria:** The learner can correctly identify and demonstrate the four zones and list appropriate relationships for each.

### Segment 2: Beyond Physical Space (Verbal and Digital) (We Do - 15 Minutes)

#### The Three Types of Personal Space

**Educator Action (I Do / Content):** Explain that space is more than just physical distance.

1. **Physical Space:** The distance between bodies (covered in Segment 1).
2. **Verbal Space:** Respecting boundaries in communication (not interrupting, avoiding intrusive or overly personal questions, not pressuring someone to share gossip).
3. **Digital Space:** Respecting boundaries online (not sharing someone's photos without permission, not sending constant unwanted messages, not tagging someone repeatedly, respecting 'Do Not Disturb' times).

### Activity: Scenario Matching (Think-Pair-Share)

Present the following scenarios. Nashwa identifies which type of personal space is being invaded:

- A friend repeatedly calls you late at night (Digital/Verbal).
- A classmate looks over your shoulder during a test (Physical).
- A relative keeps asking about your grades or future plans, even after you say you don't want to talk about it (Verbal).
- Someone posts an embarrassing picture of you on social media without your permission (Digital).

### Segment 3: Boundaries vs. Weakness (I Do / Content - 10 Minutes)

#### The Misconception

**I Do (Modeling):** Address the core fear: that setting boundaries makes you seem mean, weak, or inflexible.

"Sometimes, people worry that if they say 'no' or ask someone to stop, they are being weak or unfriendly. This is not true. Think of boundaries like the walls of a beautiful house. The walls aren't there to keep everyone out; they are there to protect what's valuable inside (your time, feelings, energy). They show self-respect."

- **Weakness/Avoidance:** Avoiding conflict, saying yes when you mean no, letting others control your decisions.
- **Boundary Setting:** Clearly, calmly, and kindly communicating your needs and limits, even when it feels difficult. It requires strength and clarity.

**Key Takeaway:** Setting a boundary is an act of clear, respectful communication, not an act of hostility.

## **Segment 4: Setting Boundaries Effectively (You Do / Application - 20 Minutes)**

### **The Formula for Setting Boundaries (Kind, Clear, Firm)**

**I Do (Modeling):** Introduce the effective boundary script template (using 'I' statements):

"I feel [Emotion] when [Action occurs]. I need [Desired change/limit]. Instead, could we [Alternative request]?"

*Example:* "I feel stressed when I am tagged in group photos without my permission. I need to approve photos before they are posted. Instead, could you please send the photo to me first?"

### **Activity: Boundary Scripting and Role-Play (Creative Practice)**

**You Do (Practice):** Nashwa selects three scenarios from the list below (or generates three relevant real-life scenarios) and writes a firm but kind boundary script for each on an index card.

1. A friend consistently interrupts you when you are talking. (Verbal boundary)
2. A family member tries to give you a hug when you prefer not to be touched right now. (Physical boundary)
3. A friend texts you constantly between 9 PM and 7 AM. (Digital boundary)

**Role-Play:** Practice delivering the scripts. Focus on clear tone, confident posture, and direct eye contact. The instructor plays the role of the friend/family member, testing the firmness of the boundary.

**Success Criteria:** Scripts utilize 'I' statements and clearly state the limit and the alternative request.

## **Conclusion and Assessment (10 Minutes)**

### **Recap and Review**

**Educator Action:** Quickly review the key points.

- What are the four physical space zones?
- Name the three types of personal space.
- How does setting a boundary prove strength, not weakness?

### **Summative Assessment: The Boundary Reflection**

Have the learner complete the following short reflection:

1. Write down one physical boundary you commit to protecting this week.
2. Write down one verbal or digital boundary you need to communicate this week.
3. Explain in your own words why setting a boundary is an act of self-respect.

## Next Steps and Extension

**Extension Activity (For Advanced Learners):** Research and compare how personal space zones (proxemics) differ between two specific cultures (e.g., Japanese vs. Italian culture). How would this cultural knowledge change your interaction strategy?

## Differentiation and Adaptability

Context	Adaptation Strategy
<b>Homeschool (Nashwa)</b>	The instructor/parent acts as the primary partner for the Proxemics mapping and all role-play activities. Focus on real-life family/friend scenarios.
<b>Classroom Setting</b>	Use group work for the Scenario Matching (Think-Pair-Share). Role-play groups of three (one boundary setter, one boundary receiver, one observer/feedback provider).
<b>Training/Workplace</b>	Shift the focus of scenarios to professional boundaries (e.g., managing interruptions during meetings, handling after-hours emails, respecting shared desk space). Maintain the I-statement scripting framework.
<b>Scaffolding (Struggling Learners)</b>	Provide pre-written boundary scripts and have the learner choose and practice them first. Use visual aids for the Proxemics zones with clear labels.