

Start With Sorry – Lesson Plan (Ages 9–12)

Overview

- Core message: Apologising is about responsibility, respect, and repairing relationships—with peers, adults, and ourselves.

Learning goals:

- Students understand why genuine apologies matter.
- Students can identify when an apology is needed and what makes an apology meaningful.
- Students develop, practice, and reflect on apology and forgiveness skills in real-life situations.

Lesson Plan Sequence

1. Introduction: Apology in Everyday Life

Prompt:

- Ask students: “What does apologising mean to you? When was a time you received a really good or bad apology?”
- Share: Stories of famous or memorable public apologies (age-appropriate: classroom incidents, sports, news, etc.).
- Group Brainstorm: Write on the board: “Why do people sometimes struggle to say sorry—even when they know they should?”

2. How Apology Affects People & Relationships

Prompt:

- “Saying sorry” isn’t just about words—it impacts trust, respect, and even our brains and bodies.
- Studies show that apologising can reduce stress and anger and help people reconnect.

Small Group:

- Analyse brief scenarios (printed or read aloud) in which someone apologises—students discuss:
 - What happened?
 - How did each person feel before/after?
 - What made the apology work or not work?
- Scenarios Example:
 - A friend accidentally sends an embarrassing text to the group.
 - Someone forgets to include a classmate in a group project.

3. The Ingredients of a Real Apology

Own what you did.

Say sorry and mean it.

Explain (but don't make excuses).

Ask how to make it right.

Listen to the other person's feelings.

Discussion:

Why is each step important?

Can you think of a time an apology was missing one of these steps?

4. Role-Play: The Apology Lab

- Pairs or Groups: Draw a situation from a hat or select from scenario cards.
- Each group acts out the wrong, the apology, and the response.
- Audience provides feedback: Did the apology feel real? What could make it better?
- (Encourage use of body language, tone, and active listening.)

5. Apology in the Digital World

- Discuss: Why are digital apologies (by text, online) harder or easier?
- Students write two apology messages:
 - a. By text or DM
 - b. In person (as a script)
- Reflection: Which would feel better to receive? Why?

6. Apology and Forgiveness Journal

Prompt: "Describe a time you needed to apologise but didn't, or a time you accepted someone else's apology. How did it feel?"

Follow-up: Over the next week, jot down moments you notice at home, in class, or online where an apology made a difference.

7. Building a Culture of Repair

In groups, write a short "Class Apology Charter"—a set of principles about how the class will approach mistakes and repair.

Display in the classroom: "In our class, everyone has the right to say sorry, be heard, and make things right."

8. Celebration & Ongoing Practice

- Share reflections or “apology wins” from the week.
- Recognise students who model genuine apology or forgiveness (with “Peace-Maker Leader” certificates or notes).
- Resources & Printables
- Scenario Cards Examples (Printable):
 - Forgot a friend's birthday.
 - Made a joke that hurt someone’s feelings.
 - Didn’t return a borrowed item.
 - Reacted with anger and said something mean in an argument.
 - Shared someone else’s secret.

Apology Journal Prompts

“Today, I noticed someone apologise. What happened next?”

“Write about a time saying sorry made you nervous, but helped a relationship.”

“Why is it sometimes hard to apologise even when we’re wrong?”

Class Apology Charter Example (Template)

“In our class, we all...

- Take responsibility for our actions
- Say sorry when we hurt others, on purpose or by accident
- Listen when someone apologises
- Try to repair the harm and move forward, together”

Certificates/Recognition

- “Repair Leader Award”
- “Apology Ambassador” sticker/badge

Teacher Tips

- Model sincere apology if you make mistakes or overreact—kids notice!
- Reinforce that taking responsibility is a sign of maturity and courage.
- Praise effort and improvement, not perfection.
- Remind students: Apology is not only about words but also about behaviour and repair.
- Consider a “Peace-Maker Jar”: class can write down apologies/reparations they see and share during circle time weekly.

Sample Scenario Scripts

Script 1: Forgetting a Friend's Birthday

Characters: Jamie, Taylor

Scenario: Jamie realises they forgot Taylor's birthday and Taylor seems upset.

Script:

Jamie: "Taylor, I just realised I missed your birthday. I'm really sorry I forgot—it wasn't fair to you."

Taylor: "I felt left out, but thank you for saying sorry."

Jamie: "Is there a way I can make it up to you? Maybe we could celebrate together later?"

Taylor: "That would be nice. Thanks for apologising."

Script 2: Hurtful Joke

Characters: Max, Priya

Scenario: Max made a joke about Priya in class and noticed she looked sad.

Script:

Max: "Priya, I realise my joke in class was hurtful. I'm sorry for saying it."

Priya: "It did bother me, but thank you for apologising."

Max: "I'll be more careful with my words. Can I do anything to make it right?"

Priya: "Just please don't make jokes like that again."

Script 3: Sharing a Secret

Characters: Sam, Jess

Scenario: Sam told someone else Jess's secret.

Script:

Sam: "Jess, I told someone your secret. That wasn't right, and I'm really sorry."

Jess: "I trusted you, and that hurt me."

Sam: "I understand. I promise not to do it again. Is there any way I can rebuild your trust?"

Jess: "Let's talk about it, but thank you for owning up to it."

The Five Steps to a Real Apology

1. Say what happened:

forgot to include you in the
game."

2. Take responsibility:

"That was my mistake, and I
know it hurt you."

3. Say sorry and mean it:

"I'm really sorry for what I
did."

4. Ask how to make it right:

"Is there a way I can make it
up to you?"

5. Listen: "I want to hear
how you feel."

Printable Apology Journal Prompts

Apology Reflection Journal

"Describe a time you needed to apologise, but found it hard to do."

"Write about a time someone apologised to you—how did it make you feel?"

"What makes an apology feel real?"

"When you received a heartfelt apology, did it change your feelings toward the person? How?"

"Think of a time you forgave someone. How did forgiveness help you?"

"Why do you think people sometimes avoid saying sorry, even when they know they're wrong?"

"Write about a recent conflict. If an apology was given, what happened next?"

"Draw a comic strip showing a problem, an apology, and friends making up."
(Print these prompts as handouts or in a lined journal for regular use.)