



LESSON PLAN

How laws are enforced

Learning outcome 3.7

Explain how laws are made, enforced and evolve over time

Students will learn

- ▶ Where laws in Ireland have come from
- ▶ The stages through which a Bill passes to become a law
- ▶ Case-study: Irish Sign Language Act 2017
- ▶ How law is enforced in Ireland

Materials

- ▶ Slide show
- ▶ Worksheet: Stages of a Bill - one for each student
- ▶ Debate opinion cards - one copy of each
- ▶ String or masking tape - if you opt to do the spectrum debate
- ▶ Animation: How bills are passed **How bills become laws**

Assessment for learning/Key skills

- ▶ Brainstorming
- ▶ Group work
- ▶ Communicating
- ▶ Working with others

1 Explain where Irish law comes from

SLIDES 3-4

Recap previous lessons on Bunreacht na hÉireann and the Oireachtas.

Bunreacht na hÉireann is the fundamental law of Ireland. It establishes the Legislature (the Oireachtas), the Executive (the Government) and the Judiciary (the courts).

The **Oireachtas** is the only legislative authority that has power to make laws for the State.

SLIDES 5-8

Explain that there are other sources of law and outline them.

2 How Bills become laws

SLIDE 9

Show the video and the Powtoon animation.

Give each student a copy of the **Worksheet: Stages of a Bill** (see page 5) and ask them to complete it.

Answers: 1. The Bill is Initiated | 2. General points of the Bill are debated | 3. Committee Stage | 4. Report Stage | 5. Final Stage | 6. Signed by the President

3 Case study – Irish Sign Language Act 2017

SLIDE 10

Click the link in the slide to show the Act information page. Scroll through the page, roll your mouse over the tracker and use the tabs to explore the progress of the Act.

Ask students to identify:

- ▶ The purpose of the Bill
- ▶ Who sponsored the Bill [Note: “Private Member” means the sponsors were not members of the Government.]
- ▶ Which House the Bill was initiated in [Note: Bills can begin in the Dáil or the Seanad.]
- ▶ When the Bill passed each Stage
- ▶ When it was signed into law and became an Act
- ▶ How many different versions of the Bill were produced before it became an Act

If time allows, you could show some of the debates from the different Stages.

SLIDES 11-14

Discuss the points on the slides.

3 Discuss how laws are enforced

SLIDES 15-16

Brainstorm how laws are enforced in Ireland. Explain the role of the Garda Síochána and the Courts Service.

SLIDE 17

When the Oireachtas passes laws, they may specify how the laws can be enforced. Show how this works using the example.

The **Protection of Children's Health (Tobacco Smoke in Mechanically Propelled Vehicles) Act 2014** prohibits the smoking of tobacco products in vehicles where children are present.

SLIDE 18

The Act also gives the Garda Síochána the power to stop suspects and demand their names and addresses.

SLIDE 19

The Act states that a person guilty of smoking in a car with a child is liable for a class D fine, which is a maximum of €1,000.

4 Debate

SLIDE 20

In this activity, you will read out five statements on law-making in Ireland and let the students express their opinions on them in a walking debate or a spectrum debate.

Debate statements

1. Experts, rather than politicians, should make laws.
2. Citizens do not have enough say in making laws.
3. There are too many stages through which a Bill must go before becoming law.
4. Laws are made in the interests of the general public.
5. Bunreacht na hÉireann is out of date.

Walking debate

Pin the **Debate opinion cards** (see pages 6-7) at opposite ends of the classroom. Read out the statement and ask students to move to the sign that reflects their opinions. Ask students to explain why they took that position.

Spectrum debate

Place a piece of string or masking tape on the floor to represent the spectrum of opinions with one of the **Debate opinion cards** (see pages 6-7) at either end. Read out the statement and ask students to stand at the point on the string that reflects their opinions. Ask them to discuss the issue with the people nearest to them in groups of two or three. The groups can then discuss the issue with the other groups. This methodology gives a voice to students unwilling to speak in front of the full group.

→ Extension activities

Consult the Bills & Acts section of the Houses of the Oireachtas website and check the progress of Bills of interest to you.

Find out what Bills your local TDs are currently sponsoring. Contact one or more TD and ask his/her opinion of the outcome and/or timeline of this process.

Note: To see which Bills a particular TD is sponsoring, go to the TDs & Senators section of the Houses of the Oireachtas website, open the TD's member profile and scroll down.



Worksheet: Stages of a Bill

Number the Stages of a Bill in the order in which they occur.

Signed by the President	
Committee Stage	
General points of the Bill are debated	
Final Stage	
The Bill is Initiated	
Report Stage	

Trà



Agree

Nil | **Disagree**