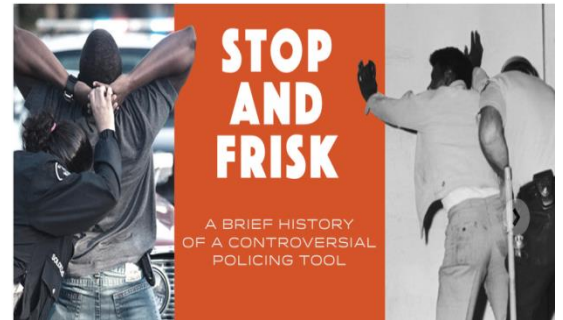


## Lesson Plan: A Brief History of Stop-and-frisk

By Rachel Roberson

### Featured resource

[KQED's The Lowdown: Stop-and-frisk, a Brief History of a Controversial Police Tactic](#)



Josh Kalven for KQED

### Opening quick write prompt:

Have you ever heard the term “stop-and-frisk” before? If so, what does it mean? What do you know about it? If not, what do you think “stop-and-frisk” refers to?

*A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.*

### Objective

- Students will analyze the history of stop-and-frisk policies from the 1960s to the present.
- Students will evaluate the effectiveness of stop-and-frisk in relation to the crime rate and police relationships with communities of color.

### Essential Question and Lesson Context

**How have stop-and-frisk policies been used in the past 50 years? How do stop-and-frisk policies affect the communities in which they are practiced?**

When police officers stop-and-frisk, they question and search an individual based on a suspicion that the person has committed or is going to commit a crime. The policy is designed to stop crime before it happens. When crime rates dropped in the 1990s, stop-and-frisk programs were often credited. However, the tide turned against the tactic when data showed that police disproportionately targeted people of color. Many communities protested the practice, and the courts intervened. When stop-and-frisk was curtailed, the crime rate continued to drop, calling into question the tactic’s actual effectiveness. This lesson explores the history of stop-and-frisk and how the practice, once seen as a solution to urban crime, evolved over the decades.

### Key vocabulary

*Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).*

Word	Simple definition
<b>Deter</b> (v.)	To prevent something from happening <i>The evidence does not show that stop-and-frisk <b>deters</b> crime.</i>
<b>Indiscriminate</b> (adj.)	Done at random and without judgment, and often causing harm <i>The <b>indiscriminate</b> use of stop-and-frisk by police led to resentment and anger in many communities.</i>
<b>Infringe</b> (v.)	To wrongly limit or restrict <i>Some stop-and-frisk programs were ruled unconstitutional because they <b>infringed</b> on citizens' civil rights.</i>
<b>Proactive</b> (adj.)	Anticipating and preparing for a possible future issue <i>Many believed stop-and-frisk tactics were a <b>proactive</b> way to prevent crime.</i>
<b>Scant</b> (adj.)	Lacking, not having enough <i>There is now <b>scant</b> evidence that stop-and-frisk programs caused the drop in crime rates.</i>

## Investigate

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to gauge what students already know about stop-and-frisk.
- Explain that students will be investigating the history of stop-and-frisk (see the overview above). The policy has a lengthy history and began from the belief that it would deter crime. But stop-and-frisk has long been a controversial tactic that has as many critics as proponents.
- As a class, read through Slides 1-5 in [this interactive explainer](#) on The Lowdown.
- **Stop-and-Frisk jigsaw:** Divide the class into three groups to jigsaw [the interactive explainer](#). Group 1 will investigate and summarize key points from the first wave of stop-and-frisk policies (Slides 5-15). Group 2 will research the second wave (Slides 16-25). Group 3 will report on where stop-and-frisk policies stand today (Slides 17-35). If needed, subdivide the slides further or have more than one of each group.
- Groups should use the following guiding questions to get ready to report out to the class:
  - 1) Why were stop-and-frisk programs adopted or promoted during this time period?
  - 2) What were the advantages of the program, according to proponents?
  - 3) What were the problems with stop-and-frisk, according to opponents?

- Each group reports its findings to the whole class to build a common understanding of the issue.
- **Check for understanding:** Why was stop-and-frisk viewed as a positive tactic in the early days of its use? What do you think is the primary concern with stop-and-frisk? Explain using evidence.
- **Transition to the Make and Share:** Tell students they will have a chance to share their thoughts on this issue in the comments section of The Lowdown. The first time they comment, students must sign in to [Disqus](#), a free discussion app embedded in The Lowdown.
  - To sign in to [Disqus](#), click the “Comments” button at the bottom of the post.
  - Click the blue “Get Started” button in the gray “Welcome to Disqus” box.
  - Students will need to enter a username. We recommend first name, last initial.
  - After signing in for the first time, students must verify their email address before commenting. A verification email will appear in their inbox once they sign in to Disqus.

## Make and share

- Individually or in small groups, students post in the comments section in response to the debate about when schools should start.
  - Responses should be supported by evidence from [The Lowdown post](#).
  - Encourage students to reply to other comments after posting their response. Remind them to use evidence to support their claims and use respectful language when responding.
- Students can write their own response or use the following questions as a starting point:
  - **Make your case:** Do you think stop-and-frisk is an effective or ineffective policing tactic? Why or why not?
  - **Explore both sides:** In your opinion, what’s the best reason for police departments to use stop-and-frisk? What’s the most compelling reason to end the practice of stop-and-frisk?
  - **Dive into research:** Does your community use stop-and-frisk or a similar tactic? Research your own community’s police department tactics by searching for news articles or information about how the police in your community interact with residents.
  - **Share out:** Do you or anyone you know have experience with stop-and-frisk? Explain the situation, how you felt and what you think about the practice.
  - **Get creative:** Describe an image in the [interactive explainer](#) that was powerful or that helped you better understand the issue. Explain why you chose the image. What did it make you think of? What did it communicate about the controversy surrounding stop-and-frisk programs?

## Assessment/reflection

- Students reflect on what they have learned either through a class discussion or in writing:
  - What have you learned about the policy of stop-and-frisk? Did your opinion change or stay the same as you learned more about the issue?
  - What was it like to post your responses publically and reply to other posts? What did you learn from other students? What do you hope they learned from you? What will you do the next time you post a comment in response to The Lowdown?

*Circle chats, small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.*

## Extension/homework

**Write/speak locally:** Students turn their opinions about stop-and-frisk into a letter, short speech or presentation, then research ways to make their voice heard in their community. (Example: Speaking during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting on an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out [KQED Learning's Local Election Toolkit](#).

## Common Core standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</a>	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1</a>	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.