

Worksheet 1: When do scientific/technological advances lead to a change in the law?

2016: Government gives the public notice that using a **handheld mobile whilst driving** will soon lead to six penalty points and a £200 fine. New drivers who are caught with a phone at the wheel will have their licence taken away and be forced to retake their test.

2016: Facebook apologises when its 'Marketplace' (an eBay rival) advertises **snakes, weapons and illegal drugs**. A technological issue is blamed for this error. Facebook are keen to point out that it does not support the sale of such items – or of services such as manual labour.

2016: A new non-invasive test (called an NIPT) is being trialled on pregnant women. The test allows foetuses to be screened for Down's Syndrome. NIPT causes no apparent risk to the unborn child, unlike previous tests used to identify Down's Syndrome. As such, experts think that more testing for Down's Syndrome will occur. This is causing lots of controversy about **a parent's legal rights to make decisions about their unborn child**.

2016: A new law is proposed in the UK, through which internet providers must keep records of **which websites customers have used** in the past year.

Worksheet 2: Why must the law adapt?

Fill in the gaps using the missing words at the bottom of the page.

WHY MUST THE LAW ADAPT TO SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES?

Laws are needed in society in order to make sure that (1) _____ are treated fairly. Laws protect members of society and help to resolve disagreements between groups and between individuals.

Laws frequently need (2) _____ because of the many changes that emerge in terms of scientific and technological advances. New laws can also reflect changing values (e.g. the right to have a same-sex marriage).

It can be difficult for the (3) _____ to 'keep up' with the rate at which new discoveries are made, especially given that a law has to pass through several stages in the Houses of Parliament before it can be enforced. This is why the role of pressure groups is so important; pressure groups often (4) _____ for new laws to be introduced and/or for existing laws to be amended.

The role of (5) _____ is essential in the law-making process too. After all, an MP cannot be expected to have expertise in all areas. It is very important that top-level (6) _____ and technology specialists advise the government on which legal changes should accompany any new products, (7) _____ or systems that become available to citizens.

Although it can become confusing to live in a society in which new laws are constantly being introduced, these new laws are essential for public order and for safety. Strict (8) _____ concerning texting at the wheel, for example, have more power than simply appealing to people's sense of right and wrong.

MISSING WORDS

penalties
experts

government
citizens

services
campaign

scientists
updating

Laws that reflect scientific and technological developments

SPECIFICATION LINK: THEME C, LAW AND JUSTICE – WHAT IS THE LAW AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT US?

Objectives

- LO1** I can explore why laws must respond to scientific developments
- LO2** I can explore why laws must respond to technological developments

Class:	Date:	Last lesson:	
G & T pupils:	SEN pupils:	M:	F:

Connect

- In your opinion, what is one of the most important **recent scientific/technological** developments?
- Discuss with **your partner** whether scientific and technological advances *always* benefit society.

Activate

- Put students into pairs and ask them to think of examples of when a scientific/technological development has **led to the creation of new laws**.
- Examples:
 - The introduction of cars on British roads led to many laws, including the need to stick to the speed limit and the need to drive on the correct side of the road.
 - The invention of mobile phones led to strict new laws about which kind of images were illegal to share by text, e.g. images which sexually exploit children.
 - The sudden widespread use of Facebook, and other forms of social media, created a need for 'trolling' (cyber bullying) to be recognised as a crime.
- Ask several **spokespersons to feed back** their ideas.
- Ask class to vote on which group had the most thought-provoking ideas.

Demonstrate

Worksheet 1 When do scientific/ technological advances lead to a change in the law?

Worksheet 2 Why must the law adapt?

- Ask students to read through Worksheet 1 (which features four examples of a scientific/technological

development and its impact on the law).

- Ask them to reflect upon Worksheet 1 and then to fill in the gaps on Worksheet 2. The missing words are provided at the bottom of the sheet.
- Share answers with the class:

Laws are needed in society in order to make sure that (1) citizens are treated fairly. Laws protect members of society and help to resolve disagreements between groups and between individuals.

Laws frequently need (2) updating because of the many changes that emerge in terms of scientific and technological advances. New laws can also reflect changing values (e.g. the right to have a same-sex marriage).

It can be difficult for the (3) government to 'keep up' with the rate at which new discoveries are made, especially given that a law has to pass through several stages in the Houses of Parliament before it can be enforced. This is why the role of pressure groups is so important; pressure groups often (4) campaign for new laws to be introduced and/or for existing laws to be amended.

The role of (5) experts is essential in the law-making process too. After all, an MP cannot be expected to have expertise in all areas. It is very important that top-level (6) scientists and technology specialists advise the government on which legal changes should accompany any new products, (7) services or systems that become available to citizens.

Although it can become confusing to live in a society in which new laws are constantly being introduced, these new laws are essential for public order and for safety. Strict (8) penalties concerning texting at the wheel, for example, have more power than simply appealing to people's sense of right and wrong.

Consolidate

- **Small-group activity:** ask students to discuss why it can take a long time for new laws to 'catch up' with technological and scientific advances.
- Invite spokespersons to **share their ideas**.
Examples of good ideas:
 1. *When a new invention appears on the market, it is hard to predict what percentage of people will use the invention safely.*
 2. *Every new law needs lots of discussion before it can be introduced. This means that when politicians want to introduce a new law due to a new development, it can take months for that law to be agreed upon in the Houses of Parliament.*
 3. *Sometimes laws have to be agreed on an international scale. For example, if a new form of air travel was invented then experts from many countries would have to discuss which new laws were required.*
- Ask individual students to **write a paragraph** explaining why it can take a long time for new laws to 'catch up' with technological and scientific advances.
- Example of a good paragraph:
Technological and scientific developments occur on a regular basis. Politicians try to ensure that laws concerning these new developments are up-to-date. This is not always practical however, for several reasons. Firstly, it is very hard to predict how a new product or service will be used (or abused) by the public, making it difficult to decide exactly what citizens need protecting from. Secondly, some technological and scientific advances happen without the government's knowledge, meaning that politicians do not get a warning about the need for certain new laws. Thirdly, new laws of any kind can take a long time to introduce. This is due to the large amount of people who are involved in the process of law-making.

Extra challenge

Activate activity: Give G & T students a **specific theme** and challenge them to find an example linked to that theme. Examples of themes: medical advances, national security, mobile phone technology and genetic engineering.

Extra support

Demonstrate activity: cut out the missing words for students in advance. They can then move them around the page to decide which words go where.

Recommended websites

http://think.direct.gov.uk/assets/pdf/5946-1-DFT-Mobile-Couple_A3_v5_hires.pdf

Homework

Print off a **news story** about a new law that has been introduced due to a scientific/technological development.