How to Apologize

30-minute lesson • 4K–2nd grade • Book, movement, and song

LEARNING TARGET
I can say an apology I mean and choose a helpful next step.

Materials: How to Apologize by David LaRochelle, illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka. No worksheets or technology needed. Teacher scripts and song below are original; read the book itself from your copy.

0–3 minutes | Connect

Say: “Today we are learning about something everyone needs sometimes: apologizing. We all make mistakes. A mistake does not make you a bad person. We can notice what happened, say sorry, and try to help.”

Invite a quick partner share: “Tell your partner one way a friend can show kindness.” Allow passing. Take two brief responses.

3–11 minutes | Read How to Apologize

Show the cover. **Say:** “David LaRochelle wrote this book, and Mike Wohnoutka made the pictures. Listen for what makes an apology helpful.”

Read the book aloud, showing the illustrations. Keep comments brief so there is time for practice. After reading, say: “An apology means more when we mean our words and take responsibility for what we did.”

11–15 minutes | Talk about it

Ask these two questions:

1. “What makes an apology sound like you mean it?”
2. “What can you do after saying sorry to help make things better?”

Take two or three answers to each. Model: “I’m sorry I knocked your paper down. I can help pick it up.” Say: “We name our own action without blaming the other person. Sometimes the other person still feels upset. We can give them time.”

Move & practice

Minutes 15–23 • Movement game: Pause, Say, Repair

PAUSE = freeze your body
SAY = open your hands while saying an apology
REPAIR = mime a helpful action

Have children stand or stay seated with space around them.

Say: “We will act out pretend mistakes. We will not touch anyone or knock over real things. Nobody is out.”

Teach three movements: PAUSE = freeze your body; SAY = open your hands while saying an apology; REPAIR = mime a helpful action.

Say: “I will tell you a pretend situation. Then we will pause, say an apology, and show a way to help.”

Round 1 | Crayons on the floor

“You accidentally knock crayons onto the floor. Pause!” Freeze. “Say!” Model and echo: “I’m sorry I knocked down the crayons.” “Repair!” Mime picking up crayons.

Round 2 | Interrupting a partner

“You interrupt your partner. Pause!” Freeze. “Say!” Echo: “I’m sorry I interrupted.” “Repair!” Mime giving the partner a turn, then listen quietly for five seconds.

Round 3 | A wrinkled drawing

“You walk across someone’s drawing and wrinkle it. Pause!” Freeze. “Say!” Echo: “I’m sorry I stepped on your drawing.” “Repair!” Mime gently straightening the paper.

Final round | Children choose the repair

Repeat one situation. Let children supply their own apology and helpful action. Invite two demonstrations.

For younger children, echo one short phrase at a time. For older children, have them name the action and propose the repair independently.

Sing & wrap up

Minutes 23–30 • Song and closing

23–27 minutes | Apology song

Sing these original lyrics to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” No recording is needed.

When my actions hurt a friend,
I can help and try again.
Say I’m sorry, mean it too.
Find a kind next thing to do.
When my actions hurt a friend,
I can help and try again.

First sing once for the class. Then sing together twice. On “friend,” open your hands toward the group. On “help,” mime helping. On “sorry,” place a hand near your heart if comfortable. On “next thing,” take one small step in place or tap a knee. End by softly singing the final two lines together.

27–30 minutes | Show what you learned

Say: “Pretend you bumped someone’s folder onto the floor. Tell your partner an apology and one helpful action.”

Give both partners a turn. Accept words, gestures, or communication supports. Listen for naming the action and offering to pick up the papers.

Close: “We all make mistakes. A helpful apology tells the truth about what we did. Then we try to help and change what we do next time. The other person may need time, and that is okay.”

Have the class say: **“Pause. Say sorry. Try to help.”** Return to the classroom routine.

Teaching notes

Use pretend examples, rather than asking children to describe real conflicts or apologize publicly. Children may watch, gesture, use AAC, or practice with adult support. Movement can be seated. Do not require eye contact, physical contact, or an immediate “It’s okay” response. If a child is still very upset, support calming first and practice later.

Book reference

How to Apologize • David LaRochelle • Illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka • Candlewick Press
Author’s book page: davidlarochelle.com/childrens_books/how_to_apologize/
This lesson uses an actual copy for the read-aloud. It does not reproduce the book’s text. The practice scenarios and song are original classroom additions.