

Are you smarter than an 8th grader?

Take the seatbelt safety quiz to find out. . .

Last year, Karen Stofcheck, with the Citrus County School District, worked closely with Heather Yates, with the Sheriff's Office, to write a grant called "Learn and Serve" available through the Florida Department of Education . The grant, which focused entirely on educating youth about the power of wearing a seatbelt, enabled both parties to work together for the benefit of kids in community schools.

In March of this year, Yates, along with traffic analyst Ken Perez of the Sheriff's Office, met with 8th grade students at Inverness Middle School to teach them about seatbelt safety. They began with an interactive quiz that facilitated students expressing their knowledge about seatbelts and their usage.

Take the quiz to see how you rank along with the over 100 students surveyed:

Wearing a seatbelt is a choice – not a law.	True	False
It doesn't matter if I wear a seatbelt when I'm in the back of the car.	True	False
Most passengers involved in a fatal crash who wore their seatbelt survived the crash.	True	False
Car crashes are the number one killer of young adults.	True	False
I always wear my seatbelt.	True	False

Now, let's take a look at the answers and compare them to the students surveyed.

Wearing a seatbelt is a choice – not a law.

90% of the students said FALSE – that wearing a seatbelt is a LAW. **They were correct.** In fact, a driver can receive a ticket for not being buckled up. Also, anyone under the age of 18 MUST be buckled up at all times, or the driver could be issued a citation, including receiving points on his/her license. Were you as smart as an 8th grader?

It doesn't matter if I wear a seatbelt when I'm in the back of the car.

85% of the students said FALSE – that wearing a seatbelt while seated in the backseat of a car IS important. Why? Among other reasons, because if you're not wearing your seatbelt while in the backseat and the car is involved in a crash, the passenger could become a projectile killing others in the vehicle, including him/herself. These students again were correct.

Most passengers involved in a fatal crash who wore their seatbelt survived the crash.

78% of the students said TRUE – that if wearing a seatbelt, most people can survive a car crash. That’s pretty amazing when you think of it, isn’t it? Something that takes about three seconds – at most – could potentially save your life. Is that too good to be true? No, it’s not, the students were right again.

Car crashes are the number one killer of young adults.

52% of the students said TRUE. Think about it. . . alcohol, drugs, suicide. There are a lot of things out there that can impact the youth of the 21st century, but do car crashes really have that much of an impact? Yes, it’s TRUE. Car crashes kill more teens and young people than any other potential threat out there. If wearing a seatbelt can decrease that number, encouraging everyone you know to buckle up could make a huge difference.

I always wear my seatbelt.

71% of the students said FALSE – I always wear my seatbelt. Hmmm, after the majority of students got every answer right, when asked the MOST important question, 71% got it wrong! Simply put, even armed with the knowledge needed to make sure to put on a seatbelt, the youth we surveyed *still* didn’t do it.

What about you? Do you wear your seatbelt **every** time you get in a vehicle, whether driver, front passenger or when you’re in the backseat? Do you refuse to drive your car unless everyone is buckled up? Do you encourage others to buckle up no matter how much of a hurry you’re in?

Make a commitment. Buckle up. Every trip, every time.

In order to drive the message home to students, we engaged them in a variety of activities to convince them that not wearing a seatbelt is simply NOT an option. One of the things we required them to do was to get in groups and create their own seatbelt safety commercial. Afterwards, we watched all of their performances and then picked winning commercials that would be recorded and placed on our website. You can view two of the winners at www.sheriffcitrus.org. Simply click on the “Students and Parents” tab to view them.