



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

CLASSROOM | 4-8 Activities : “First Kids”

Consider This ...

Susan Ford lived in the White House with her parents, Gerald and Betty Ford. She once commented: “It’s not a whole lot of fun to be written about in the press every time you make a move. . . . I remember my mother saying, “The children were not elected to this office. Leave them alone.” What do you think of Mrs. Ford’s response? Do you think first kids have the same rights to privacy as any other child their age? When a person is elected to serve the public — a president, senator, governor, mayor — they are expected to be available to the public, to answer questions about their job. But they also have a right to have a private life, away from the public, when they can enjoy their family and friends. It’s sometimes difficult to know when work ends and play begins.



Susan Ford washes her car outside the White House, June 1976. Gerald R. Ford Library

How would you react if you saw newspaper articles with pictures of you and your family on vacation? Or entering school, church, or a restaurant? Do American citizens have a right to know about the details of the first family’s life? Pretend you are the president. Make a list of rules you would write for reporters — do’s and don’ts — for covering the first family in the press. Then make the same list as if you were the owner of a major newspaper. Compare the two lists.



Party Time!

Pretend you live at the White House and you are inviting your friends over for your birthday party. Design a birthday invitation and list the activities or games you will play during the White House party. Decorate the invitation with pictures of the places you'll play. Your father or mother, the president, says you can go anywhere you want except the West Wing, which is where the president works. Your parents also say you must give a tour of at least one of the historic rooms. Write a script, which you will read to your friends, about the historic room you select (for example, the East Room, the Blue Room, or the State Dining Room). **CLICK THE LINK BELOW FOR OUR TOUR OF THE WHITE HOUSE:**

http://www.whitehousehistory.org/whha_tours/whitehouse_tour/oo.html



Sistie Dall's birthday invitation. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library



Following In Your Footsteps

For a first kid's own protection, the United States Secret Service knows where a president's child is at all times. When moving from room to room within the White House, playing outside on the lawn, in the school classroom, at a concert, or on vacation. While this seems like an invasion of privacy, it helps keep the first family safe.

If a record were kept about where and how you spend your time, what would it say? Print this daily log, or make your own. Carry it with you for one entire day (a 24-hour period) and fill in where you are and who is with you. Make note of when you move from one place to another and how you got there. Did you walk, drive, ride your bike?

Ask one of your parents, a brother, or sister if you can keep a log on them for a day. Don't forget to ask their permission. Remember, you're not spying! And also remember that they have a right to be left alone in their private spaces. The Secret Service uses code names for the people they protect. What code names would you create?

After you complete the log, share it with your parent or sibling. How did it make them feel to have their movements recorded? How did you feel spending the day filling in the log?

(SEE NEXT PG)



Secret Service agents protect President Clinton (white sweatshirt) as he jogs. United States Secret Service



D A I L Y L O G

12:00 - 1:00 am	
1:00 - 2:00 am	
2:00 - 3:00 am	
3:00 - 4:00 am	
4:00 - 5:00 am	
5:00 - 6:00 am	
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9:00 - 10:00 pm	
10:00 - 11:00 pm	
11:00 pm - 12:00 am	



The Most Famous Back Yard in the World



A birds-eye view of the White House. Erik Kvalsvik

This is a photograph of the White House and the yard that surrounds it. There are 18 acres of land within the iron fence that would be your yard if you were first kid. The north lawn is smaller and looks out onto Pennsylvania Avenue. This lawn is not very private. The south lawn provides much more space, and this is where you will find tennis courts, a swimming pool, a putting green, and a small basketball court. On the south lawn, Amy Carter played in her tree house and the Kennedy children played on their swing set and trampoline. There are grassy lawns, bushes, and many trees — some of them were planted by presidents — giving you plenty of places for adventure.

If you lived in the White House and your parents asked you how you would like to use your back yard, what would you tell them? If you could design the lawn, what would it look like? Would you plant groves of trees for hiding games? Would you put in a full-size baseball diamond? (There's enough room!) Would you build statues of your heroes?

Add your ideas by drawing them on the President's Park plan

(SEE NEXT PG)



