Activity 3: Robot Helper Rules

Deciding What Our Computer Friends Can Do (Grades K-2)

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> ❗ Teacher Overview
>
> Young students create simple "rules" for a classroom robot helper, learning that people need to decide what computers should do on their own and when they should ask humans first. This builds foundational understanding of human oversight in automated systems.
> **Duration**: 20-25 minutes **Grade Levels**: K-2 **Group Size**: Whole class **Technology**: None required (optional: show pictures of robot helpers)

Learning Goals

Students will:

- Think about what robot helpers should do **by themselves** vs. **ask first**
- Understand that **people make the rules** for computers
- Practice making **fair rules** that help everyone

CYBER.org Standards Alignment (K-2)

- **K-2.DC.ETH**: Basic technology ethics

The Story

Meet Sparky the Classroom Robot!

Read aloud to students:

Our classroom is getting a new helper named Sparky! Sparky is a robot that can help us with lots of things:

- Sparky can turn the lights on and off
- Sparky can play music during activity time
- Sparky can remind us when it's time to clean up
- Sparky can tell the teacher if someone is being unsafe

But before Sparky starts helping, WE get to decide the rules! We need to tell Sparky what to do by itself and when to ask us first.

The Big Questions (15-20 minutes)

Question 1: The Lights

Ask the class: > "Should Sparky turn off the lights by itself when it's sunny outside, or should Sparky ask the teacher first?"

Discussion prompts: - What if someone is reading and needs the light? - What if it gets cloudy again? - Is it okay if Sparky decides this by itself?

Vote: Sparky can decide OR Sparky should ask first

Record the class decision: _____

Question 2: The Cleanup Reminder

Ask the class: > "Should Sparky play the cleanup song whenever it's messy, or only when the teacher says it's time?"

Discussion prompts: - What if we're in the middle of a fun project? - What if Sparky thinks it's messy but we're still working? - Should Sparky decide what "messy" means?

Vote: Sparky can decide OR Sparky should ask first

Record the class decision: _____

Question 3: Telling About Unsafe Behavior

Ask the class: > "If Sparky sees someone running in the classroom, should Sparky tell the teacher right away, or should Sparky wait to see if it's okay?"

Discussion prompts: - What if someone is just excited? - What if it's an emergency and they NEED to run? - Is it good that Sparky wants to keep us safe? - But should Sparky always tell?

Vote: Sparky should always tell OR Sparky should wait and see

Record the class decision: _____

Making Our Rules (5 minutes)

Our Class Rules for Sparky

Create a simple chart together:

Sparky CAN do by itself	Sparky should ASK FIRST

Teacher prompts: - "What did we decide about the lights?" - "What about cleanup time?" - "What about keeping us safe?"

Key Teaching Points

What We Learned

Robots need rules from people! - Computers are good helpers - But PEOPLE decide what the rules are - Some things robots can do alone - Some things need a person to decide

Why it matters: - What if Sparky's rule isn't fair? - What if Sparky doesn't understand something? - People help make sure the rules work for everyone!

Wrap-Up Discussion

Ask students:

1. "Was it easy or hard to make rules for Sparky?"
2. "What if Sparky made its OWN rules without asking us? Would that be okay?"
3. "Who should get to make the rules for robot helpers?"

Optional Extension: Robot Helper Drawing

Art activity: "Draw a picture of a robot helper and write (or tell the teacher) ONE rule you would give it."

Prompt: "My robot helper is named _____ and my rule is _____."

Assessment

Observation Notes

Behavior	Observed
Student participated in voting	
Student shared an idea about rules	
Student understood that people make rules for robots	
Student could explain why some things need asking first	

Assessment Connection

This table shows how activity elements connect to the Human-AI Collaboration Rubric criteria:

Rubric Criterion	Developed Through	Evidence Source
AI Partnership Framing	Treating Sparky as helper with needs for guidance	Verbal framing: Does student see robot as needing rules?
Complementary Strengths	"What Sparky can do" vs. "What people decide"	Participation in chart creation
AI Limitation Awareness	Discussion of when Sparky might not understand	Responses to "What if Sparky doesn't understand?"
Synthesis Quality	Creating balanced rules for robot	Quality of class rules chart entries

Teacher Notes

Why This Matters

Every time we use Alexa, Google, or Siri, automated systems are making decisions. This activity plants the seed that **humans get to decide what AI does**—a foundational concept for digital citizenship.

Preparation

- ☐ Practice the Sparky story
- ☐ Prepare voting method (thumbs up/down, stand up/sit down, etc.)
- ☐ Create simple chart for recording decisions
- ☐ Optional: Find pictures of friendly robots to show

Keep It Simple

The goal isn't to cover every scenario—it's to establish: 1. Robot helpers are useful 2. People make the rules 3. Some things need human judgment