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Britney Spears admits baby driving mistake

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11 February, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Britney Spears admits baby driving mistake

Pop singer Britney Spears has hit the headlines for the wrong reasons again, this time for driving her SUV with her four-month-old son seated on her lap. While she has admitted how reckless and dumb her actions were, she has apportioned a considerable amount of blame on the paparazzi. She said the celebrity-obsessed photographers hound her to the extent that she feels she is constantly escaping their attentions. Ms Spears claimed she instinctively put her son between her and the steering wheel in an attempt to avoid a waiting "pack" of "aggressive" cameramen. The media agency that took the pics rebutted her claims, saying: "These pictures were taken in a very peaceful context, in which photographers exhibited no aggressive behavior."

Spears may face prosecution for violating traffic safety laws. California regulations require children to be secured in a child-safety seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh 27 kg. A police spokesperson said Ms. Spears would have been fully aware of the legalities and repercussions of her recklessness. He said a deputy sheriff had already paid a visit to Spears' Malibu home at the request of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family services, who are apparently up in arms at the irresponsible and "downright dangerous" example set by the singer. They said it is quite routine to report incidents where a child has been endangered due to a failure to properly restrain them in a car. The matter is now pending with the LA Police Department.

WARM-UPS

1. CELEBRITIES: Write down the name of some celebrities who have broken the law. Talk about these in pairs / groups. What punishment did they receive? Was it the same as a “normal” person would get? Do you think famous people get treated differently under the law?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Pop singers / headlines / SUVs / recklessness / paparazzi / steering wheels / photos / traffic safety laws / child car seats / sheriffs / Los Angeles / setting good examples

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. CAR SAFETY: Which of these points are subject to traffic laws in your country? Would you like to see any of them tightened up?

- Child seats
- Children sitting in the front
- Smoking in a car and children
- Speed and children
- Stickers to warn other drivers
- The number of children in a car
- Seat belts
- Other

4. OPINIONS: Do you agree with these opinions on celebrities and the law?

- a. Celebrities should be treated exactly the same as everyone else under the law.
- b. Celebrities have a duty to set a good example to others.
- c. Famous people are under different pressures and should be treated differently.
- d. Too many celebrities get away with crimes because they are rich and famous.
- e. Celebrity lawbreakers should get bigger punishments to set an example.
- f. Famous people should work to encourage us to keep to the law.
- g. Britney Spears had no excuse to break the law by putting her son on her lap.

5. HEADLINES: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “headlines”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. HOUNDED: You are a famous star. Everyone in the street recognizes you. The paparazzi constantly follow you and photograph your every move. Talk to the other “stars” in the class about being famous. What do you think of the paparazzi? In what ways is your life not normal?

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Britney Spears allowed her baby son to steer her car at 80 kph. | T / F |
| b. Ms. Spears has admitted her actions were reckless and dumb. | T / F |
| c. Ms. Spears said she was afraid of a hound owned by a photographer. | T / F |
| d. A photo agency said it took pics of Ms. Spears in a peaceful manner. | T / F |
| e. In California, children up to the age of six must use child seats in cars. | T / F |
| f. Los Angeles police visited Ms. Spears at her home after the incident. | T / F |
| g. A family group has called Ms. Spears' actions "upright dangerous". | T / F |
| h. The LA Police Department said the matter is now fully resolved. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| a. reckless | flouting |
| b. hound | repudiated |
| c. instinctively | awaiting action |
| d. rebutted | demonstrated |
| e. exhibited | thoroughly |
| f. violating | foolhardy |
| g. repercussions | intuitively |
| h. up in arms | consequences |
| i. downright | harry |
| j. pending | angry |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. hit the headlines | of her recklessness |
| b. she has admitted how reckless | no aggressive behavior |
| c. apportioned a considerable | of aggressive cameramen |
| d. avoid a waiting pack | a visit to Spears' Malibu home |
| e. photographers exhibited | with the LA Police Department |
| f. Spears may face prosecution | amount of blame on the paparazzi |
| g. the legalities and repercussions | for the wrong reasons again |
| h. a deputy sheriff had already paid | arms at... |
| i. up in | and dumb her actions were |
| j. The matter is now pending | for violating traffic safety laws |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Britney Spears admits baby driving mistake

Pop singer Britney Spears has hit the _____ for the wrong reasons again, this time for driving her SUV with her four-month-old son seated on her _____. While she has admitted how reckless and _____ her actions were, she has _____ a considerable amount of blame on the paparazzi. She said the celebrity-obsessed photographers hound her to the _____ that she feels she is constantly escaping their _____. Ms. Spears claimed she instinctively put her son between her and the steering wheel in an attempt to avoid a waiting "_____" of "aggressive" cameramen. The media agency that took the pics rebutted her claims, saying: "These pictures were taken in a very peaceful _____, in which photographers exhibited no aggressive behavior."

extent

dumb

context

apportioned

headlines

attentions

lap

pack

Spears may face prosecution for _____ traffic safety laws. California regulations require children to be _____ in a child-safety seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh 27 kg. A police spokesperson said Ms. Spears would have been fully _____ of the legalities and repercussions of her recklessness. He said a deputy sheriff had already _____ a visit to Spears' Malibu home at the request of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family services, who are _____ up in arms at the irresponsible and "downright dangerous" example set by the singer. They said it is quite _____ to report incidents where a child has been endangered due to a failure to properly _____ them in a car. The matter is now _____ with the LA Police Department.

paid

routine

secured

pending

apparently

violating

restrain

aware

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Britney Spears admits baby driving mistake

Pop singer Britney Spears has hit the headlines for the wrong reasons again, this time for driving her SUV with her four-month-old son _____ on her lap. While she has admitted how reckless and _____ her actions were, she has _____ a considerable amount of blame on the paparazzi. She said the celebrity-obsessed photographers _____ her to the extent that she feels she is constantly escaping their attentions. Ms Spears claimed she instinctively put her son between her and the steering wheel in an attempt to _____ a waiting "pack" of "aggressive" cameramen. The media agency that took the pics _____ her claims, saying: "These pictures were taken in a very peaceful context, in which photographers _____ no aggressive behavior."

Spears may face prosecution for _____ traffic safety laws. California regulations require children to be _____ in a child-safety seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh 27 kg. A police spokesperson said Ms. Spears would have been fully aware of the _____ and repercussions of her recklessness. He said a deputy sheriff had already paid a visit to Spears' Malibu home at the request of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family services, who are _____ up in arms at the irresponsible and "_____ dangerous" example set by the singer. They said it is quite routine to report incidents where a child has been endangered due to a failure to properly _____ them in a car. The matter is now _____ with the LA Police Department.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'matter'** and **'pending'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "CHILD SEAT" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about holidays and sick days.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| • hit | • face |
| • reckless | • aware |
| • amount | • paid |
| • hound | • arms |
| • pack | • downright |
| • peaceful | • pending |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you like Britney Spears?
- c. What do you think of celebrities who break the law?
- d. What are the laws regarding child safety and cars in your country?
- e. Do you think the laws should be stricter?
- f. What punishment do you think Britney Spears should receive?
- g. What punishment should people receive if children are injured or killed because they are not in child seats in an accident?
- h. What do you think of the paparazzi?
- i. Do you think the photographers are to blame in any way in this story?
- j. Do you think celebrities should show more patience with the media?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Would you like to be very famous and be followed by photographers?
- d. Do you think child safety seats are essential every time?
- e. Do you think it is right for stars and celebrities to get preferential treatment under the law?
- f. What other laws would you like to see passed to protect children in cars?
- g. Do you think cars should be automatically fitted with seats to protect children?
- h. Do you think it is becoming safer or more dangerous to drive a car?
- i. Do you think you would have acted similarly if you were Britney Spears?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

CHILD SAFETY: In pairs / groups, think of new laws to make it safer for children to be in cars. Create the penalties for people breaking these laws.

| | LAW | PENALTY |
|---------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Child seats | | |
| Children sitting in the front | | |
| Smoking in a car and children | | |
| Speed and children | | |
| Stickers to warn other drivers | | |
| The number of children in a car | | |
| Seat belts | | |

Change partners / groups. Tell each other your laws and penalties. Give each other feedback on them.

Return to your original partner(s) and share what you heard from your earlier partner(s).

Conduct a class survey to find out what the most common laws and penalties were.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information on previous occasions on which Britney Spears has hit the headlines. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. SURVEY: Conduct your own "child seat" survey among your family and friends. Report your findings to your partner(s) in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. CAR SAFETY: Write an essay on your thoughts about car safety and children. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| a. reckless | foolhardy |
| b. hound | harry |
| c. instinctively | intuitively |
| d. rebutted | repudiated |
| e. exhibited | demonstrated |
| f. violating | flouting |
| g. repercussions | consequences |
| h. up in arms | angry |
| i. downright | thoroughly |
| j. pending | awaiting action |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. hit the headlines | for the wrong reasons again |
| b. she has admitted how reckless | and dumb her actions were |
| c. apportioned a considerable | amount of blame on the paparazzi |
| d. avoid a waiting pack | of aggressive cameramen |
| e. photographers exhibited | no aggressive behavior |
| f. Spears may face prosecution | for violating traffic safety laws |
| g. the legalities and repercussions | of her recklessness |
| h. a deputy sheriff had already paid | a visit to Spears' Malibu home |
| i. up in | arms at... |
| j. The matter is now pending | with the LA Police Department |

GAP FILL:

Britney Spears admits baby driving mistake

Pop singer Britney Spears has hit the **headlines** for the wrong reasons again, this time for driving her SUV with her four-month-old son seated on her **lap**. While she has admitted how reckless and **dumb** her actions were, she has **apportioned** a considerable amount of blame on the paparazzi. She said the celebrity-obsessed photographers hound her to the **extent** that she feels she is constantly escaping their **attentions**. Ms. Spears claimed she instinctively put her son between her and the steering wheel in an attempt to avoid a waiting "**pack**" of "aggressive" cameramen. The media agency that took the pics rebutted her claims, saying: "These pictures were taken in a very peaceful **context**, in which photographers exhibited no aggressive behavior."

Spears may face prosecution for **violating** traffic safety laws. California regulations require children to be **secured** in a child-safety seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh 27 kg. A police spokesperson said Ms. Spears would have been fully **aware** of the legalities and repercussions of her recklessness. He said a deputy sheriff had already **paid** a visit to Spears' Malibu home at the request of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family services, who are **apparently** up in arms at the irresponsible and "downright dangerous" example set by the singer. They said it is quite **routine** to report incidents where a child has been endangered due to a failure to properly **restrain** them in a car. The matter is now **pending** with the LA Police Department.