

Are Roller Coasters Safe?

Zooming down a hill, you feel the wind rushing in your face. Seconds later, you are hanging upside down! You are riding a roller coaster. But are you safe?

New roller coasters are getting bigger, faster, and scarier. Millions of kids and adults take these thrill rides each year. Some **experts**¹ worry that the rides' sudden twists and turns are unsafe.

High-speed coasters whip riders' heads back and forth. One report blamed coasters for 13 brain injuries from 1995 to 2000. Another report says some people have nearly died from coaster-related brain injuries.

A Safety Study

Recently, two scientists set out to learn if coasters really do cause brain injuries. They studied the effects of riding three of the fastest coasters in the United States. The scientists say the coasters' twists and turns are not fast enough to cause brain injuries.

"People take more than 1 billion rides on roller coasters each year. The reports on brain injury are few and not proven," said Douglas Smith. He is one of the scientists who did the new study.

Coasters and Kids

Some experts do not think the new study proves coasters are safe--especially for kids. They say the scientists studied only how coasters affect adults, not kids. They want a new study.

Edward Markey is a government official. Recently, he asked a group of experts to include children in their next study about roller coaster safety. Results from that study will be reported next year. Roller coasters have to be studied to make sure that "riders of all ages" are safe, Markey said.

¹ **expert**: one who has special skill or knowledge gained from training or experience

A Dodgy Call

Should schools ban dodgeball once and for all?

Captains have picked their teams. Gym teachers have passed out the hard rubber balls. Now it is time to play the game that some students love and other students dread.

Of course, we're talking about the game of dodgeball.

Students have played dodgeball in gym for many years. Few people used to think twice about it. Now, dodgeball has come under fire.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education does not support dodgeball. The group thinks the game should not be played in physical education (PE) classes. In recent years, some schools have banned dodgeball because it is too risky. They also think it allows some students to be bullies. Dodgeball has its critics. It also has its fans. Many students think it is fun. Some teachers think it is good exercise for students.

Where do you stand on dodgeball? Read the debate. Then make your call.

Yes! Schools should ban dodgeball.

Dodgeball has caused trouble in PE classes for many years. Schools should ban the game once and for all.

Gym classes are meant to improve the health of students. Dodgeball is a slow game. Most players only step away from thrown balls. Some players hide behind larger players. That does little to help students get fit. Students should play more active games such as basketball and soccer.

In some schools, dodgeball is called killerball. It's a violent game. When thrown hard, the rubber balls can sting. The balls can cause bruises and bad scrapes. Students should not play a game in which something is hurled at their bodies on purpose.

Dodgeball pits the strong against the weak. Bullies openly pick on some students. Sometimes bullies continue to tease other students after the game has ended.

One role of schools is to keep students safe. Playing dodgeball can strike fear into some students.

Dodgeball is a mean and risky game. It has no place in schools.

No! Schools should not ban dodgeball.

Dodgeball is a part of most gym classes. Students have enjoyed playing the game for many years. There is no reason to ban it now.

Dodgeball is good for students. It helps them improve physical skills. It also teaches students about teamwork.

Studies show that young people are not as fit as they should be. But active games like dodgeball help students work up a sweat.

In dodgeball, players make short sprints. They run from thrown balls. Students also run to get loose balls. Throwing the balls helps students build strong arms.

Some people say that dodgeball is risky. All PE games and sports have risks. Dodgeball is no different. Still, it has become safer. Many schools make students wear eye gear and use soft foam balls.

Teachers make sure that students play dodgeball fairly. They also keep an eye out for bullies who might try to spoil the game. Rough players are often taken out of games.

Dodgeball is a fun game that is a good activity for students. Schools should continue to let students play dodgeball.

Should School Be Year-Round?

Many students say that June is the best time of year. In most places, school lets out as summer begins. Some students don't spend summers at home or at camp, though. They are in school instead. That is because they go to year-round schools.

Students in some year-round schools go to school the same number of days as students in schools with a long summer break. They get mini-breaks throughout the year instead of one long summer vacation. The mini-breaks are a few weeks long. For example, students at some year-round schools get a few weeks off at Thanksgiving instead of just a few days.

More and more schools are becoming year-round places of learning. The National Association for Year-Round Education states that the number of students in year-round schools tripled from 1990 to 2000. By 2001, there were about 3,000 year-round schools.

Is your school year-round? If not, would you want it to be? Read the arguments that follow.

Yes, Schools Should Be Year-Round

Year-round schools are better than schools with a long summer break. Students in year-round schools have more breaks. They get to enjoy time off in every season.

Year-round schools allow families to plan vacations at times other than summer. Students in year-round schools are less likely to have to miss school for a trip that isn't in the summer.

Frequent breaks are good for students. They have less stress when they go back to school after a short break. They become more eager to learn. One student said, "I love it. Just about the time I'm really tired, I get a break."

Breaks also give teachers time to plan better lessons. Teachers in schools with a long summer break are so busy teaching that they have less time to plan lessons for their classes. Students in year-round schools tend to remember what they learn. That is because their breaks aren't too long. Teachers don't have to spend time going over things that students have forgotten over the summer. All schools should be year-round.

No, Schools Should Not Be Year-Round

Year-round schools are a bad idea. Summer is a great season. Students should be able to enjoy their summers fully.

Most families plan vacations over the summer. Year-round schools restrict summer family vacations. They also don't allow students to go away to camp or take on summer jobs to earn money for the future.

Too many breaks disrupt learning. The breaks allow teachers to focus on a topic for only a few weeks. During mini-breaks, students are away from school long enough to forget what they learned.

In schools with a long summer break, lessons are not broken up by frequent breaks. Teachers can spend more time on one topic. Teachers also don't have to plan around as many breaks. Summer can also be very hot. Many schools don't have air conditioning. How can students learn in a hot classroom?

Christopher Newland, a researcher at Auburn University, said that year-round schools do not help students learn. Newland said, "The evidence is that it would be as useful as changing the color of the school buses."

Schools with a long summer break work just fine. There is no need to change to year-round schools.

A Day in the Life of a Veterinary Technician

A fluffy black-and-white cat greets patients and visitors at the Chippens Hill Veterinary Hospital in Bristol, Conn. The cat lives at the hospital, as do two other cats, a pair of cockatiels, a milk snake, a bearded dragon (a type of lizard), and a three-and-a-half-foot-long, 7-pound green iguana.

Chippens Hill is a warm, welcoming place for animals to live, to be cared for, to heal, and, yes, sometimes to die.

In the hospital's examination room, Danielle Pratt is reassuring a nervous patient whose anxiety is causing long strings of drool to fall from her mouth. Pratt, 32, is a veterinary technician at Chippens Hill. The patient, Clara, is a big cuddly-looking long-haired white cat who is too overweight—and reportedly too lazy—to clean herself properly. She is in the animal hospital today to have her matted fur shaved and to get her yearly rabies shot. She is not happy about this prospect, so Pratt speaks to her in reassuring tones. Clara will be sedated throughout the procedure—both for her safety and for Pratt's safety. Shaving an angry, anxious cat is a nearly impossible task. Clara continues to drool in dreaded anticipation.

A voice from the next room calls out, "Danielle! Your patient is upside down and drowning!" Pratt investigates and finds that Turtle, a small tortoise in her care, is upside down in his container. Pratt rights him and explains that Turtle arrived at the hospital full of parasites and not eating. "He still won't eat on his own," she says. "Turtles can take a while to get better. We're trying to give him a chance." For now, she feeds Turtle through a feeding tube.

The animal hospital is busy, and Pratt will be working hard all day long. This day's appointment schedule includes neutering a young cat, examining a boa constrictor that's not eating, and trimming a chinchilla's teeth. Pratt will assist with the surgical procedures and perform several procedures herself, including drawing blood from each patient. "The only time you're sitting is at lunch," she says. "This is not a lazy person's job."

For now, though, Pratt's attention is on Clara, who is meowing in protest as she is poured out of her carrier and placed on the examination table. Before carrying her to the scale, Pratt wraps the cat in a towel, one of the many self-protective measures a vet tech must take every day. So far, Pratt has