

Age Limits

**A. As you read the article linked below, look for the answer to the following question:
*Why did the U.S. government change the minimum age for smoking?***

Age limit now 21 across US for cigarettes, tobacco products

Anyone under 21 can no longer legally buy cigarettes, cigars or any other tobacco products in the U.S.

The new law enacted last week by Congress also applies to electronic cigarettes and vaping products that heat a liquid containing nicotine.

The provision raising the legal limit from 18 to 21 nationwide was in a massive spending bill passed by Congress and signed by the president on Dec. 20. About one-third of states already had their own laws restricting tobacco sales to people 21 and older.



“This is a major step in protecting the next generation of children from becoming addicted to tobacco products,” new FDA commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn tweeted last week.

Usually, new legislation doesn’t take effect right away. The change simply increased the age limit in existing law, so it was able to go into effect immediately, a spokesman for the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.

The agency has regulated tobacco products since 2009. It enforces the law partly through spot checks. Stores can be fined or barred from selling tobacco for repeat violations.

Anti-smoking advocates said the higher age limit should make it more difficult for young people to get tobacco, particularly high school students who had friends or classmates over 18 buy for them.

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From: <https://apnews.com/article/1d57bfaacfb8844106bbabca7ac849a6>

B. Answer the following discussion questions in partners.

1. What is the minimum smoking age in your country?
2. Do you agree with the U.S. government's decision? Why or why not?
3. Do you know anyone who is a smoker? Or do you smoke? When did they/you start?
4. If you could choose the minimum age for smoking in your country, what would you choose and why?

C. Match the vocabulary from the article with the definitions or synonyms.

1. vaping	A. passed, started
2. nicotine	B. proposal
3. enacted	C. using e-cigarettes
4. bill	D. charged
5. legislation	E. stopped, banned
6. regulated	F. stimulant drug (found in tobacco)
7. enforces	G. law-making
8. fined	H. controlled
9. barred	I. prosecutes, applies

D. Answer the following questions with a partner using the vocabulary you have just learned.

1. Is vaping common where you live? Why or why not?
2. What's the most recent law your government has enacted? What's your opinion of the law?
3. Aside from the tobacco industry, what other big industries are regulated by the government?
4. What are some common ways that governments enforce their laws?
5. Have you ever been fined? What happened?
6. Do you think stores that sell cigarettes to minors should be barred from doing business? Why or why not?

E. Next, in partners, look at the table below and together decide the appropriate minimum age for each of these activities. Discuss why you think those ages are appropriate, and write down the age next to each topic. (For example, “I think you should have to be 21 to join the army because...”)

Smoke	Quit school	A tattoo
Drink	Join the army	A piercing
Use other drugs	Drive	Live alone
Buy sweets	Marriage	Vote
Use social media	Work	Be considered an adult

F. Now switch partners. With your new partner, compare the ages you chose for the table above. Explain why you chose those ages. If you want to change any of the ages you wrote down, you can do that now.

G. Talk with your partner about how you think these minimum ages should be enforced or encouraged (e.g. fines, community service, barring businesses that break the law, etc.).

H. Read the following interesting minimum age regulations from around the world and explain to your partner whether you agree or disagree with these laws.

1. In Oaxaca and Tabasco, two states in the country of Mexico, the minimum age to buy sugary foods and drinks is 18 years old.
2. Although it wasn't enacted, some politicians in the U.S. state of Hawaii tried to pass a law that would make the minimum smoking age 100.
3. In some U.S. states first cousins are allowed to marry but only if they are both over the age of 65.
4. Children under the age of 13 are not legally allowed to use Facebook.
5. In some provinces in Spain you can get a tattoo at the age of 14 as long as you have a signed form of consent from a parent.

I. Finally, a common English idiom is that “Age is just a number.” What does that idiom mean? Do you agree with that idiom? In what situations? Discuss your ideas with your partner.