



# GUIDELINES FOR BETTER LEGAL WORKSHOPS: BEST PRACTICES FOR PLE PRESENTATIONS

## PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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### SPEAKERS

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#### OJEN's Guidelines for Better Legal Workshops

[www.ojen.ca/en/training/facilitator-training/guidelines-for-better-legal-workshops](http://www.ojen.ca/en/training/facilitator-training/guidelines-for-better-legal-workshops)

## PLANNING YOUR WORKSHOP

1. Work with a community partner. They can help you get to know your audience (eg. age range, language levels, common legal problems), use relevant examples and anecdotes, and connect with your audience.
2. Understand your audience. Know their level of understanding of the topic and consider their gender, race, class, age, ability, religion, gender, geographic location, and other demographics to form a community referenced approach when providing your legal information workshop. Note – if your audience is under 18, be aware of your duty to report cases of abuse and neglect, and consider privacy issues around youth disclosure of a criminal record.
3. Use external resources when possible. Turn to subject matter experts and special interest groups to see if they have existing materials in plain language on your legal topic. (eg. workshop materials, fact sheets, [glossaries](#), FAQs, [resource libraries](#), teacher's guides, community workers, etc.) These experts will have adapted their resources to the specific needs of their target audiences.
4. Begin building your workshop by outlining your goals. What are the 3-5 concepts or ideas you want the participants to take away from your workshop?
5. Keep things simple. Draft a workshop outline that covers the legal content and workshop activities you plan to use. Be realistic about what you can achieve and

establish reasonable time limits. Tip – talk to a community partner about what you have planned to make sure your content is relevant and appropriate for your audience.

6. Start with a five-minute “hook.” A good hook quickly engages your audience and helps you gauge their knowledge and interest about the topic. (eg. polls - Kahoot, Mentimeter, brief scenarios, etc.)
7. Use slides and visual aids, but avoid being text-heavy – this will make it difficult for your audience to follow along. Consider using common or plain words, clean designs, white space, left text alignment, simple font, and graphic elements like boxes and charts.
8. Avoid lecture-style presentations about the law. Let your audience apply the information you are presenting. Consider using short scenarios, a mock interview, question and answer, or filling out forms (eg. LTB form) to engage them throughout the workshop.
9. Acknowledge that sometimes the law may be complicated and differ from real world situations (eg. police encounters, confronting an employer, family disputes, etc). Be realistic about parts of the legal system that can be frustrating for the public and be sensitive to your audience’s resources (eg. money, power, and risk).

## **RUNNING YOUR WORKSHOP**

1. Remember to introduce yourself and your role. Keep your personal introduction simple and short. If you want to provide more detailed information, hand out a pamphlet or direct them to your website.
2. Make your role in the workshop clear. Explain to your audience the difference between legal information and legal advice, and make sure they understand the capacity of the information being presented.

3. Use clear and simple language. Consider using shorter sentences and the present tense. Don't forget to be consistent (eg. don't alternate between "prenup", "prenuptial agreement", and "marriage contract"). Mind your acronyms and avoid phrasal verbs as well.
4. Watch for signs that would suggest your audience is confused or tuned out. By slowing your pace, making your topic transitions clear, and clarifying the relationship between ideas, your audience will be better at being able to follow and engage.
5. Consider giving your audience an agenda and a glossary at the start of your workshop. By defining legal terms and sharing the workshop schedule, your audience will feel empowered and engaged.
6. Be a good host by being arriving prepared, by managing your time carefully, and by offering your audience food and breaks for longer sessions.

## **WRAPPING UP YOUR WORKSHOP**

1. Connect your audience with free or low-cost legal services. Most people don't know where to begin looking for a lawyer and many can't afford one, so be prepared to offer those services.
2. Be ready to offer the names and contact information of the relevant local legal clinics, public services, advocacy groups, community groups, or other relevant organizations that may be helpful to your audience. Tip – find out if the referral organization has demographic guidelines, income cut-offs, or geographic boundaries before you refer them.
3. Ensure to include all of your referral information and resources in a takeaway document (eg. a pamphlet, a handout, etc.) to offer your audience at the end of the workshop.

4. Consider giving your audience a few broad sources of reliable legal information on your topic (eg. [StepstoJustice](#) or the [Ontario Legal Information Centre](#)), a link to a legal aid in their province for free legal help (eg. [Legal Aid Ontario](#), [Pro bono Ontario](#)), a few sources of reliable legal information, at least one source of reduced-cost legal help (eg. [JusticeNet](#)), and a few local sources of relevant help that may not be strictly legal in nature (eg. [Workers' Action Centre](#), [Migrant Workers' Alliance](#)).
  
5. Evaluate your workshop. Evaluation data provides an understanding into whether, why, and how programs achieve their goals. If possible, hire an external evaluator. If that's outside your budget, consider weaving evaluation questions, standards, and considerations into your workshop process for the greatest possible impact on your target audience.