

Addressing the access to justice gap: A teacher's guide to OJEN's Apps for Justice Challenge

Welcome to OJEN's Apps for Justice Challenge! Now in its third year, and run in partnership with the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law, this program is a creative, collaborative way to explore access to justice (A2J) issues, as well as fundamental legal concepts and areas of law, through the lens of technology.

The challenge is a multi-session, in-class program for Ontario high school students. Each session lasts approximately one hour, although we have suggested ideas for extension activities if you have more time or additional periods to devote to it.

Day One <i>optional</i>	What is "access to justice"? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students play OJEN's A2J Game and reflect on the barriers people face when dealing with legal problems.• <i>If you have already played the A2J Game in your classroom this year, feel free to skip ahead to Day Two.</i>
Day Two	Using technology to fill gaps in access to justice <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students consider existing A2J technology and explore its functions.
Day Three	Introducing the Challenge problem & design thinking basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students review the Challenge problem/scenario and form groups to tackle a specific legal issue and brainstorm how technology could help.
Day Four	Developing the poster and pitch <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students work in small groups/teams to design an app that addresses one of the access to justice problems introduced in the scenario. They create a poster or presentation that introduces their app.
Day Five	In-class feedback forum: showing & sharing with classmates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student teams take turns presenting their ideas in five-minute pitches and classmates ask questions and share their feedback.

New this year: in order to increase accessibility and flexibility in the running of the program, classrooms will have the opportunity to submit either their winning app proposal or, should they so desire, a selection of the app ideas that students came up with. All submissions will be reviewed by a panel of OJENers and reps from the University of Ottawa and feedback will be provided. Additionally, one winner will be selected, awarding creativity, innovation and addressing a pressing access to justice issue.

Expansion Modules: Alternative assigned readings/student handouts. If you have more time, or if you want to broaden the material assigned to the students, these additional modules contain external links and readings about the law, which provides a range of resources for further learning.

Day One	<p>Module 1: <i>What is Access to Justice?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 3 in Expansion Modules • Introduces students to the concept of access to justice by defining a legal problem and exploring barriers that prevent people from getting help for their legal problems.
Day Two	<p>Module 2: <i>Access to Justice & Technology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 11 in Expansion Modules • Students brainstorm ideas for their own apps to address access to justice after learning about the benefits and risks of using technology to address access to justice needs.
Day Three	<p>Module 3: <i>Access to Justice App Design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 17 in Expansion Modules • Students learn about how to apply a “human-centered” design approach to their own access to justice apps.
Day Four	<p>Module 4: <i>Legal App Design and Presentation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 23 in Expansion Modules • Students develop persuasive writing and speaking skills while they prepare posters and presentations outlining their app design.
Day Five	<p>Module 5: <i>Giving Feedback</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 31 in Expansion Modules • Each student group pitches their app idea to the class with a goal of persuading the class that their app technology will help users address access to justice issues.

Day 1 What is “access to justice”?

Suggested time: 1 class period (60 min)

- 20 min: Introduce the concept of “access to justice”
- 20 min: Play OJEN's Access to Justice (A2J) game
- 20 min: Debrief and discuss

Materials:

- OJEN's Access to Justice Game
 - ✓ [Digital version](https://ojen.ca/accesstojusticegame/)
 - ✓ [Teacher's Guide](https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-to-justice-online-game-teacher-guide/)
 - ✓ [Student worksheet](https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-to-justice-online-game-student-worksheet)
- Students will need access to phones, tablets or computers if they are going to navigate the game in pairs or in groups. Alternatively, you can use a projector or smart board to navigate the game on one device as a class.

What is access to justice? 20 minutes

- Introduce the concept of “access to justice” using **pages 3-6** of the [Teacher's Guide](#). This student handout provides a good introduction to the access to justice problem in Canada.
- Use the **Q & A class discussion activity** on **page 7** of the [Teacher's Guide](#) to review the issues before playing the game.

The Access to Justice (A2J) Game 20 minutes

- OJEN's Access to Justice Game puts students in the shoes of someone who struggles with resolving a legal problem. It also draws students' attention to three of the most common legal problems faced by Canadians: employment, housing and family law disputes.
- Ensure each student has access to the game, or project it at the front of the class.

- Explain how it works:
 - This is a game about getting legal help in Ontario. You will play as one of three people:
 - JEAN (family law)
 - JAMIE (employment law)
 - DALLAS (housing law).
 - Your goal is to get help and get your legal issue resolved or heard by the court (or the Landlord & Tenant Board, for Dallas).
 - To do that, you will be able to visit different buildings and services to get information or help. Visiting one will advance the story.
 - You can go anywhere, in any order, and you can visit the same place more than once.
 - You may also have things happen to your character that open up new options or change how much money you have.
 - Remember to read carefully and keep an eye on how much money you have (it's listed at the top of the screen).
- Give students 20 minutes to play the game. You can assign the [student worksheet](#) so that they can track their progress (or lack of). They may do a second scenario if they finish early.

Debrief and discuss 20 minutes

- After 20 minutes of playing the game, bring the class back for a group discussion.
- **Discussion questions:**
 - Were you successful? How did you make it through the game?
 - How did it feel? Was it frustrating? Confusing?
 - ✓ The constraints in the game reflect real-world limits, like who can help with what, income cut-offs, and so on.
 - Do you think your character is going to win their case in the end? Will they be happy with the outcome? Share the following with the group:
 - ✓ If Dallas didn't pay back their landlord, they will probably still be evicted.
 - ✓ Jamie won't get his job back. He may get his money back in a few months, if he wins.
 - What are some other factors that could make it even harder for real people to get legal help?
 - ✓ Lack of transportation/mobility (especially in rural areas)
 - ✓ Work schedules (most offices are only open 9-5)
 - ✓ Having children or doing elder care
 - ✓ Language or literacy barriers
 - ✓ Comfort with technology
 - What happens to society if people can't actually enforce their legal rights in housing, employment, or family law?
 - What would have helped your character?
 - What could we do about this situation?

Possible modifications or extension activities:

- If you have more time, you can run the **in-person role-play version** of OJEN's A2J game.
 - ✓ [In-person role-play version of the A2J Game](https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-justice-game)
<https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-justice-game>
 - ✓ [Teacher's Guide](https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-justice-game-facilitators-guide-teachers)
<https://ojen.ca/en/download/access-justice-game-facilitators-guide-teachers>
- If you have less time, consider assigning the digital version of the A2J game as homework, and skip to Day 2 of this program.
- Optional additional reading:
[Module 1: What is Access to Justice? in the Expansion Modules, page 3.](#)

Day 2 Using technology to fill gaps in access to justice

Suggested time: 1 class period (60 min)

- 20 min: Scenario 1 (Two's a crowd) discussion
- 30 min: Introduce A2J technology & explore its functions
- 10 min: Scenario 2 (The price of convenience) introduction

Materials:

- [Scenario 1: Two's a crowd](#)
 - <https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-scenario-1/>
- [Scenario 2: The price of convenience](#)
 - <https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-scenario-2/>
- Optional additional reading:
 - [Module 2: Access to Justice & Technology](#)
 - Expansion Modules page 11

Two's a crowd: a scenario-based class discussion 20 minutes

- Distribute **Scenario 1: Two's a crowd** to the students.
- Use **Scenario 1** to illustrate access to justice barriers and encourage students to brainstorm possible solutions.
 - The scenario focuses on one individual (Jordan) with a particular legal problem.
 - They are close in age to the students participating in this challenge.
 - Although Jordan is a young individual, their specific issue may not be one that your students have experienced, and that is where perspective-taking, empathy, imagination and creativity come into play.
- You can use the following questions as discussion prompts for your students as they explore the issues in this scenario.

Questions	Answers
<p>Should Jordan have the right to demand timely repairs for essential services, and what legal obligations does Mr. Carter have to address these issues?</p>	<p>Yes, under Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), landlords are required to maintain rental units in a good state of repair and ensure all essential services (such as water, heat, and electricity) are functioning properly. Mr. Carter must promptly address the leak and the heating issue. If he fails to do so, Jordan can file a complaint with the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) or report the issue to local municipal authorities.</p>
<p>What steps can Jordan take to protect their right to privacy and resolve the issue of unannounced landlord visits?</p>	<p>The RTA states that landlords must provide at least 24 hours' written notice before entering a tenant's unit, except in cases of emergency. Mr. Carter's unannounced visits are illegal. Jordan should document each instance, remind Mr. Carter of the law in writing, and, if the behavior continues, file a complaint with the LTB or seek legal assistance.</p>
<p>How can Jordan document and escalate unresolved issues to seek remedies if necessary? Can Jordan withhold their rent or withhold the amount spent on the extra costs due to the landlord's neglectful behavior?</p>	<p>Jordan can visit the official Landlord and Tenant Board website for information on filing complaints and tenant rights. Legal Aid Ontario (https://www.legalaid.on.ca/) and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario offer guidance and legal support for tenants facing housing issues.</p>
<p>What resource can help Jordan understand how the Landlord Tenant Board works and the process he needs to take to address the landlord's neglect effectively?</p>	<p>Steps to Justice has a great section on Housing Law generally and the Landlord Tenant Board specifically (including guided pathways to help with filling out forms).</p>
<p>How can technology help solve Jordan's problems in this situation?</p>	<p>Students may draw inspiration from the following already existing tools (but do note jurisdictional differences):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "RentSafeTO" (or similar property standards apps) to report housing violations to local authorities, ensuring quicker inspections and responses • Tenants' rights apps to quickly access legal information, helping Jordan understand their rights

	<p>and available courses of action when facing landlord disputes (i.e., “JustFix” in New York)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home repair requests and organizational apps (i.e., “My Landlord”, “Centriq”) • Home security apps for video recording unexpected visits by landlords to provide proof of violations that can be used in legal complaints (i.e., SmartHome), but do keep in mind privacy concerns (see recent reporting on the issue).
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A2J technology & exploring its functions

30 minutes

- We recommend using **Module 2:** pages 11-16 of the Expansion Modules to teach this section.
- You can distribute all or part of this appendix to the students.
- Make sure to spend some time reviewing **pages 13-14** of the resource, which explain the various **functions of A2J technology**. Students will want to keep this in mind when they design their own apps.
- Review the **benefits** and **risks** of A2J technology on **pages 14-16** of the resource as well.
- An interesting way to explore apps could include a class discussion about what apps students like. Why do they like these apps? Are there specific functions or features that make them desirable?

The price of convenience: introduction to the challenge problem

10 minutes

- **Scenario 2: The price of convenience** is the main problem that we will use for this Challenge.
- Distribute the scenario and guide to the students and review the problem together
- The next class will focus on exploring the problem, the areas of law that it engages, and the specific hurdles and barriers that Jordan faces.

Day 3 Introducing the challenge problem & design-thinking basics

Suggested time: 1 class period (60 min)

- 20 min: Scenario 2 (The price of convenience) scenario and backgrounder review and discussion
- 30 min: 4 corners activity and worksheet
- 10 min: Group share-back

Materials:

- [Scenario 2: The price of convenience](#)
 - <https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-scenario-2/>
- [Scenario 2: Four corners worksheet](#)
 - <https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-four-corners-worksheet/>
- Optional additional reading:
 - ✓ [Module 3: Access to Justice App Design](#)
Expansion Modules page 17

The price of convenience: a scenario-based class discussion

20 minutes

- The **scenario and background guide** for this scenario provide in-depth information about the access to justice barriers in this fact pattern as well as the relevant areas of law.
 - You will receive an additional teacher's backgrounder via email from OJEN staff.
- The questions below can serve as a starting point for discussion on Jordan's situation.
 - What areas of law, legal issues are engaged by Jordan's situation at work?
 - What are the A2J barriers present in this situation?
 - What is the negative impact on Jordan and their network?

Four corners activity

30 minutes

- Ask students to congregate in a part of the classroom according to each area of law:
 - Workers' rights
 - Collective bargaining
 - Human rights and discrimination
 - Artificial intelligence in the workplace
- They should choose a corner based on their interest in working on an app that falls within this area of law. Students in each corner then become partners or small group members (no more than four people per group).

- Explain, after grouping and before they begin the [worksheet](#), the value of brainstorming and not being too critical at the earliest stages of design. There are “no bad ideas” at this stage; creativity and openness are the priority.
- Students should begin the worksheet, answering the questions below. (They should not necessarily expect to finish the entire worksheet in 30 minutes.)
- Make sure that each group will have somebody who will be able to share their discussion with the larger group after the 4 corners activity.
- If you feel that students would be happier to choose their partners before choosing an area of law to focus on, you can go straight to the grouping part of the activity. The students will choose their groups first, then, as a group, choose an area of law to focus on, before proceeding with the activity. Additionally, there can be more than one group per area of law/not all of the areas need to be covered by a group.

Questions to consider in groups:

1. What A2J problem(s) is Jordan experiencing in your chosen area of law?
2. Who else experiences this problem (i.e. who are your target users)?
3. How can technology help to solve these problems, and what are some tools and resources already out there that can help?
 - Here, teachers can encourage students, in their formed groups, to explore [Steps to Justice](#) and other given resources in the specific targeted area of law.
4. What kind of app may alleviate Jordan’s stress and confusion (and others’ like them)?
 - The app is to focus on combating one specific area or hurdle that the person in the scenario is facing. There can be some overlap, but it should be clear which area of law the app is addressing.
5. What are your hopes for the app? What are the predicted obstacles to making these hopes a reality?
6. What is your app’s name? How does it relate to its content and function?
7. How will you promote and spread the word about it?

Sharing some of our initial ideas

10 minutes

- Ask students to return from their small groups and share their work
- What is their app’s primary function? (The name and other details can come later if students weren’t able to get to them.)
- Note any similarities that happened between different small groups.
- Did the various groups come to similar or different conclusions about the limits or benefits of creating an A2J app?

Possible modifications or extension activities:

- If you would like to give your students an introduction to the concept of designing thinking, try this short 10-minute video:
 - ✓ [What is Designing Thinking? An Overview](#)

Day 4 Developing the poster and pitch

Suggested time: 1 class period (60 min)

- 10 min: What are the elements of poster design?
- 50 min: Design your legal app poster (group work)

Materials:

- **App Design and Presentation**
 - ✓ **Module 4: Legal App Design & Presentation**
Expansion Modules, page 23

What are the elements of poster design?

10 minutes

Once preliminary ideas about each group or pairing's app have been decided, students can think about how their app will look. If students are comfortable using and have access to online or electronic design tools, they may present the app through a digital mockup, using PowerPoint for slideshow presentations, or **Canva** to make prototypes directly on the web app. Alternatively, students may wish to use poster boards or collages. The principles laid out below apply to all formats.

- Start by sharing the elements of the poster design:
 1. Name of their app
 2. A drawing or sketch of their app's logo
 3. A drawing or sketch of the home screen of their app
 4. What problem their app will solve
 5. How their app will solve this problem
 6. Who the app's target users are
- Teachers can share tips for effective presentation design from **Module 4: Legal App Design & Presentation** (Expansion Modules, page 23) as well as sample posters on pages 29 and 30.
 - Tips to help students design their posters
 - Choose an organized structure
 - Use short, simple headings
 - Don't include too much information
 - Don't overcrowd the poster
 - Use colour and images where appropriate
 - Include citations

Design your legal app poster/presentation **50 minutes**

- Ask students to start designing their posters or slides in their pairs or groups.
- If students haven't solidified details of their apps, that's okay. Either they can take some time at the beginning of this section to finish discussing, or they can work through it as part of the design process. What the app will look like is closely related to what it will do, so addressing some aspects of their app through the design planning may be a helpful exercise.
- Students have until the end of this session to work on their poster, and will present their idea to the group in the next session.
- The students should aim to include a wireframe or screenshot of what the homepage will look like, and *at least two other pages* to demonstrate functionality.
- You have the option of either asking your students to think about their pitch as they are designing their poster or assigning the pitch as a take-home assignment. The latter is recommended in order to not rush things.
 - Pages 25 to 27 of **Module 4** will help students prepare for the presentation.

Day 5 In-class feedback forum: sharing & showing with classmates

Suggested time: 1 class period (60 min)

- 50 min: Pitch your app
- 10 min: Votes

Materials:

- [Student feedback forum](https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-feedback-forum/)
 - <https://ojen.ca/en/download/afj-2025-feedback-forum/>
- Optional additional reading:
 - ✓ **Module 5: Giving Feedback**
 - ✓ Expansion Modules pages 31 to 33

Pitch your app & class feedback forum 50 minutes

- Each group will have approximately 5 minutes to make their pitch to the class. All group members should have an opportunity to speak.
- This activity is an opportunity for students to share their ideas for an app. While this is an exercise in presentation skills and effective communication, equally important is the learning and practicing around giving constructive feedback.
- Students should be encouraged to develop and share their thoughts about their classmates' ideas for an app.
 - The student feedback forum handout that we've provided is one way to do this, but if you prefer to set up your own feedback system, you may wish to draw on pages 31 to 33 of Expansion Module 5.
 - Students can raise their hands and share feedback individually, or you could assign groups responsibility for providing feedback to each other (e.g. group 1 provides feedback to group 2 and vice versa).
- The feedback criteria is included in the [student feedback forum handout](#).
- When providing feedback, students should start with one thing they liked about the presentation and/or app idea (i.e., a strength) and then offer something for the presenting group to consider (i.e., constructive criticism).
 - The phrasing of the constructive criticism is worth explicitly stating. Presenting that type of feedback as a question is more inviting and open than offering criticism. For example, students providing feedback can ask themselves "is there something that the presenting group can improve upon?", and subsequently provide feedback based on this question.

Vote for your favourite app (optional)

10 minutes

If your class would like to participate in the optional last stage of the challenge, you will have the students vote on their favourite app to determine a representative/winner. All students should be given the opportunity to vote for the app idea that most **effectively** and **creatively** addresses the A2J problem from the scenario. Voting can be done through a secret ballot. We suggest that students can vote for any idea but their own. Should time permit, students could be given space on their ballot to tell each group something they like and a question for the group to think further about. Should you not want to use a secret ballot to choose a winner, feel free to use any other evaluation system to pick the winner that you think is best suited for your class.

Alternatively, should you not want to limit your submission to simply one winner, you could present the option to have any or all ideas submitted for feedback.

Preparing the idea for submission and feedback (optional)

The final presentation should take the form of a slide show, other digital presentation or photos of paper and poster board. On the digital front, PowerPoint is a good option for creating slideshows, and Canva is a free online alternative.

The student group(a) who were selected by their classmates will incorporate the feedback they received in class on Day 5 to hone their idea before submitting for the final stage.

Ideas submitted to OJEN will be considered by OJENers and representatives from the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law. Feedback will be given for all ideas and a winner will be announced.