



LIFE – Legal Information for Everyone | A PLE Toolbox

Resources for lawyers and paralegals delivering Public Legal Education in Ontario

Sample Session Plan

What should a session plan include?

- 1. Start with a hook** – A hook is a teaching technique that is used to turn the audience's mind toward the subject of the lesson, assess the existing knowledge of the audience and/or stimulate interest in the subject. A hook is a wonderful way to engage the audience in your session right from the start. Start the session by introducing yourself briefly (more detailed bios can be handed out or projected on an overhead) and launch right into the hook. Examples of possible hooks are.
 - Providing interesting statistics (e.g. the majority of Small Claims Court cases are about "x")
 - Asking the audience a question (e.g. raise your hand if you have a will)
 - Getting audience members to talk to each other (e.g. turn to the person next to you and share when you were last a landlord or a tenant)
- 2. Determine the content** – Think about what legal information you want to cover and at what level of detail. How much time will you spend on each concept? How will you deliver the information? As part of determining the content you will also want to :
 - Determine the take-away. This is the most important thing you would like the audience to learn from your session. This is the key message of your session, ideally a practical tip. Example: after accepting a new job be sure to get a copy of the employment contract.
 - Identify any technical or legal terms that will likely come up and be prepared to explain them. Preparing a glossary in advance will help ensure you cover all difficult terms and do not lose any audience members along the way. Check the following websites for comprehensive plain language glossaries to reference:
 - OJEN's website: www.ojen.ca
 - Websites for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Aid Ontario
 - Create an outline with realistic timelines.
 - Make sure to give the audience an opportunity, early in the session, to interact, either with you or with each other. A lengthy lecture followed by a

question period is not an effective way to receive and absorb new information.

- Think about presenting your information using a variety of methods. Including visual aids like props (e.g. court forms, court robes, photographs), PowerPoint presentations, video and YouTube clips or other forms of social media like Twitter and Facebook will appeal to different kinds of learners and will keep your audience engaged.

3. Incorporate activities – For an hour-long session plan to incorporate 1-2 short activities to break up the lecture-style format, maintain the audience's interest and bring legal concepts to life. Anticipate all of the dynamics, logistics and materials you will need to make the activity run successfully (e.g. how will roles be chosen, how big will groups be, where will groups convene). Possible activities include:

- **Ask the audience a question:** give everyone a moment to think about their answers independently, and then have them turn to the person beside them and share their thoughts.
- **Role play:** prepare a short scripted play based on a relevant scenario, assign roles to audience members to act out; or present a scenario involving a legal dispute and have the audience members play the judge and determine the appropriate outcome. www.ojen.ca has educational scenarios on most areas of law, available for free download.
- **Debate:** provide a scenario involving a legal dispute, divide the audience into opposing groups and have them debate the potential perspectives.

4. Consolidation and wrap-up – At the end of the session, leave time for two steps: **1)** providing time for the audience to ask questions (at least 15 minutes); and **2)** evaluating what the audience has learned. There are several ways to evaluate learning (and the effectiveness of your presentation style). You can use the following options:

- Prepare and distribute a survey to the audience, either in hard copy at the session or electronically using a service like Fluid Survey or SurveyMonkey after the session.
- Have all audience members write down and submit to you one thing that they learned during your session.
- Ask a few “yes or no” questions to the audience about material you covered during the session and have the audience members give their answers by raising their hands.

Template

(Based on a one-hour PLE session)

Topic/Session Title: _____

Hook (5 minutes): _____

Substantive content (25 minutes): _____

Activities (15 minutes): _____

Consolidation and wrap-up (15-20 minutes): _____

Other things to keep in mind:

- Check in regularly with the audience to make sure that they understand what you have covered so far including technical terminology.
- Provide a short plain-language summary of the area of law (available on www.yourlegalrights.ca) and/or additional resources about the topic for the audience to take away.
- Bring a list of local legal clinics and the Law Society Referral Service in order to make effective referrals.