
Legal Life Skills Facilitation Strategies

Street Law's Legal Life Skills curriculum aims to include thorough, detailed lessons for teaching practical legal education to participants. While some lesson facilitators find they can use the lesson plan as written, other facilitators find that they need to make lesson modifications to suit their time allotment, their audience, or their method of delivery. This document provides suggested facilitation strategies should a lesson need to be modified.



Suggestions for Modifying Lesson Timing

All Legal Life Skills lessons are written as 60-minute lessons; however, some facilitators need to teach a single lesson over multiple sessions, either because they do not have 60 minutes with their participants, or because they think the lesson will take longer than 60 minutes.

Generally speaking, the best way to modify lesson timing is for the facilitator(s) to review the full lesson ahead of time during the preparation session to determine the best place to stop and how to restart the lesson the next time the group convenes. The best stopping point for each lesson will be different. If there are multiple facilitators, it is important to confer with the previous (or next) facilitator to share information about the lesson and the stopping points from the previous session.

Further advice for modifying lesson timing:

- Use the agenda to determine a stopping point between lesson segments. For example, if I have 30 minutes with my participants and I am teaching the “Banking Basics” lesson, I can teach the first two lesson segments in 20 minutes according to the lesson plan. To fill out that additional 10 minutes, I could extend the discussion with students or start to share key information from the next lesson segment.
- If you split a lesson across multiple sessions, do not assume participants will remember everything from the first part of the lesson as they begin the second part of the lesson on another day. Build in some additional time to review what was covered in the first part. Give participants the opportunity to recall what they know, rather than summarizing it yourself. As always, correct any misinformation.
- **Word of wisdom:** It is better for participants to have deep, applicable knowledge from a lesson rather than rush through a lesson and jeopardize their understanding of it.



Participant Engagement Strategies

- **Strive for Full Participation:** The goal of teaching any Legal Life Skills lesson is for all participants to be able to apply new learning to their own lives. Participation is key to this happening. Full participation, though, can be challenging. People learn in different ways. The following facilitation strategies can be used to increase lesson engagement:
 - **Wait Time** is a strategy that gives students independent silent time to think before responding to questions. It is “thinking time.” After the facilitator asks a question, pause to give participants a chance to think about the answer. It can be tempting to call on the first person who raises their hand; however, waiting a short period of time will give more participants the opportunity to think through their own answers. ([Learn more in the Facilitator Tips video.](#))

- **Check for Understanding** by asking questions that will allow the facilitator to assess whether participants know the information needed to move on in the lesson. The facilitator could check for understanding to make sure that participants are clear about directions for an activity, or the facilitator could check for understanding to make sure that participants know difficult content. ([Learn more in the Facilitator Tips video.](#))
- **Inquiry** is when facilitators incorporate thoughtful questions throughout the course of a lesson. Many Legal Life Skills lessons include questions built into the lesson. However, if participants need additional support or clarity, a facilitator should think first about a way they might ask a question to help the participant reach the answer themselves rather than simply providing the answer. Putting the onus of critical thinking on participants builds understanding and applicability. ([Learn more in the Facilitator Tips video.](#))
- **Know Your Audience:** Each individual participant is different and each participant group will have a different personality, as well. Getting to know the participant audience builds relationships, supports lesson customization, and ultimately helps sustain the messages delivered in Legal Life Skills lessons.
 - **Getting to Know You:** One of the best ways to engage participants is to build relationships with them. Talk to them, ask them questions, break bread with them, tell them about yourself (but not so much that you do not have time to listen to them). As you get to know participants better, bring additional resources, information, anecdotes, and more to speak directly to them. The partner teacher or program liaison is an excellent resource to help you get to know the participants.
 - **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity:** Cultural sensitivity is a set of skills that allows a facilitator to learn about and understand people whose cultural background is not the same as their own. A single document like this one cannot grow a facilitator’s cultural awareness and sensitivity, but it can remind facilitators to understand the cultural backgrounds of participants and think through how those backgrounds might influence their understanding of and participation in the lesson.

Strategies to Support Struggling Readers

Few Legal Life Skills lessons have long, challenging readings. Despite that, some participants may be wary of any reading that is required of them. Here are some strategies to support struggling readers:

- **Read Aloud:** Reading aloud puts all participants on the same page so that participant understanding is not impacted by their independent reading skills. The facilitator might choose to read aloud, or they may identify a strong participant reader prior to the lesson who agrees to read aloud to the group.
- **Check for Understanding:** In some Legal Life Skills lessons, comprehension of written text is required to complete an activity. A good facilitator ensures that participants understand the written text needed for the activity prior to engaging in that activity. This might require planning some additional questions to check for participant understanding of a reading. The facilitator might ask for the definition of an important vocabulary word introduced in the text, or they might ask for an explanation of an important legal concept from the text that participants will then apply during the subsequent activity. ([Learn more in the Facilitator Tips video.](#))
- **Spend More Time on the Lesson Vocabulary:** For some, a barrier to reading comprehension is new vocabulary. Each Legal Life Skills lesson includes vocabulary that may be new to participants. Prior to facilitating the lesson, review the key vocabulary terms that are italicized in the outcomes on page 1 of each lesson. Define the term, ask participants to define the term in their own words, use the term in a sentence, and give examples and non-examples of the term (if applicable). ([Learn more from this Understood resource; scroll to “Read: How to Use This Vocabulary Words Strategy.”](#))