

Tip Sheet for Trainers

When professionals from the legal community conduct outreach using public legal education strategies, the law automatically comes alive. A legal professional's personal engagement with the law gives him or her credibility. Such credibility can get an activity off to the right start. By engaging the public in interactive explorations of the law, trainers can leave a classroom knowing they have helped students grasp the law and legal issues.

The activities provided in this Toolkit offer a range of interactive instructional strategies; however facilitators are invited to adapt the activities to fit particular teaching goals. The toolkit can be a valuable resource for planning a training. It was designed so that each chapter can be taught as a stand-alone lesson or be presented in a series. The topics do not have to be presented in order; trainers can choose those which are most interesting and familiar to them.

If you are a legal professional, judge, or law student preparing for a presentation, you may find the following tips helpful:

- **Know your subject.** Spend some time reviewing the material prior to addressing participants. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to say that you don't. People will know very quickly if you are trying to make up an answer and then your credibility will be lost.
- **Work with the participants or an organizer before your session.** Let her or him know what you plan to do and provide background materials. Ask what the participants might know and adjust your session accordingly.
- **Be prepared.** Before you begin, you should know what you want to say and how you are going to say it. Establish a presentation outline.
- **The first few minutes are important.** To ensure students remain engaged for the duration of the presentation, get them involved immediately. Start your presentation with a statement that gets their attention or ask a question that they're eager to answer.
- **Talk with the participants, not at them.** A lecture may work for a professor in a law class, but it is not the best way to interact during a workshop. Most students will be interested in the topic and will engage in meaningful discussion if given the opportunity. Give them that opportunity!
- **Work the room.** Don't stand in one place or sit down. Move around and interact with participants, and get each one involved. Encourage participation by demonstrating your own enthusiasm for the topic. "Float" around the room during small group activities to keep conversations on track and in the right direction.

- **Have a plan, but be prepared to depart from it.** When you generate interest and enthusiasm, participants' questions and comments may lead you away from your plan. Don't be afraid of this, but be mindful of getting off topic and take steps to put the lesson back on track.
- **Talk in a language people can understand.** Don't be afraid to bring up difficult topics that generate heated conversation, but remember that you are not addressing a judge, but rather individuals who have little to no legal training. Listen to everyone's opinions, talk to them in terms they can understand without having specialized training, and take time to explain words or concepts that might not be readily known to your audience.
- **Create hypothetical situations.** Use a lot of examples to illustrate points you are trying to make. Develop pretend scenarios, perhaps basing them on current events in the news, or simply use your imagination to make some up. It is much easier for students to learn when the lesson is applied to real world facts.
- **Be in control.** When you are the trainer, you will be tested on your knowledge of the subject and your management in presenting the materials. If someone is disruptive, do something — don't ignore the situation! Be authoritative, and let the participants know that you are in control of the situation.
- **Watch the clock.** No matter how interesting you may be, attention spans will waver. Budget your time accordingly and do not go over whatever time limit you initially told the participants.
- **Consider using multimedia.** The ACJLS will be updating its website to provide new electronic materials that can supplement the Toolkit. For example, you may be able to show a video clip of a regional expert talking about the rule of law. Check the website at www.acjls.org or contact the ACJLS directly for any assistance designing your activity.
- **Remember the main points.** Always try to ask the following questions: What are the elements of the rule of law in the present discussion? What can I emphasize to tie the lessons together? How can I drive home the key lesson of the Toolkit, which is the importance of the rule of law, and how it can best be promoted?
- Above all, and perhaps most importantly, **enjoy yourself** – you want your love for what you do and your respect for the law to show!