



The Big 
Legal Lesson

Volunteer Toolkit



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The Big Legal Lesson

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Introduction:

Thank you for taking part in The Big Legal Lesson. You are joining a network of thousands of teachers and legal professionals across England and Wales who are committed to developing young people's knowledge of the rule of law and their legal rights.

Thank you to international law firm Mishcon de Reya for sponsoring The Big Legal Lesson again. Their funding allows us to offer all resources and support to participating schools for free.

Also, thank you to our education partners The Law Society for their continued support in helping us deliver legal education to young people across the UK.

This toolkit has been created to support you to deliver a successful The Big Legal Lesson session at a local school.

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Please note

In addition to reading this guide, volunteers should also download The Big Legal Lesson resource pack and PowerPoint for the relevant age range. These provide a comprehensive overview of activities.

Together with this document, these resources provide volunteers with everything they need to know in order to run a successful The Big Legal Lesson session.

Need support?

If you require any further advice or support ahead of running your session please contact:

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Young Citizens

Young Citizens is a national education charity lighting the spark of active citizenship for children and young people. Established in 1989, we deliver skills, knowledge and enrichment to over half a million children and young people each year through a range of topical classroom resources and immersive learning experiences.

Our team of education experts works to equip young minds with the confidence to shape both local communities and powerful societal systems. We do this by mobilising teachers, professionals and policy makers to transfer expertise to the people who need it most, making complex current affairs accessible to all.

Young Citizens offers a diverse portfolio of learning projects for schools and youth groups to use. Whether it be through interactive [mock trial competitions](#), [skills-based workshops](#) with professionals or [social action programmes](#) in school, the charity is dedicated to inspiring children and young people to be active participants in society.

The Big Legal Lesson

Running since 2020, The Big Legal Lesson is a national education campaign to make sure all young people have the opportunity to develop their legal literacy skills at school.

Since 2020, thousands of teachers have registered to take part, reaching over 200,000 young people. This makes it the largest public legal education campaign of its kind.

Last year, 93% of participants said that it allowed young people to better understand the rule of law and how it applies to their lives. 100% of participants said they would recommend it to a colleague.

In 2026, **The Big Legal Lesson will be running from 23rd February - 27th February**. During this time we are asking legal professionals to start a conversation about the law with young people by delivering a legal education session at a local school.

Can't run between 23rd and 27th February? Don't worry, you can still take part. Whilst we encourage as much activity as possible during this time period we recognise the need to be flexible. The resource packs will be available throughout the year so feel free to book a time slot with a local school that best suits you and them.

Once registered you will have access to a resource pack which includes all the details you need to plan your session. A number of activities are included within these resource packs, not all activities need to be delivered. The amount of content you can cover will depend on the length of the session you are delivering.

Resource packs are available for the following age ranges:

Primary:

- Key Stage 1: 5-7 year olds
- Key Stage 2: 7-11 year olds

Secondary and Post-16:

- Key Stage 3: 11-14 year olds
- Key Stage 4+: 14-18 year olds



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Setting up your session

This section of the toolkit will take you through how to contact local schools and set up a session. It also contains information about what needs to be communicated with the school ahead of the session.

Before you contact local schools consider what age range you would prefer to deliver to. Activities are available for 5-18 year olds so can be run in both primary or secondary schools as well as in Post-16 settings.

Finding a school and making contact

Step 1: Do you have any existing connections?

Do you have any existing connections with a school that you can utilise? Do you have any connections with your old school? Do you have children that attend a local school? Do you have any friends or family members who are teachers and might be interested in this opportunity? If so, approach these schools and teacher contacts first.

Step 2: Researching a school

If you don't have any existing connections with a school, you can search for a local school on the government's database: get-information-schools.service.gov.uk

Start by putting in the name of the local authority or town where you want to search for schools. You can then filter by 'phase of education'. You can then choose to view them on a map or change the radius of your search.

Once you are happy with the schools you have found, you can download the information as a spreadsheet. This will give you more information than you need but will save you from having to access the website again and will give you key contact information and the school website. We suggest that you identify at least five schools in case you struggle to set up a session with the first few schools you get in touch with.

Step 3: Making contact with a school

Go onto the school's website. Here you will be able to find a generic email address for the school as well as their phone number. You might also be able to find a list of teachers' email addresses; if so, the ideal people to contact about The Big Legal Lesson are the Head of Citizenship/and or PSHE, Head of Careers, Head of Years.

You are now ready to email the school about The Big Legal Lesson. A sample e-mail you can use is included at the end of this toolkit.

If you have not heard back from the school after a few days, please do send a chaser email and/or phone the school to ensure the email was passed on to the correct person internally. Schools and teachers are notoriously difficult to make contact with and this step might require some chasing on your behalf.



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Things to do before your session takes place:

Once you have confirmed a session with a local school, there are a number of actions you will need to take ahead of the session taking place. Use the checklist below to ensure that you have everything covered.

- **Agree the logistics** - Liaise with your contact teacher to find a suitable time and date for the session. Agree what year group the session will be delivered to and how long the session will be. Check how many students will be there on the day.
- **Download the relevant resource pack** - Familiarise yourself with the resource pack for your age range and decide which activities you will run based on the length of your session. Resources are available for the following age ranges.
 - Key Stage 1 - Ages 5-7
 - Key Stage 2 - Ages 7-11
 - Key Stage 3 - Ages 11-14
 - Key Stage 4+ - Ages 14-18
- **Classroom set-up** - Discuss with the teacher how you would like the classroom organised. The session will involve a lot of group work, so young people should ideally be sitting in small groups. You will also need to be able to display the PowerPoint and all young people will need to be able to see the screen.
- **Send the relevant materials** - You will need to send your contact teacher a copy of the PowerPoint. Agree with the teacher if they will create the necessary resources for the session or if you will bring these with you. Specific printing instructions are included in the resource pack for each age group.
- **Establish the teachers role on the day** - Emphasise the following to your teacher contact
 - 1) They are responsible for behaviour management.
 - 2) They will need to inform you if there are any educational needs you should be aware of.
 - 3) They will need to support as you facilitate the session by ensuring young people remain on task. After you have explained each activity, the teacher should provide floating support – checking in to ensure understanding and that the task is being completed.
 - 4) Request relevant policies - Ask your contact teacher to send you a copy of the school's child protection and safeguarding policies ahead of the session. Make sure you have familiarised yourself with these ahead of the session.

You should maintain regular contact with the teacher. We would recommend sending them a reminder e-mail of all the details of the session 1 week and 2-3 days before the session.



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On the day of the session

Below are a few pointers to ensure your session runs smoothly.

- Plan your route to the school in advance and arrive 10-15 minutes before your session is scheduled to start.
- You will need to sign in, be collected by your contact teacher and make your way to the classroom together. Arriving early will ensure you are ready to start on time. Check with your contact teacher if you need to take any form of ID with you on the day.
- Make sure you print the worksheets in advance and bring them with you to the session (unless it has been agreed ahead of the session that your contact teacher will do this). The young people will need these to complete the activities and it is unlikely the teacher will have time to prepare them if you forget.
- Have your resource pack plan to hand. This will provide you with everything you need to know to run the activities.
- On arrival, check with the teacher that the classroom has been set up for group working and that the class has already been split into groups.
- Once you are in the classroom give the worksheets to the teacher and ask that they support with distributing them to the groups as and when needed.
- Refer back to the resource pack throughout. It has been designed to support and guide you – please do make use of them.
- Enjoy! The activities have been designed to be fun and interactive and make for an enjoyable volunteering experience.



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Facilitation tips

1) Preparation is key!

The most important thing you can do to ensure your session runs smoothly is to prepare in advance. The more prepared you are and the better you know the activities, the more confident you will feel and the smoother the session will run. Make sure you have read through the resource pack and PowerPoint in advance and that you are comfortable and familiar with the content. If you have any questions at all please do contact the team at Young Citizens for advice.

2) Some key things to remember

Alongside ensuring you have prepared in advance, below are some key points to remember:

- **Introduce yourself using clear and accessible language** - Remember the age of the young people you are delivering to. Steer clear of acronyms. Remember some of the young people you are working with might never have interacted with professionals before and will therefore be unfamiliar with common terms and phrases to do with the world of work.
- **Set some ground rules at the start** - This will help create a safe learning space e.g. respecting each other's opinions and not talking over one another.
- **Explain each activity clearly and state the timings** - Introduce each activity, clearly stating the task and how long the group will have to complete it.
- **Update the class with how long they have left for each task** - Make sure you tell the group when they are half way through a task and when they have a few minutes left. This will help to keep them to task and on time.
- **Move between the groups during activities** - Check that young people have understood and are on task. Remind them to think about key ideas and ask them questions that encourage their thinking/discussions. In the unlikely event they aren't already doing so, you may need to remind the teacher to provide floating support to groups during the activities.
- **Getting feedback** - When gathering feedback don't be afraid to ask young people directly for answers or get the teacher to support. Young people can sometimes be shy and need encouragement to share their thoughts. At the start of each activity let the groups know you will be coming to them for feedback and don't be afraid to ask young people for their response. If needed, you can also ask the teacher.
- **One positive and a development area** - When giving feedback to the young people, give one piece of positive feedback and another piece of feedback focusing on an area where the young people could further develop their answers. This helps to build confidence whilst also ensuring the young people's further learning and development.

Remember:

You don't need to complete all the activities in the resource pack. It is better to have an in-depth discussion on a few activities than rush through them all.



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Facilitating discussion:

- Remind the group of the ground rules that have been set as and when required; this should help establish an environment where young people feel safe and comfortable to express their thoughts.
- Ask the group what they think of each other's opinions.
- Ask devil's advocate questions to draw out opinions.
- Don't let a few young people dominate the conversation. Limit airtime if necessary.
- Use active listening by trying to summarise what has been said.
- Keep the discussion on track and try to draw everyone's opinions out.

Encouraging participation from everyone:

- Use open-ended questions (starting with who, what, why, when, how).
- Be objective and facilitate learning - don't dictate your own opinions. Young people can be impressionable. We want to encourage them to form their own thoughts and ideas, not take on those of the volunteer.
- Don't force young people to read out loud in case they have language or literacy difficulties or lack the necessary confidence. Ask if there are any volunteers to read, and if not, just read it out yourself.
- Generally, asking individual young people for their input is fine. They are in a classroom environment and are used to answering questions from their teacher. However, if you see that a young person is particularly reluctant to answer a question then do move on and ask someone else.
- Ask the teacher for support if you need it. The teacher is in the classroom, they know the young people very well and are there to help you.
- Be non-judgmental and aware of people's cultural, religious and/or socio-economic differences.
- Consider different learning styles (see the next page).



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Learning Styles:

Understanding that everybody learns in different ways is important to help young people get the most out of their The Big Legal Lesson experience. The materials produced by Young Citizens take this into account by offering a variety of ways to learn about the topics.

The VAK learning styles model suggests that most people can be divided into one of three preferred styles of learning but that there is no wrong or right way. Broadly the types of learner are:

Visual Learners:

- Like to see or observe what needs to be learned.
- Will use phrases such as 'show me', 'let's have a look'.
- Prefer pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films etc.
- Are best able to perform a new task after reading the instructions or watching someone else demonstrate what's required.

Auditory Learners:

- Have a preference for listening to the spoken word, sounds and noises.
- Use phrases such as 'tell me', 'let's talk it over'.
- Are best able to perform a task after listening to instructions.
- Are happy with spoken instructions.

Kinaesthetic Learners:

- Have a preference for 'doing'.
- Like to experience things hands-on.
- Use phrases such as 'let me try'.
- Are best able to perform a new task by trying it out and learning as they go.

People commonly have a preferred learning style, but this may be part of a blend of all three. Some people have a very strong preference; other people have a more even mixture of two or less commonly, three styles.

Understanding these various learning styles will help you to facilitate sessions that best suit the diverse styles that will exist amongst groups of young people.



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Handling challenging behaviour

Standards of behaviour are generally very high during The Big Legal Lesson. It is an exciting opportunity for young people to do something outside of their ordinary lessons and they will have been briefed by their teacher in advance about how to behave with external visitors.

The most important thing to remember is that the teacher in the classroom is the person who is responsible for behaviour management. They will be on hand to support you throughout – ensuring the young people understand the activities and keeping them on task.

Below are some techniques that you can use in the classroom if you do come across any young people displaying challenging behaviour.

An unresponsive student

Possible reasons: Lack of confidence, shy around peers and new adults, English is not their first language.

- Don't just ignore them!
- Don't force them to speak. You don't know their specific experience or background so forcing them to speak might be upsetting for them. Instead move on and ask someone else if they are able to answer your question.
- Try asking them closed questions so as not to put pressure on them but to encourage them to engage in the topic.
- Explore something in particular that interests them to get a response.
- Give them a specific role that makes them feel important (and that they will be able to do) e.g. could they hand out the worksheets for you or write notes for their group?
- Get them to work in pairs. It might be that they are too shy to talk to you but are comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions with their peers.
- Offer positive reinforcement when responses are received and if they do respond, see if you can refer to their comment later.

A student makes an inappropriate comment or a controversial statement

Possible reasons: 'Just said it for a laugh', misheard/misread it from somewhere and repeated it but never really thought about it, they believe it and they can justify it (the hardest to deal with).

- Remember to remain impartial, sensitive and ensure that you are being non-judgmental – be careful not to impose your own opinions.
- Remember you have the support of the class teacher. Don't handle anything that you are not comfortable with.
- If you feel confident, explore and keep asking questions, e.g. what if you were in that situation, what if a friend was etc. If the student has made the comment as a joke or is parroting something they have heard, they are likely to talk themselves out of the statement. If appropriate, ask the other students what they think of this opinion, if they agree/disagree instead of directly addressing what the student said.
- If the comment is aimed at someone in the class, this must be dealt with. If the teacher did not hear the comment please report it to them to deal with.



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A disruptive student

Possible reasons: Lack of focus, lack of understanding, seeking attention, may be bored and in need of more creativity or challenge.

- Ask the student a direct question about the activity to engage them.
- Try not to give too much attention to what the student is saying or doing. Draw attention back to the activity and the students who are engaged.
- Ask extension questions to stretch the student if you feel they are not being stretched enough.
- Ask the teacher to talk to the students if they are being too disruptive.

A student keeps going off topic

Possible reasons: Lack of focus, they don't fully understand the task they have been set.

- Try to link in what the student is saying to the topic that is being discussed.
- Refocus the discussion by repeating the question/ instructions for the task you have set them.
- Remember that most young people are quite chatty and will enjoy having a discussion with an adult they haven't met before. Some off-topic conversation is fine, as long as the topic of the session is being discussed for the majority of the session.



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Safeguarding and Child Protection

When working with young people, we all have a responsibility to keep them safe and protected.

When you volunteer with young people at a school you are expected to comply with the school's safeguarding and child protection policies. Failing to do so may put you or a young person at risk.

Prior to delivering your session request a copy of the school's safeguarding and child protection policies and make sure you familiarise yourself with them. We have provided some additional advice below.

- When delivering your session, you should be accompanied by a teacher at all times. This should be embedded in the school's own safeguarding policy, but please do reiterate this to the teacher in advance of the session taking place. You should also check to see whether there are any other additional measures that the school will need you to follow, in line with the school's own safeguarding policy.
- It is important to avoid any physical contact with young people.
- Never make suggestive, sarcastic or inappropriate remarks to or about a student, even in fun.
- Be aware of your own behaviour and model appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.
- Do not establish, respond to, or maintain personal contact in person or online with any young person outside of the session.
- Be aware that sometimes the sessions can cover sensitive issues. Do not ask questions or instigate conversations which might lead to students disclosing information inappropriately or potentially re-traumatising them.

Handling Concerns

If a young person does share something with you that causes you concern for their, or another young person's safety or welfare, remain calm and reassuring. Do not ask leading questions and do not promise to keep secrets.

As soon as possible after the session speak to the teacher in charge and make a record what was said. Pass all information on to the safeguarding lead at the school. You should also let the safeguarding lead at your organisation know.

If there has not been a disclosure but you still feel some concerns for any reason (e.g. because of what you see or hear from a young person or another adult), it is important to pass this on as well. Always speak to the teacher if you have concerns, however unsure you may be, and pass all information onto the school's safeguarding lead.



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Sample e-mail to schools:

Subject: The Big Legal Lesson - Free legal education activities for schools

Dear [Name]

My name is [Name], I am [Job Title] at [Firm]. I am contacting you to offer an exciting, free education opportunity - The Big Legal Lesson.

Running since 2020, The Big Legal Lesson is a national education campaign run by the charity Young Citizens, whom I volunteer with. The Big Legal Lesson aims to make sure all young people have the opportunity to develop their legal literacy skills at school.

Since 2020, thousands of teachers have registered to take part, reaching over 200,000 young people. This makes it the largest public legal education campaign of its kind. Last year, 93% of teachers said that it allowed their students to better understand the rule of law and how it applies to their lives. 100% of teachers said they would recommend it to a colleague.

"I had positive feedback from every class due to the active nature of the activities, and the children thoroughly enjoyed learning about their rights and responsibilities."

Primary School Teacher, The Big Legal Lesson

I have included some details below which outline some of the activities that are available:

- **What's the law got to do with me?** Classes are introduced to a fictional character and explore how the law impacts their day. They go on to consider how they interact with the law on a daily basis.
- **Who makes the law?** Classes consider which people in the UK have the power to make and change laws and what power individual citizens have to impact the law.
- **The changing law** - Classes look at recent changes to the law and consider what impact these changes might have on different individuals.
- **Making my voice heard** - Classes suggest a change they'd like to make to the law and examine what actions they could take to make their voice heard on this issue.

I would welcome a conversation about delivering this free, fun, interactive and engaging campaign with [XXX School]. Please let me know a good time to give you a call to discuss this opportunity further, or email me with any questions you may have.

Alternatively, please feel free to share this email with any colleagues who might be interested or better placed to take this forward – perhaps Head of Year(s) or Citizenship/PSHE leads.

Kind Regards,

[NAME]