
What's the law? – Fines

Presenter's notes

How to use these notes

Topic: Legal obligations and requirements for dealing with fines.

Resources: *What's the law?* free online resource 'Fines', which contains a photo story, activity sheet and answer sheet.

These notes provide guidelines for a presenter's script and information on how to use these resources when presenting to a community group. The notes include a story summary, questions and answers, key messages, areas for further discussion and referral information.

Preparing to present

It may be useful to read the activity and answer sheets to prepare for your presentation – they may give you ideas for additional questions and activities for your group. It is also a good idea to look at the websites and information provided under 'Possible discussion points and referral information' below.

If you need assistance with presentation skills, engagement ideas or coordination support for the group you are preparing for you can contact cle@legalaid.wa.gov.au or (08) 9261 6500.

Introduce yourself and *What's the law?*

Before you begin the presentation, introduce yourself, your role and your organisation.

For example, if you work at Legal Aid WA:

- Legal Aid WA helps the community in many different ways if they have problems with the law. We provide legal education to newly-arrived communities about their rights and responsibilities.

Refer to the *What's the law?* free online resource and its purpose by mentioning these key points:

- We see many different newly-arrived communities get into trouble with the law and often it is the same legal problems that arise. These problems can be avoided if people know some simple information about the law and where to go for help before their problem becomes serious.
- The photo stories in *What's the law?* have been made to help people learn about the law on thirteen different topics.

Begin with some introductory statements and general questions about the topic:

- Today we are going to show you a photo story about fines.
- Knowing how to respond to a request to pay a fine is important.

- Many people do not give priority to paying a fine because they do not realise the consequences if they do not pay, or if they leave paying until later.
- What sorts of things might result in a fine? Is it easy to get a fine?
- Is it hard to know what to do when you get a fine? Is the letter hard to understand?, it is easier to ignore letters about paying a fine than to deal with it, but leaving it only makes the problem worse. Buying a car is the second most expensive purchase they will make after buying a house. Because of the price involved, it is important to think carefully about the type of car you want, financial loans for cars and how much you can afford to pay.
- Who owns a car? Did you sign a contract when you purchased the car?
- Who has signed a contract? Did you understand the whole contract?

Summarise the photo story

- This story is about Ayel, who parks her car in a permit zone because she can't find a spot anywhere else when she is parking to go to work.
- Ayel later receives a letter from the local council advising that she must pay a fine for illegal parking but she ignores it.
- It is not until she receives another letter, with a request to pay even more immediately, that she talks to her husband Ajit about it. They cannot afford to pay the fine immediately
- Together they decide she should ring the council to ask what to do. She does this and is given an extension of time to pay the fine.

Ask questions

To strengthen engagement with the photo story and develop the group's legal literacy, ask key questions before showing the story. This will encourage the group to watch actively and think about key messages.

While you are watching the story, think about the next six questions:

Why does Ayel get a fine?

Why does Ayel get a reminder to pay the fine?

Why does Ayel ring the council?

Why is Ayel given more time to pay the fine?

What could have happened if Ayel had not contacted the council?

What is one serious consequence of not paying fines at all?

Show the photo story



Answer the questions

Ask the same key questions after you show the story and allow for discussion to tease out the right answers.

Why does Ayel get a fine?

- She has parked her car illegally. The parking sign said “permit zone” and she was not displaying a permit in her car and was therefore not allowed to park her car there.
- The permit zone is checked by employees of the council and if they find someone who has breached the rule for parking in the permit zone, they will issue an infringement notice, which is a written notice requiring payment of a fine for breaking the law.

Why does Ayel get a reminder to pay the fine?

- Ayel has been sent one letter requiring her to pay the fine by the due date.
- As she has not paid the fine she has been sent a reminder notice, with another due date.
- This is designed to prompt payment of the fine before there are more serious consequences.

Why does Ayel ring the council?

- Ayel has received the fine from the council and on the reminder letter it says to ring the council for help.
- She follows this prompt and rings the council.
- This is sensible as the fine is still being dealt with by the council so they will know about it and they have authority to deal with it.
- The fine has not yet been sent to the Fines Enforcement Registry so the Registry will not know about it and will have no authority to deal with it.

Why is Ayel given more time to pay?

- Ayel told the council officer that she could not afford to pay immediately.
- On this basis she was given an extension of time to pay.
- Alternatively the council may have been able to accept payment in instalments and she could have asked about this option.

What may have happened if Ayel did not contact the council?

- The fine may have remained unpaid and been sent to the Fines Enforcement Registry for payment to be enforced
- The fine would have increased further as this is what happens when a fine is referred to the Registry.

What is one serious consequence of not paying a fine?

- Even if the fine is not traffic related, failure to pay it may result in the suspension of the person's driver's licence.

Emphasise key messages

- Read all letters and notices you receive, especially those that appear to require payment of money – do not ignore them
- Get help in understanding these letters if you are not sure what they mean.
- Be aware of the due date for payment and if possible, pay on time.

- Be aware that the amount may increase if you miss the due date for payment.
- Act early – don't leave it too long to get help. Ask for an extension of time to pay or arrange to pay in instalments if these options are available.

Further questions and discussion

- Does anyone have any questions?

You are not expected to be a lawyer to use this resource. Many teachers and community workers use this resource successfully. If a participant raises personal legal issues, you may refer them to the **Legal Aid WA Infoline** on **1300 650 579** or the closest community legal centre (<http://www.communitylaw.net/>) or Legal Aid WA office.

Possible discussion points and referral information

Court fines vs infringements

- **Fines** – a court fine is handed down by a judge, magistrate or justice of the peace in court. See [Court fines](#) on the Department of Justice website under Court and Tribunal Services.
- **Infringements** – infringement notices are issued by the police, local government authorities and various other prosecuting agencies, either in person or through the post. You can get an infringement for things like speeding, illegal parking or littering. See [Infringement Notices](#) on the Department of Justice website under Court and Tribunal Services.

Consequences of not paying

- The consequences of not paying a fine or an infringement are similar. See [Consequences of not paying](#) on the Department of Justice website under Court and Tribunal Services.

Frequently asked questions

- See [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the Department of Justice website under Court and Tribunal Services.

Legal Aid WA website

- www.legalaid.wa.gov.au – see under Find legal answers – Fines and Infringements.

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