



**Creative
Lives**

How to plan a successful creative workshop

A toolkit for creative group leaders





A well-planned, well-delivered creative workshop can be fun, educational and inspiring for participants, and leave workshop leaders feeling a real sense of achievement. While the artistic content will vary from workshop to workshop, there are some aspects of planning and delivery that remain largely the same.

Even if some of the following suggestions and guidance don't apply to your particular event, it's worth working your way through each section of this toolkit, to make sure you've considered everything in advance.



Creative Criccieth, Christmas tree workshop

PEOPLE, PLACES AND PUBLICITY

What do you hope to achieve?

What is the overall aim of your creative workshop, and what do you hope your participants will learn?

Imagine the workshop is over and people are heading home. What do you hope they will have in their hearts, minds, and potentially bags as they leave? Then work backwards from there to achieve your aim.

Write down your aims here:



Who is your workshop aimed at?

Who your workshop is aimed at will impact on how you prepare, run and advertise it, as well as the equipment and materials you'll need. So answer this question first, not just in terms of demographic (adults, children, families, cultural background, people with additional support needs etc.) but whether your creative activity is tailored for beginners, intermediate or advanced.

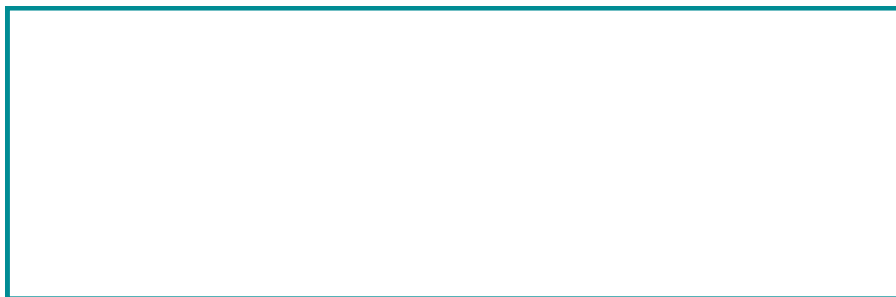
Write down some notes on who your workshop is aimed at, here:



When will it happen?

When we're caught up in our own lives, it can be easy to forget that other people have a different agenda. So before scheduling a workshop, take a look at school holiday dates, cultural days, national holidays etc, so ensure you give your workshop the best possible chance of a good attendance.

Make a note of some potential dates here:



Where will it take place?

When looking for a venue, consider who will be attending, how they might travel there, and what access needs they may have. All of this will have a bearing on the venue you choose.

If possible, visit the venue in advance to look around and get a feel for how you might use the space. Photographs can only help you so much!

Find out who will be there on the day of your workshop (if anyone). Will they open and close the space for you? Make sure you have a contact number if they are not staying onsite during your session.

It's a good idea to walk around the venue as if you were a participant. Find out about the building itself:

- Where are the kitchen and toilets?
- How do you operate the heating / open the windows?
- Where are the fire exits?
- Where are the plug sockets and light switches?
- Does the venue have a First Aid kit?

Discuss your needs for the workshop. For example:

- Are there tables and chairs (and who is responsible for setting them up/putting them away)?
- Is there access to water?
- Are there any outdoor spaces?
- Do they have extension leads?
- Where is the cleaning equipment?
- Where are the bins (and will you need to put your own rubbish out)?

If you are providing refreshments, find out where the cups/plates/cutlery are stored, and how to use any necessary equipment (such as a hot water boiler).

If the venue doesn't already have something you'd like to use, they may already know how to borrow it for you.





Make a note here of any other equipment / materials you need the venue to supply:

On the day itself try to arrive at least an hour early to set up (and build that time into your room booking). Make sure the space is accessible for everyone who is attending, including looking out for any trip hazards.

People working at the venue will know better than anyone if there are parking facilities nearby (disabled and non-disabled), and the best public transport routes. Find this out in advance and include it in your pre-workshop information.

Make a note here of transport options you can share with people:

Welcoming attendees

Signage is so important to help people feel welcome and comfortable. From the front door onwards, make sure your attendees know how to get from the street to their seat with ease, including directions to lifts and toilets.

Make sure somebody is there to welcome people as they arrive - it can be disconcerting entering a new building if you're unfamiliar with it, and attending the workshop itself may not have been easy for them. A smiling face on arrival can make all the difference.

Have a sign-in sheet at the door so you know who has arrived. This can also be a good way of capturing contact information to keep in touch with people (include a tick box so people can give their consent to this).

Once everyone has arrived, you might want to consider a round of introductions and/or a warm up exercise so that participants get to know each other.

Make a note here of where in the building you need to position signs:





Timings

Work out how long your creative activity will last, bearing in mind that people learn and progress at a different pace depending on experience.

Build in time at the beginning, middle and end of your session for people to feel comfortable and looked after. It can take longer than you think for people to arrive, greet each other, get used to the space, visit the toilet, have a refreshment etc. so take account of the number of participants and plan accordingly.

If possible, it's also worth factoring in time at the end for reflection (nice for participants and potentially very handy for you when planning your next session!).

Show respect for the venue and people using the space next, and clear the room in good time for their arrival or for the building being locked up.

Work out the timeline of your workshop here:



Content

Start your session by explaining what will happen and when during the workshop, so people know what to expect.

Despite the information you shared in advance, people may have very different expectations of the workshop. For example, you may have planned an informal, have-a-go session, whereas participants may be expecting a formal taught class with a structured programme. It's worth reminding participants what they will and won't be doing during their time with you.

While you're talking about the workshop content, include information about breaks and finish time, so people can potentially hang on before taking a comfort break and missing something.

It's worth having a plan b (and potentially c and d) in case something goes wrong, such as the materials not arriving in time, the participant make-up not being a good fit for your existing plan etc.

Note down some back-up plans here:



What resources will you need?

The resources you'll need will vary depending on the kind of creative workshop you're delivering, and what the venue is able to provide. They might include:

- Materials for the workshop
- Tools and equipment
- Cleaning materials
- Information sheets or follow-up material (such as book or video recommendations)
- Some form of refreshments (check for dietary requirements in advance, so everyone feels included)

How are you going to transport these things there and back?

Make a note here of what you'll need to take:

Setting a price

It can be hard to know your worth, so have a look at what other artists are charging for similar events. Make sure you factor in:

- Room rental
- Materials
- Refreshments
- Any resources people take away
- Your time (including advance preparation, set-up, delivery, and tidy-up)

It's always best if you can take payment in advance online (via a platform such as PayPal, Eventbrite, Stripe etc), but if this isn't appropriate for your attendees, make the necessary arrangements to take cash on the day.

Make a note of your costs here:



Publicising your workshop

You know your audience best, so target them in the appropriate way(s).

This could be online through your website, social media, newsletter and sharing on other people's sites (including Facebook groups set up for your area). Or more traditional ways such as a poster on local notice boards, flyers in libraries and community/arts centres, or via an advert or article in your local newspaper.

Your venue may also be able to help spread the word. Be sure to include all the necessary information on your publicity (especially the date, time and venue!), and a colourful photo goes a long way to capture your activity.

If you have the know-how, creating a 'QR' code for your leaflet/poster which takes people straight to the booking page can be really helpful. If you're not sure how to make or use a QR code, read [this handy guide](#) on the Creative Lives website.

Make a note here of how you'll publicise your workshop:

Communicating with participants

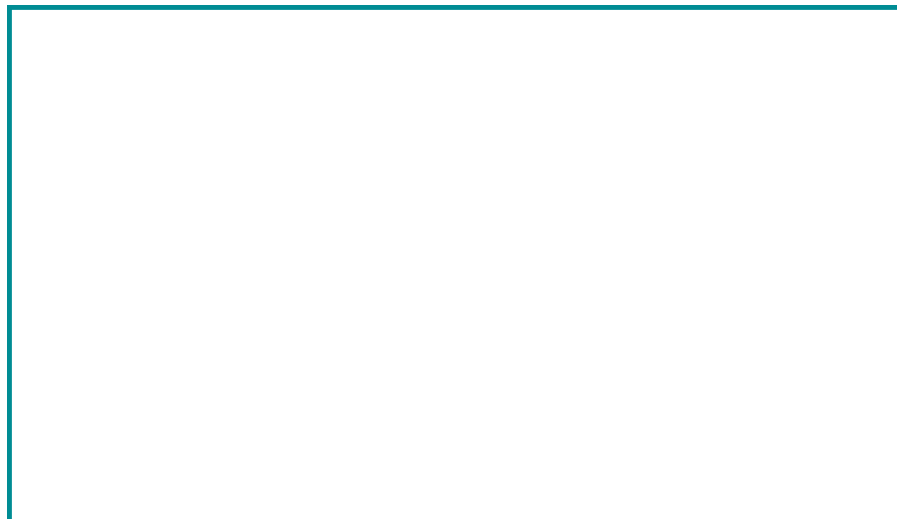
A booking form is a great place to gather all the information you need in one place. Whether you're using a physical piece of paper or an online form (such as Eventbrite), remember to ask about contact details, and any access or dietary requirements. If you have a newsletter, this is a chance to ask if they'd like to sign up to hear about future workshops.

Keeping in touch with your participants in the run-up to the event can help make people feel informed and welcome. Send an email (or a quick phone call if people are not online) a few days before to remind them of the date, time, location, and anything they need to bring.

Directions are also very useful, as is information about car parking or public transport to the venue.

If they'll be taking anything home with them (e.g. a finished artwork), suggest they bring something to carry it away in. And if they're likely to get messy, remind them to wear or bring old clothes or aprons.

Make a note here of what attendees need to know:



OFFICIAL REQUIREMENTS

A creative workshop should be fun, but behind the scenes a number of less exciting, but no less important, things may need to be in place. Here are some of the things you may need to consider:

Public liability insurance

This covers injury to members of the public and damage to their property should something happen during your workshop, so it's important to have it in place. In some instances, if you received financial help to run your event, it may also be a condition of your funder. Taking out your own cover is usually the best option, however it's also worth exploring the following:

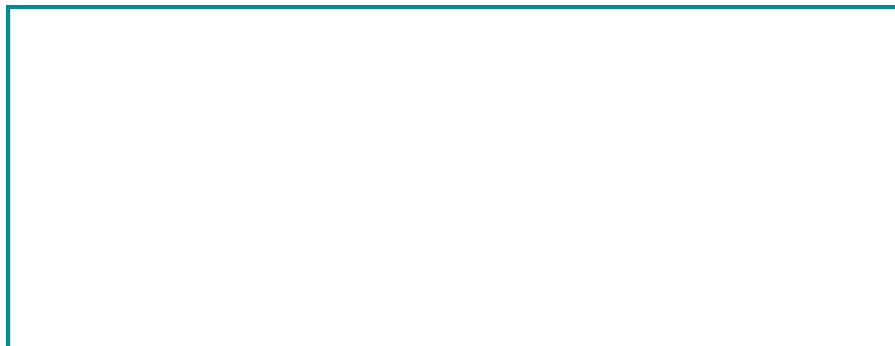
Does the venue already have it? - If the space your session is taking place in regularly holds events, they may already have cover for the whole venue and everything that takes place there. Speak to them to confirm they have public liability insurance in place, that it extends to covering your group whilst hiring the venue, and the specific activities you're undertaking.

Umbrella bodies - Becoming a member of an umbrella body relevant to your art/craft form can prove helpful in many ways. Some of them offer exclusive insurance packages which, even with the membership fee, can work out cheaper than buying your own. Check out the [Umbrella Bodies page](#) on the Creative Lives website.

Partner with another organisation - Could you run your workshop in partnership with a larger group/organisation that has its own public liability insurance? If so, confirm they are happy to do this, and ask them to provide written confirmation and a copy of their insurance policy.

If you do have to buy your own Public Liability Insurance, it's worth shopping around. Online comparison sites can be very helpful, and there are a number of insurance companies that specialise in community/charity organisations, so will have a greater understanding of your situation.

Note down your insurance plans here:

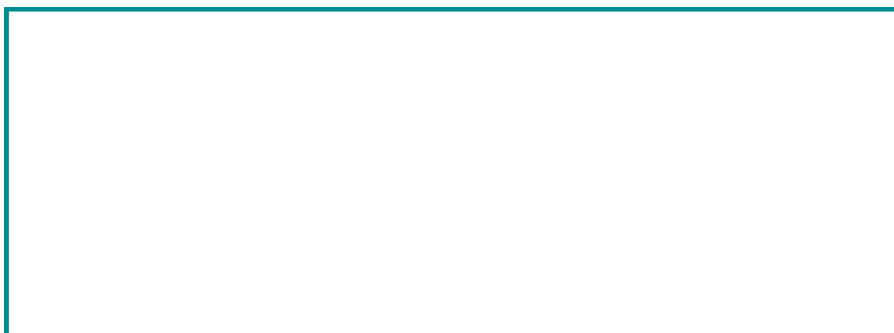


Safeguarding

If you are working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, you may need to have DBS (England/Wales), PVG (Scotland), Access NI (Northern Ireland) or GNVB (Republic of Ireland) checks in place.

If you don't already have one, it's worth creating a 'Safeguarding policy' which sets out your commitment to protecting children/vulnerable adults, and any checks you have carried out. If you need assistance with this, visit Creative Lives' [safeguarding advice page](#), with helpful links.

Note down your safeguarding plans here:





Risk assessment

As an event organiser, you have a responsibility to the public to ensure that your event is run in as safe and appropriate a way as possible. A risk assessment ensures that you have thought through the safety implications of the activity and taken all possible steps to reduce risks.

In the unlikely event that something does go wrong during your session, having a risk assessment will show that you have done your best to predict and reduce risk. To help you with this, you can download Creative Lives' free briefing, [Risk Assessment for Event Organisers](#).

Make a start on your risk assessment here:

Photography and filming

If you plan to capture your session with photographs and/or videos, there are a few things to think about:

How will you use them? (e.g. on your website, social media, flyers publicising future workshops etc). Think about this in advance, so you get the best possible photos for your purposes.

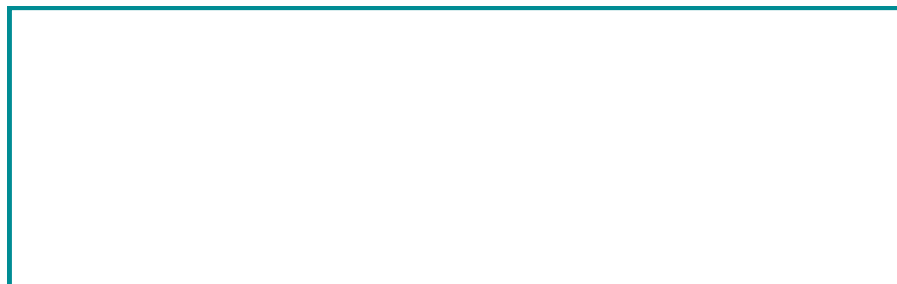
Make sure you let people know at the start of the session that you will be taking photos/filming, so they can opt out if necessary. Tell them where and how the photos/footage may be used.

You might need photographs from your session to share with a funder (who may then use them in their publicity). Again, ensure your participants know about this.

Putting a notice up on the wall explaining your intentions, and drawing people's attention to it, can be helpful.

If you have children and young people under 16 in your session, you should seek the permission of their parents/carers before including them in any photography/filming by asking them to sign a consent form.

A consent form includes information on how and where the photos/footage will be used, and gives people the option to tick certain boxes (e.g. they may be fine with you using photos of their child on your website, but less happy for them to be used in social media).





Permission to play music

If you are playing music (live or recorded) at your session, you may need a licence (unless it's music that you yourself have written). If your workshop is taking place in an established venue, chances are they will already have these licences in place - so ask them when you're booking the space. If they don't, visit the PPL/PRS website to find out about buying a licence. <https://pplprs.co.uk/>

AFTER THE EVENT

Evaluation

Decide whether you want to hand out forms at the session for people to fill in immediately (if so, build in time for this) or if you're going to email your participants afterwards (in which case, make sure you have their email address).

If the feedback forms are purely for your own use, try to keep the questions short and simple. If they're a requirement of your funder, make sure you're asking the right questions.

If you want to keep in touch with your participants with information about potential future workshops (and didn't ask for this on your booking sheet), you could ask for their contact details on your evaluation sheet.

Write your evaluation plans here:



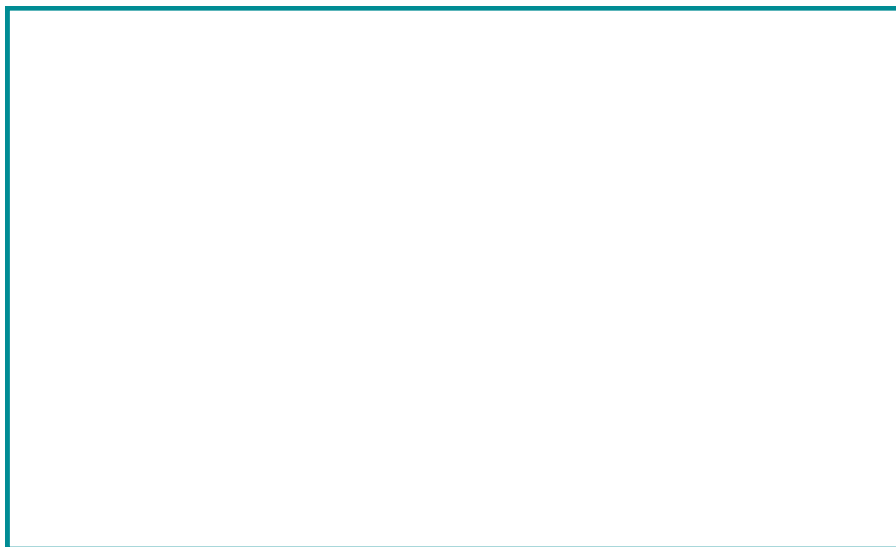


Venue

Leave it as you found it to ensure you'll be welcomed back! Replacing chairs, sweeping the floor, and washing up cups all takes time, so remember to build in enough for this.

Send feedback (good or bad) to the venue host after the first time you use it. Show appreciation if it all went well, or offer suggestions if things could have been better. Building up a good relationship with a venue isn't just a nice way to go about your business, they may suggest your activity to other users of the building.

Jot down your thoughts about the venue here:



A FEW OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT ...

With the best will in the world, despite extensive planning, things can go awry.

It's worth taking a moment to consider how you would handle any of the following scenarios, on the off-chance they happen.

- A facilitator, co-facilitator or assistant unexpectedly cancels at the last minute or doesn't turn up.
- Someone you weren't expecting turns up for the session.
- Someone becomes upset or angry during the session.
- Someone does not want to take part.
- Someone is 'taking over' the session, or asking too much of your time.
- You sense the workshop is not going well.
- Somebody has an accident.
- You turn up and the venue is closed / has no electricity / not enough chairs or tables.

The materials you planned to use don't arrive in time.



Write down your thoughts on how you would handle some of these situations here:

To find out about new resources, opportunities and more,
sign up to Creative Lives' monthly newsletter:
www.creative-lives.org/newsletter

Creative Lives Charity Limited is registered in Scotland as Company No. 139147 and Charity No. SC 020345.

Registered office: The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh EH8 8DL.

Creative Lives acknowledges funding from Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Ireland and Creative Scotland.