



How to find good legal information online

Introductory notes for instructors

Legal life skills outcomes

Knowledge:

- what information is relevant in Ontario
- which sources of information are more likely to be credible

Skills:

- digital literacy
- identifying key questions
- literacy
- prioritizing information
- comprehension
- notetaking

Personal capabilities and circumstances:

- making decisions on when to raise an issue with the employer



CLEO

Community Legal Education Ontario
Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario

Clues to good legal information online

If you have a legal question, the internet can be a good place to start off trying to find information. However, you may find it hard to get the information you're looking for. For example, sometimes the first hit in Google might lead you to information that does not actually apply in Ontario.

So, it's important to go through a few steps to figure out whether you can rely on a specific piece of legal information online.

Activity: How to find good legal information online

Watch this short (4 minute) video on how to find good legal information online.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW0y8mOLLfI> Take notes about key points in the video.

Then answer these "true or false" questions about finding good legal information online.



1. "Jurisdiction" means that all laws are the same no matter where you live in Canada.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. One way of telling whether a piece of legal information is reliable is to check to see if it shows the date that it was created or updated.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. If there are testimonials on the information from people who used it, saying how much it helped them, that must mean the information is reliable.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. If you have to pay to access legal information online, it must mean that this information is better than free information.
 - a. True
 - b. False

More information about jurisdiction

Because there are different levels of jurisdiction in Canada, it can sometimes be confusing to figure out what level of government oversees the specific type of legal problem that you might come across.

The table below is a good starting point about where you can start looking for information about employment law problems.

Employment and Work – Jurisdiction Table

Type of issue	Jurisdiction	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firings and layoffs • Workers’ Compensation and Workplace Safety (WSIB) • Pay equity • Parental, pregnancy and other leaves • Employment standards 	Provincial (Ontario) 	Ontario Ministry of Labour labour.gov.on.ca
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment insurance (EI) 	Federal (Canada) 	Service Canada servicecanada.gc.ca

if you have a question about your rights as a worker, it’s always a good idea to call someone so that they can help you after you’ve given them details about your working arrangement.

Small group exercise: jurisdiction

Now that you have read some more information about jurisdiction, please discuss a few questions about jurisdiction in small groups, based on your understanding and your personal experience. You can look back at the information if you need to. Pick one member of your group to write down the answers for the whole group.

1. Using your own words, explain what “jurisdiction” means.
2. Have you or a family member or friend had to deal with a legal problem in the past? If so, describe an experience that you had trying to get information. Did you phone the right place? Did you have to phone many places to finally get the information?

Where can I get legal information online?

- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario/ Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario) produces legal information in this area. cleo.on.ca/en/resources-and-publications/resources-topicsresources-topic
- CLEO’s Steps to Justice website has information about employment law and several other areas of law: stepstojustice.ca
- the Ontario Ministry of Labour provides online information on the Employment Standards Act and Health and Safety in a number of languages. labour.gov.on.ca
- the Workers’ Action Centre provides online information on employment law issues in several languages, organized by legal topic. workersactioncentre.org information is organized by legal topic.

Who can I call for legal information?

- (Toronto only) The Workers’ Rights Info Line provides information and support about workplace issues by telephone. Call 416-531-0778.
- Your community legal clinic might have an employment lawyer or legal worker who can talk to you. They can also help with problems with your landlord or government payments. Search by postal code here: www.legallaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl
- (Toronto only) If you have a problem with your landlord, you can call the FMTA Tenant Hotline at (416) 921-9494

Ahmed's story

A. Some background about the story

The story you are about to read is about someone who has just started a new job with a temporary agency. He has some questions about his rights and talks to some friends, but gets different responses from them.

When you are reading the story, start to think about the key questions that Ahmed should use to do a search for online legal information. You will be asked to look for legal information on CLEO's Your Legal Rights website.

B. Read the story

Last month, Ahmed signed on to get work through a temporary agency. They called him one week later and told him that he would be placed at a small law firm as a receptionist for two months.

This was great news for him – he was happy that he would be able to use the computer skills he learned in his job training course, and start making some money. The temp agency offered to pay him \$13.50 an hour, which they said was 50 cents more than the minimum wage in Ontario.

Ahmed was told that he would be expected to work the following hours:

Monday:	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday – Thursday:	9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Friday:	9:00 am – 5:00 pm

When Ahmed started the new job, his supervisor at the law firm told him that he could take the following breaks from work:

Monday and Friday:	30 minutes for lunch – not paid
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday:	no coffee or snack break – only bathroom breaks

Ahmed asked whether, instead of the 30 minute lunch break, he could take two 15 minute breaks instead. He also asked for a five minute break on his short days. The supervisor told him that he needed to take his half-hour break every day at noon, which was the only time that another person was available to answer the phones.

Ahmed was confused by the information about breaks from work – he knew that other friends of his got a full hour for lunch, and some of them got paid on the lunch break as well. After work, he met with his friend Nabih for dinner, and spoke to him about it.

Nabih told him that the law firm was definitely breaking the law when it came to breaks. The law, according to Nabih, guaranteed an hour for lunch without pay, and a 15 minute break on his half-days, again without pay. Nabih suggested that Ahmed look this up online, and print off information to give to his supervisor so that he could get the longer breaks

Ahmed also spoke with another friend of his, Moazzam. Moazzam, unlike Nabih, told Ahmed last month, Ahmed signed on to get work through a temporary agency. They called him one week later and told him that he would be placed at a small law firm as a receptionist for two months.

Activity: Key points from the story

Answer the following question:

1. Identify two key questions in Ahmed's story related to his rights under the *Employment Standards Act*. Write them down in the space below.

Your instructor will then bring you all into a large group to discuss your answers, and make sure that you have the correct information you need for the next activity – doing an online search to answer the employment law questions raised by Ahmed's story.

C. Activity: Search for legal information about Ahmed's rights

Your instructor will divide the class in half. Half of you will search for the first key point mentioned in the large group, and the other half for the second key point. Your instructor will be coming around the room in case you need help with this.

1. Write down some search terms in the space below that you can use for one of the two key points that came out of the group discussion.

2. Open *stepstojustice.ca* and enter your search phrase.

3. Open the first thing that comes up on this search and read the content on it. Does the information have a date on it? If so, write it down here.

4. Does the information state clearly where it applies? If so, write the answer below.

5. Does the content answer your question? If so, write the answer below.

6. If this content did not answer your question, try another search with different words.

D. Small group discussion

You will now break up into smaller groups and discuss the following questions. Pick one member of your group to write down the answers for the whole group.

1. What do you think was the right answer to the question? Was everyone able to find it?
2. What types of real-life issues do you think are raised in Ahmed's story?
3. Brainstorm ways that Ahmed could try to deal with this issue if he chose to. Who should he speak with?
4. Talk about the possible problems that Ahmed might face if he decides to address the legal issue.
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew that someone was doing something that was against the law, but decided not to deal with it? Why not?

Teaching notes and answer keys

Clues to good legal information online

Here is some other information to help with this that you can provide to your learners:

- For a quick clue about whether the information on a website applies in Ontario, look at the suffix of the website for clues about where it was produced. For example:
 - *.ca* usually means the website applies in Canada
 - *.on.ca* usually means the website applies in Ontario
 - *.gc.ca* means that the website was produced by the Government of Canada
 - *.gov* usually means that the website applies in the US
 - *.org* usually means that the website is non-profit, but this is a suffix that is used by websites originating in many different countries
- In the GTA, municipal laws apply to different cities and regions in the GTA – there is not a common municipal law. For example, if your learners live in Mississauga or Brampton rather than Toronto, the municipal laws that apply to them are governed by the Region of Peel.
- A good tip to help filter down Google search results: use a geographic keyword in the search term. For example, if looking for information about your rights at work, include the word “Ontario”

Clues to good legal information online

We’ve sent separately some information for your reference about jurisdiction with different areas of law: **“Learning about legal jurisdiction”**. Note that for the purpose of the learner’s activity kit, we focused on employment law jurisdictions only.

Criminal and consumer law issues are not included at present in **“Learning about legal jurisdiction”**.

For your information, most criminal law issues are under federal jurisdiction (Canada). However, moving violations in vehicles (for example, speeding tickets) fall under Ontario law, and parking tickets fall under municipal law.

Most consumer law issues fall under Ontario law.

Answers

Activity: How to find good legal information online

Watch this short (4 minute) video on how to find good legal information online. Try to take notes about key points in the video.

Then answer these multiple choice questions about finding good legal information online.

1. "Jurisdiction" means that all laws are the same no matter where you live in Canada.
 - a. True
 - b. False – some laws are the same across Canada, and some laws change depending where you live**
2. One way of telling whether a piece of legal information is reliable is to check to see if it shows the date that it was created or updated.
 - a. True**
 - b. False
3. If there are testimonials on the information from people who used it, saying how much it helped them, that must mean the information is reliable.
 - a. True
 - b. False**
4. If you have to pay to access legal information online, it must mean that this information is better than free information.
 - a. True
 - b. False**

Ahmed's story – B. Key points

(Use the large group discussion to make sure that everyone knows the key points that they should use to conduct the online search for information in "**Ahmed's story – C.**")

Identify **two** key points in Ahmed's story related to his rights under the *Employment Standards Act*. (For this purpose, you can ignore the issue about whether Ahmed has the right to prayer time at work – but note that this is a possible human rights issue under the Human Rights Code). Write them down in the space below.

- What is the actual minimum wage for office workers in Ontario?
- What breaks is an office worker in Ontario entitled to?

D. Small group discussion

You will now break up into smaller groups and discuss the following questions. Pick one member of your group to write down the answers for the whole group.

1. What do you think was the right answer to the question? Was everyone able to find it?
 - Minimum wage for office workers: \$11.25 in Ontario before October 1, 2016; \$11.40 an hour starting October 1, 2016

- Entitlement to breaks: 30 minutes off after every 5 hours of work. Employer does not have to pay for this break. If worker agrees, they can take two 15 minute breaks instead. If working less than 5 hours a day, no entitlement to a break.

2. What types of real-life issues do you think are raised in Ahmed’s story?

Some suggestions:

- Not always a good idea to trust what friends or family tell you about the law – double-check by looking for information or, if possible, calling someone before you act on the information
- In this story, there were problems both with what the temp agency and the law firm told Ahmed about his rights. This shows that what your employer tells you about the law can’t always be relied on. Always try to double-check with someone independent who has legal expertise, if you can.
- In the story, Nabih told Ahmed “not to rock the boat”. In real life, you may come across situations where you have a right that’s being violated, but there may be practical reasons that you decide not to take it up. Before taking action, it’s important to talk to others and get legal advice if possible. Then, you can decide whether the problem is serious enough for you to face possible negative implications if you act.

3. Brainstorm ways that Ahmed could try to deal with this issue if he chose to. Who should he speak with?

Some examples of ways to try to deal with the issue are:

- call the community legal clinic
- call the Workers’ Action Centre
- call the Ministry of Labour

You could also point out that in the story, there were problems both with what the temp agency and the law firm told Ahmed about his rights. This shows that what your employer tells you about the law can’t always be relied on. Always try to double-check with someone independent who has legal expertise, if you can.

In the story, Nabih told Ahmed “not to rock the boat”. In real life, you may come across situations where you have a right that’s being violated, but there may be practical reasons that you decide not to take it up. Before taking action, it’s important to talk to others and get legal advice if possible.

4. Talk about the possible problems that Ahmed might face if he decides to address the legal issue.

Some common examples that might arise:

- Doing a minor repair in your apartment rather than asking your landlord
- Paying a traffic or parking ticket in advance rather than going to court “because of the principle of the thing” – missing time off work might make going to court more expensive in the end, for example.

5. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew that someone was breaking your legal rights, but decided not to deal with it? Why not?

Free companion resources:

PLE Toolkit Module 1 – “How to help your clients”

<http://www.plelearningexchange.ca/toolbox/>

Legal information for learners:

CLEO “Your Rights at Work” — <http://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/rightswrk>

To order free copies of “Your rights at work” for your class, you can use the online order form at <http://cleo.on.ca> or call 416-408-4420.

CLEO Steps to Justice website:

<http://stepstojustice.ca/category/legal-topic/employment-and-work>