

Useful workshop information



Facilitating a workshop is essentially about sharing the love of your craft with others. Additionally, it provides a new income stream, network, followers, exposure and can help expand your own practice and creativity, teaching capacity and engagement with others in the making world.

It's a really rewarding experience for both facilitator and audience. You will be surrounded by a community of likeminded makers who are all there because they want to be. They have already engaged with you enough to purchase tickets – an investment in your practice! You will never have a more captive audience.

When designing and delivering your workshop, it's a good idea to assume the participants will come with no prior knowledge of your practice, or the skills and use of the tools, unless you're conducting an intermediate or master class. There will be some participants in the class who will need their hand held through the process more than others, while others may speed ahead.

A handout outlining the skills participants learned in your class is always appreciated. This allows participants to go home and easily reengage with the new skill they learned in your workshop. You can time yourself creating the item participant's will be making in your workshop and then double it, as a rough guide for how long it might take a complete novice to create it in a workshop context.

A good flow for your structure might look something like this:

1. Introduction
2. Demonstration
3. Making time
4. Reflection & conclusion

If your workshop goes for more than three hours, it's a good idea to include a break at some point.

Try to limit the options of customisable features offered. It would be advisable to have your class all create basically the same item or with only a few customisable elements to reduce your preparation time if you are providing the materials, or to reduce creation time as the participant weighs through additional options.

Workshops can be very social. Expect conversation between participants, sharing of work in progress, the more progressed participants helping the slower ones to catch up, and a general community spirit of creative excitement. Time managing the participants can be necessary if you've chosen to complete an item during the workshop. Ensure the slower participants are on track to complete their work with gentle reminders and an extra helping hand along the way.

During the making time, you can be making along with them to indicate what they can expect as they progress. The making time can often be when the participants 'get into the zone' and will be silent as they concentrate. This time can be used to supply them with troubleshooting for when they continue their new skill at home and encounter challenges without your guidance. It can be used to tell them anecdotes about your making career. In an in-person workshop, this is a nice time to play music, but for a digital workshop this may prove trickier, but could still be a good tool to fill the silence if you can't talk your way through hours of making!

It's not a problem to offer a workshop where an item can't be finished within the confines of the allocated workshop time. If you know this will or may be the case, ensure the participant has all the materials and instructions, preferably written, to complete their item in their own time.

Leave as much space as you can for questions along the way. It can be intimidating to ask for help, especially in an online context, so check in with each participant often and be conscious of when a participant may need extra help or encouragement. Chances are that the advice you deliver to them may be relevant to other members too who were too shy to ask or didn't want to interrupt. Oversharing information, no matter how patronising it may seem, is the best course of action.