

# Workshop Curriculum and Tips

## For Reusable Menstrual Products

Workshops are one of the best ways to educate your peers about reusable menstrual products, because they are a dedicated time, space, and context to explain in depth and answer people's questions. They also can help create community and can be a good time to distribute products. First, you'll want to designate one or a few workshop facilitators. These should be people who are already very knowledgeable about reusable products, though it is important to practice explanations, intentional language, and answering frequently asked questions. Decide together if you want the meeting to be only open to menstruators or open to everyone, only open to students or open to the local community, or anything else. Make sure this is included in all outreach. Once you've reserved a time and location for the event, start spreading the word! This can be through social media posts, email lists of other orgs, posters around campus or in bathrooms (don't forget about gender neutral and men's bathrooms), word of mouth, chalking, announcements at other org meetings, a school newspaper, a school calendar, or other methods specific to your campus. The tone and inclusiveness of the outreach will influence who feels comfortable to show up. If it's too peppy, too feminine, or too environmentally focused, for example, many people will not feel welcome or interested. Also, be mindful of the timing and location of the event, to make sure that your event is as accessible as possible. As much as possible, make your workshop flexible to people's comfort levels - offer optional ways to be very interactive and give people opportunities to answer questions, share experiences, discuss, and ask questions, but make sure that folks who might not be comfortable with that have other options, such as writing questions on a post-it, saying "pass" if you give a prompt, or giving the option of a non-period-related icebreaker question. Always stick with gender neutral language when talking about periods and anatomy, and explain why that's important.

### **Example of a Workshop:**

As people trickle in, gauge their level of comfort and start conversation or give them a zine to check out or reusable products to feel. Snacks are always awesome.

If you want to track attendance or get people on an email list for updates, have them write their contact info on a clipboard.

Welcome everyone and thank them for coming. Introduce the project and its mission, and the purpose of the workshop (ex. "The purpose of this workshop is to offer information and share experiences about reusable menstrual products, not to convince anyone to use them") If this space was open to non-menstruators, maybe say why that was important to you. Acknowledge that this can be an uncomfortable topic and that people have very different experiences with their periods and with their bodies. If anyone needs to go to the bathroom, take a break, or leave midway, no worries. Introduce gender neutral language for periods and anatomy, and why that's important. Introduce facilitators, maybe how they got involved.

Go around and share names, pronouns (with an explanation of gender pronouns), how you're doing today, and an ice breaker question (ideally give one period related question, and one non-period related questions they can choose from). Feel free to say "pass".

Example period related icebreakers: First period story, when you first realized periods existed, most embarrassing period story, favorite euphemism for periods, what stage of your cycle are currently in, if you could bleed a color other than red... etc

Example non-period-related icebreakers: favorite punctuation, favorite type of socks, something beautiful you saw recently, an act of kindness you or someone else did recently, something that makes you feel grounded, favorite moon phase, favorite planet and why, favorite way to relax... etc

Ask the group to raise their hands if they've never heard of reusable menstrual products before this workshop, then raise your hand if you have a friend who uses reusable products, then raise your hand if you already use reusable products. Getting a sense of who's in the room.

For the people who know very little, ask what their first impressions or best guesses are. Facilitators and experienced people can then share and validate those same feelings of confusion, intimidation, misinformation, excitement, etc.

With a large drawing, start with a basic lesson on menstruation and reproductive anatomy: uterus, cervix, vagina. Where does the blood come from, and where does it come out? How much blood? (Average flow is 3 tablespoons per cycle, but can be more or less.) Probably include other body parts for context: rectum, anus, bladder, urethra, pubic bone, vulva, labia, clitoris.

**Optional Discussion:** What disposable menstrual products do people already use, what are their pros and cons, how do people feel about them, availability, affordability. Do people know about the "tampon tax"?

**Optional Discussion:** What are ways that period stigma shows up in our lives or at our school? Does anyone have examples or stories to share?

Introduce reusable products and their general benefits (saving money long-term, convenience, comfort, health, sustainability).

Using actual reusable products that you can pass around (for cups, cloth pads, and period underwear), go through the basics:

1. What is it made of
2. What are the variations among brands/styles
3. For cups: How does it work anatomically (use diagrams and demonstrate a few folding techniques)

4. How to use in daily life (dorm life, out and about, travel)
5. Cleaning and maintaining it
6. Pros and Cons
7. Comments and tips from people who have used it or friends have used it
8. Q&A

At the very end, it would be great to give out post-its or notecards and have people anonymously write questions or reflections. Then collect them from everyone (even blank ones) and share them and answer questions. If people didn't ask certain frequently asked questions that you think are important, feel free to address those too.

***Optional Discussion:*** What changes do people want to see on campus, regarding menstruation? Free products in bathrooms? Being able to openly talk about periods? To dispel some common misconception? Do people have ideas for the initiative, or ways to make it more accessible?

If you have products available at the workshop, let people know what options you have, and invite them to stick around after to get them! If you have zines, buttons, posters, or information pages, offer these! And make sure to announce any upcoming events, how they can get involved, how to get products later if they're not ready yet, and who to contact with future questions or concerns.

If you do collect people's contact information, feel free to follow-up with them to thank them for coming and offer digital versions of any materials, upcoming events, or links to resources.