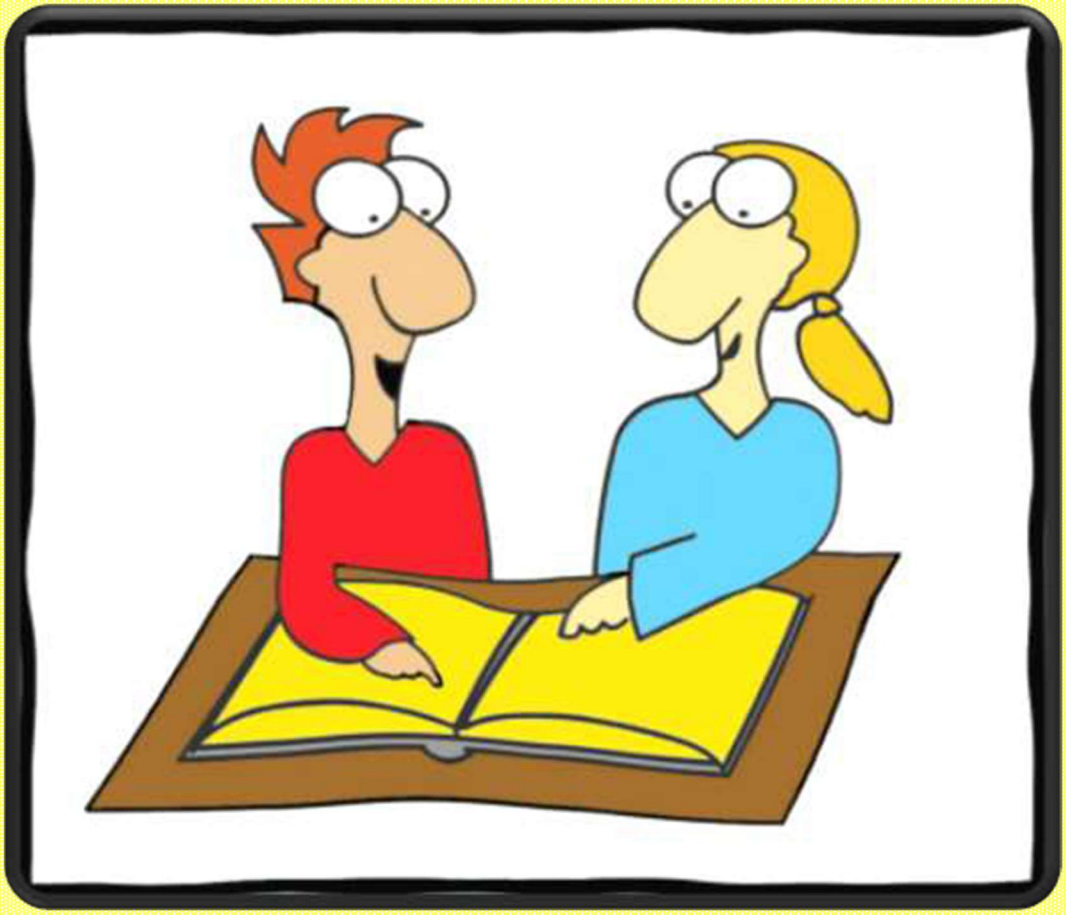
LITERACY

FACE TO FACE

A HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEER ADULT LITERACY TUTORS

SECOND EDITION



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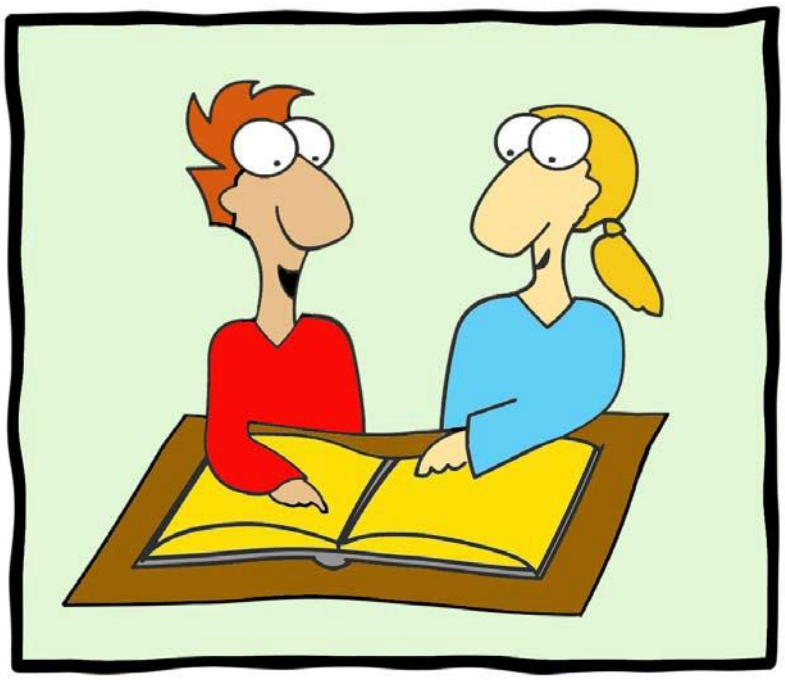

Literacy Face to Face is a handbook to assist volunteer adult literacy tutors and others who want to help someone improve their literacy. It may also be useful to support the delivery of adult literacy tutor training programs and students enrolled in vocational programs.

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If you need further support or advice on the use of this handbook, contact the teachers at the Reading Writing Hotline:

They may be able to suggest further resources, or to put you in contact with someone in your area who may be able to help you.

You may also find it useful to join the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) www.acal.edu.au or the state council for adult literacy in your home state. They provide occasional workshops, conferences, online webinars, and links to others in the network of people working in the adult literacy field.

Who is this written for?

This handbook is written for anyone who wants to help another adult improve their reading and writing skills. It presents some practical suggestions which are based on an understanding of how we, as efficient readers and writers, use our literacy skills.

It offers suggestions which are relevant to adults with a wide range of literacy needs and abilities - from the beginning reader/writer to the person who reads reasonably well but has little confidence in their spelling ability. It is also relevant to people from a non-English speaking background, provided their spoken English is sufficiently developed to carry on a basic conversation.

As adults, we use our literacy skills in diverse contexts – in using an automatic teller machine, sending a text message on a mobile phone, reading stories to the children or leaving notes for fellow workers…etc. This handbook will suggest ways of helping your student to develop reading and writing skills which are appropriate to the contexts of their lives, whatever they may be.

The approach followed is referred to in the adult education field as a student-centred approach. This is the approach that has been most widely adopted in the teaching of adult literacy and numeracy in Australia and overseas. Since adults come to us with such a wide range of needs, and of literacy and educational backgrounds, a student-centred approach begins with a response to the individual student's needs, rather than presenting them with a one-size-fits-all program.

Literacy Face to Face is a practical set of how-to's. It is not a complete literacy tutor training course. Ideally, the person using this handbook will have some background in education and ideally in adult education. The brief sections on the theoretical background are included as a refresher for those who have studied these topics before and as a reminder of the theory which underpins the teaching/learning strategies which follow.

Although the focus is on volunteer tutors working in a one-to-one situation, teachers of class-based programs and vocational education classes will also find *Literacy Face to Face* useful, particularly the section on *The Vocational Student*.

How to use this handbook

You probably don't need to read all of this handbook. However you will need to read most of this first section. Even if you have previously been trained as an adult literacy tutor, you should read the sections on *How do we read?* and *The adult learner* as a refresher. You should also read *Assessing your student's needs*.

The main part of this handbook has been divided into four: *The Beginner Reader/Writer*, *The Intermediate Student*, *The Vocational Student* and *Writing and Spelling*. Read the descriptions below to decide which one most suits your student.

The beginner reader/writer

A beginning reader is not necessarily someone who cannot read anything at all. That may be what they say, but this is rarely the case. We use the term here to also refer to someone who may know the names of all, or most, of the letters in the alphabet, may be able to recognise or work out a few simple words, recognize words in common signs or labels, or read a few sentences about a familiar topic. They may be able to write a few words such as their name and address and may be able to write a few simple sentences, albeit with spelling mistakes. They may have had some schooling in Australia or be from a non-English speaking background. However, it is assumed that they can speak English well enough to carry on a basic conversation.

The intermediate student

We refer to intermediate reader/ writers to include those who can recognise most of the words in a short text such as a newspaper item, and who can try to sound out a word with an understanding of most letter/sound relationships. They will, however, probably read slowly with loss of comprehension and will have limited word attack skills to draw on when they reach a problem word.

The vocational student

This is a student who is enrolled in, or preparing for, a vocational course such as a TAFE course and who is struggling with the reading and writing demands of the course. The main focus is on the reading and writing they need to do for that course.

Writing and spelling

This section is of relevance to all adult literacy tutors whether your student is a beginner, an intermediate student, a vocational student, or just wants to improve their writing and spelling. This section can be read in conjunction with any of the above three sections or may be used by itself for the student who only needs to improve their spelling.

Everyday Numeracy

Since numeracy is closely integrated with, and inseparable from everyday literacy, this section is also of relevance to all adult literacy tutors and should be read in conjunction with the above sections.

The remainder of the handbook is comprised of sections which may or may not be relevant to your student. Look through the *Contents* page and decide which ones you need.

How do we read?

Who is this section for?

Anyone who is going to help someone learn to read and write should read this section first. Even if you are a trained tutor and have previously learnt about reading theory you should refresh your memory and understanding of the theories on which the handbook is based.

How do we read?

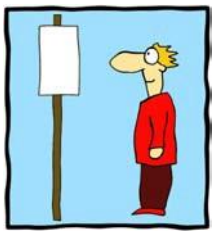
Before you read on, pause for a minute to think about how you think you learnt to read and how, as an efficient reader now, you manage to turn those squiggles on the page into meaning.

You may have said to yourself something like: I learnt the sounds made by the letters then learnt to blend them together then understood the meaning of the word. Now, as an efficient reader, that process is simply faster.

That is only part of what is involved in reading. Many people who 'know their sounds' still have trouble with reading. This section will point to some other very important aspects of the reading process.

In order to experience some of the frustrations which your student may be facing, try to learn the sounds which correspond to the following symbols. Give yourself 30 seconds to memorise them and cover up the rest of the page while you do it.

ξ - u
‡ - n
ς - t
Ж - d
Ґ - s
∩ - r
ü - e
Ю - h



Now cover that and try to work out what this word says:

ς Ю ξ‡ Ж ü ∩

Did you have trouble? Does this make it easier?

As the storm approached we could hear a clap of **ς Ю ξ ‡ Ж ü ∩** *and see a flash of lightning.*

It was difficult for you to read the word by itself but easier to read it in a whole sentence because you could use the rest of the sentence to guess at the meaning. This is a very important aspect of reading.

The efficient reader uses four sets of clues

1. The flow of the language

Fill in the blanks in this sentence:

Joe had cereal as well ..... coffee for his breakfast before he left .....the office.

How did you know which words to put in? You knew because they just sounded right. They make the sentence flow as we expect it to. However, someone from a non-English speaking background who does not speak English very well may not be able to fill in those blank spaces. We need to have a feel for the flow, or grammar of the language.

2. The meaning of the text

Neil Armstrong was the first ..... to land on the .....

How did you know which words to put there? You were helped here by what you knew about the subject. If you had not heard of Neil Armstrong then you would have trouble guessing which words fit in those blank spaces.

However, if we, as fluent speakers of the English language, and as people who know who Neil Armstrong was, were to read such a passage with all the words printed there rather than blank spaces, we wouldn't have to look carefully at those words as we read them, because we can already predict what they may be. We can predict on the basis of our feeling for the flow of the language and our knowledge of the subject.

Efficient readers predict, or guess, much of what they are reading. They do not look carefully at every letter of every word. They just take in a sample of the print to help their predictions and to confirm that they are right.

3. The letter/sound clues

Of course we also need to know something of the possible sounds made by the letters (phonics) as we are reading. But it is important to remember that the four sets of clues interact and support each other so learning about letters and sounds in isolation from real texts makes the learning difficult.

4. The context of the text

When we are reading in real situations (as opposed to 'learning to read' lists of words), we have another set of clues to help us and these come from the context of the material. Real texts don't have to be whole passages of writing. A real text might just be the student's name and address written on a dummy application form.

Or it might just be a word such as 

on a road traffic sign.

The more clues there are to suggest what the word might be, the easier it is to identify the sounds made by the letters.

For example, when we pick up the sports section of the newspaper we already make predictions about what we are going to read there and the kind of language we will meet. Those predictions are different from those we make if we are looking at the TV guide, or the motor traffic handbook, or a flier advertising the specials at the supermarket, or the street sign at the end of the street. Texts using real language in authentic contexts such as these, are called authentic texts.

These four systems of clues interact to produce efficient reading:

1. The letters in the words
2. The flow or grammar of the sentence
3. The meaning of the passage
4. The context of the text.

Implications of this for helping your student:

- You need to help your student use all four sets of clues, not just the clues given by the letter/sound relationship. 'Sound it out' is not the only answer.
- For this reason, it will be easier for your student if they learn to read using whole, real language in real contexts rather than lists of isolated words and letters.
- Teach the correspondence between letters and sounds (phonics) in the context of whole words in meaningful contexts.

The value of prediction

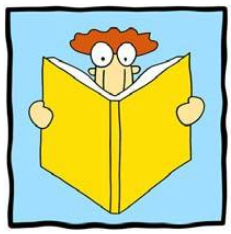
Read this passage:

There was a door on the right and one on the left.
As they all went in though the right hand door past the
the telephone, it started to ring.

Did you notice the mistakes? *Through* is mis-spelt and *the* is written twice before *telephone.*

If you did not notice those mistakes (and most people do not) the reason is that you were predicting what the words would be. You did not expect to read *though* in that position in the sentence and you did not expect to see *the* written twice together. Your eyes did not rest carefully on each word. You just took little peeps at the print and filled in the rest from what you already knew about how the sentence should flow.

Although that passage was specially written to make it highly likely that you would 'make a mistake', you undoubtedly make 'mistakes' in your reading constantly as all good readers do. Where a text says *John said,* efficient readers will often read *said John*, or they will omit a word or put in a word and as long as the passage still makes sense they will not realise that they have done it.



We make these 'mistakes' because we are concentrating on meaning and predicting ahead. Our eyes just skip across the page. This is not just a lazy habit we get into. We need to be able to read quickly to understand what we are reading about, so this predicting strategy is essential for intelligent, meaningful reading. If we spend too much time and effort looking carefully at words and sounding them out, then we lose track of the meaning of the passage.

However, even though you probably consider yourself a good reader, there are occasions when we all find reading difficult; when we find ourselves trying to read something we have no background knowledge about. For example, if we have no scientific background, reading a scientific journal pulls us all up short. Not many of us can read a text book on quantum physics confidently. Even if we can understand all the words, or could give a dictionary type definition for most of them, our eyes are not able to skip confidently across the page, making predictions about what is coming on the basis of our knowledge of the subject. Also, the language may be used in an unfamiliar way. Think of the problems most of us have with traditional legal documents.

When we are reading something unfamiliar, our reading becomes cautious. Under these circumstances, we don't make many 'mistakes'. We look closely at the words because we can't rely on our background knowledge and our feeling for the flow of the language for very much help.

This slow reading, concentrating on each word because we cannot guess what is coming next, makes it difficult to get to the meaning. This then presents a cycle of problems. If we do not understand what we are reading about, we have to read slowly. But if we read slowly, that makes it even harder for us to understand what we are reading about.

Implications of this for helping your student:

- You can break this cycle of problems by giving your student reading material which they know something about to start with, so that they can use the strategy of prediction.

- Ensure that the subject and the language are familiar.

What is the difference between a good reader and a weaker reader?

Is it just that the weaker reader 'doesn't know their sounds'? It is much more complicated than that. For example, imagine that one reader reads the following sentence:

nose
The tyres made a loud screeching ~~noise~~.

The reader has read *nose* instead of *noise*. A seemingly small mistake as there is only a difference of one letter between the two words. However, it doesn't make sense so it is therefore a significant or 'bad' mistake.

Now imagine that a second reader reads the sentence this way:

sound
The tyres made a loud screeching ~~noise~~.

This reader has read *sound* instead of *noise. Sound* looks nothing like *noise* so it would seem to be a very careless mistake. However, it makes sense and shows that the reader is thinking of the meaning of the sentence and is predicting on the basis of meaning. This is in fact what all good readers do. It is therefore a 'good' mistake.

Both of these readers have missed or overlooked one of the sets of clues we use when we are reading. The reader who read *nose* has not used the meaning clues. The reader who read *sound* has overlooked the letter/sound clues. This second reader missed these clues because the reader's mind was on the meaning of the passage. They already had a pretty good idea what word might be there so they had no need to look carefully at the letters.

What do we do when the prediction is wrong?

Good readers do make bad predictions. But one of the marks of a good reader is that they know when they make a prediction which doesn't make sense.

Read this passage:

The boys' arrows were nearly gone so they sat down on the grass and stopped hunting. Over at the edge of the wood they saw Henry making a bow to a small girl who was coming down the road. She then gave Henry a note. Read to the boys, it caused great excitement, laughter and hilarity. After a minute but rapid examination of their weapons, they ran down to the valley.

What was going on in your mind at certain points in that passage? When you first read *bow*, *read* and *minute,* you probably mis-read them. You probably used *arrows* as a clue as to how *bow* was to be read then when you read on, you realized it didn't make sense and you automatically adjusted it in your mind.

If so, well done! That is just what good readers do. Try to become conscious of your reading behaviour and you will realise that you do this often.

Implications of this for helping your student
When your student is reading to you and makes a mistake:

- If it makes sense, ignore it and let them read on.
- If it does not make sense, let them read on a little to give them time to work it out for themselves.
- If they read on and ignore it, stop them and ask: *Does that make sense? If it doesn't - what letter does it start with and what word starting with that letter might make sense there*?
- Of course, there are times when you will simply have to tell them what the word is. Don't let them struggle needlessly with frustration.
- Encourage them always to monitor their own reading in terms of: *Does it sound right and does it make sense?*

References and further reading for this section

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The adult learner

Who is this section for?

Adult literacy programs usually define an adult as anyone who has left school. Even if your student has left school earlier than the legal age, or is at TAFE or other vocational training, they will want the world to treat them as adults, and that is the important consideration.

This section is important for anyone helping such students to learn to read and write.

Adult learning

There are a number of aspects of the learning process for adults which are different from the learning process for children. It is important that we don't set up an inappropriate learning situation or environment for our adult students. This can easily happen if the learning environment we set up is modelled on the one we remember from our education as a child.

There is a large and well-established body of theory and related practice in the field of adult education. These are some of the important points that are made:

Self direction

One of the qualities which differentiates adults from children is their need to perceive themselves, and to be perceived by others, as being self-directed. Learning will be enhanced when our students are treated as self-directing, responsible people who are encouraged to take an active role in decision making and planning their learning programs.

Our students need to be consulted in setting goals (*Do you need to work on the reading and writing for work first, or shopping, or ... or ... ?*) and deciding on reading material *(Which of these stories in the paper interests you most?*). We also need to seek their feedback on the learning strategies which we choose.

Our students can only do this however, if we explain to them the reason for the learning activities. Each of the activities in this handbook has an aim which is expressed simply, and some background information which you should discuss with your student. Remind them that you won't be their learning helper forever. Your role is to help them develop some strategies to help themselves to learn. Think of yourself not as a teacher but as a learning facilitator.

However, many tutors find that initially, their students are unwilling to take this self-directing role. This is probably because they are modelling their learning situation on what they remember of school. They expect you to be in the teacher role and to tell them what to do. Initially you may have to respect this, but it is in the student's best interests if you slowly move them to the position of taking more responsibility for their learning.

Help your students to:

- set their own goals
- evaluate their progress
- give feedback on the usefulness of teaching/learning activities.

The role of experience

Adults have a rich reservoir of experience to draw on in a new learning situation.There are several points here. One is that we can use this reservoir of experience as an invaluable resource in the learning situation. For example, we have seen that the process of reading is easier when we are reading about a topic we are familiar with.

If adults can link new learning to something they already know about, the learning is more effective. Any learning not directly related to past experience is slower. This is true of any learning, but we tend to think of child learning largely as making marks on a blank slate. Adults are not blank slates. As 'learning facilitators' we must find ways of making links to the marks that are already there whenever possible. For example, when learning to spell or read a new word, try to link it to one your student already knows.

The second point is related to our self-concept. Malcolm Knowles (1978), one of the best known writers in the field of adult learning, puts it this way:

> *Because an adult defines himself [sic] largely by his experience, he has a deep investment in its value. And so, when he finds himself in a situation in which his experience is not being used, or its worth minimized, it is not just his experience that is being rejected, he feels rejected as a person. (p. 50)*

Implications of this for helping your student

- Talk with your students about their lives and experiences and show you are interested.
- Use their experiences and interests as a guide to choosing topics for reading and writing.
- Whenever possible, try to link new learning to something they already know about.

Immediate needs

Many people decide to learn to read and write or improve their reading and writing when they are adults, in response to some critical event in their lives. Your student may have just been offered a promotion at work, or may have been made redundant and is looking for a new job, or their child has begun to ask them to read books to them.

Such points in our lives are times of high motivation. If we take advantage of these learning needs, progress is likely to be enhanced. Adult learners are learners in a hurry, so we need to start working on their immediate needs. Even if your student is a beginner reader and writer but needs to reply to some formal business letters, you can start there, by providing them with some model letters which they can copy to meet their immediate needs. You can then use those pieces of writing to teach them about sounds and letters, spelling etc. That learning is likely to be more effective than if you start with 'the basics' and tell them you will get to the business letters in six or twelve months time.

- Find out what your student needs to use reading and writing skills for now, and start to work on that.

Relaxed learning environment

As adults, our response to anxiety is negative. Extra stress from the learning situation causes a slowing down of learning. Most of us enter a new learning situation in a state of stress or anxiety to start with and any further stress can lead to lower performance. You don't need to 'push' your student as they will bring their own motivation. Encouragement and praise will help much more.

- Avoid putting your student in a testing situation.
- Warmth ... encouragement ... praise.

The importance of success

Because adult learners are usually voluntary learners, we can (and do) choose not to continue if we feel we are wasting our time. Early success is important. This is particularly so for adult literacy students. Your student probably has few, if any, memories of successful formal learning situations. Adult literacy students are, almost by definition, failed learners at school (with the exception of some non-English speaking background learners). Your student is undoubtedly entering this learning situation with a fear of failing yet again. You need to ensure that they experience some success from the beginning, but you will need to manage the learning situation so that the success is genuine. Adults know when false praise is being heaped on them.

- Give activities which ensure success, so that you can give frequent and genuine praise and encouragement.

Stress and trauma

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not something that only occurs following events such as physical catastrophe, political persecution or domestic violence. It can also result from childhood experiences such as bullying, or from the years of living with the perceived shame of feeling that you can't read or write adequately, and of feeling that you are perceived as 'stupid'. All of these experiences can have lasting effects on our brain functions: an effect that is referred to as PTSD.

Many of our students relate deeply affecting stories of having been ridiculed and shamed by teachers and other students at school, and of feeling like an outsider. These experiences have the same effect on a part of the brain (the amygdala) that is responsible for our response to physical danger: the flight, fight or freeze response. The teachings from areas of neuroscience can help us to understand some of the behaviours that our adult students present, and can suggest ways of helping them to manage these deeply felt emotions. As Rhodes (2018) reminds us,

> *When students enter our classrooms and their amygdalae are in charge because of old associations with classrooms and learning, it is necessary to flip that.*

As students at school, and as adults facing shame and embarrassment in the community, our students have learnt coping behaviours to help them to deal with these situations. They have developed (mal)adaptations to these stressful and threatening situations. Inevitably, these are behaviours that they very often bring with them to the adult education situation.

For example, one of the common responses of struggling students is absenteeism. If school is just too difficult, absenteeism is the obvious solution. If your adult student is often absent or late, it is undoubtedly not just because they are lazy or not fully committed to the program, but more likely because the amygdala has lit up to remind them that this is a scary situation they are entering, and one that is best avoided.

Or their (mal)adaptation to the distress of the classroom may have been to try to remain invisible, by sitting at the back, never volunteering an answer and generally being a passive member of the group. As an adult learner this response may persist so that they may be perceived by the tutor or teacher as being aloof and unfriendly, bored and uninterested. It is more likely that they are falling back on learnt behaviour in order to protect their feeling of safety in what has always been a threatening situation. The student who yawns repeatedly during your session is not necessarily sleep-deprived. It is more likely that their brain is telling them that this is scary territory, where failure and therefore shame is likely, so shutting down is the best tactic.

The messages from adult learning theory (above) suggest activities that can make the adult learning situation feel safe. However, there are additional strategies that can help remove the sense of threat from the learning situation and help students manage their emotional response to it.

- Help your students talk about their emotional fears associated with learning, especially when they are showing signs of distress.
- Help them recall and discuss positive experiences with learning, not necessarily formal school-based learning.
- Always be the calm, reassuring and emotionally safe presence in the room to enable your student's emotions to mirror yours.

Physical aspects

There are a number of physical aspects of being an adult which also affect the learning process.

The negatives

- Eyesight starts to decline noticeably after about 40 years. If your student hasn't been a reader and has had no other need to do close work, they may not know that their eyesight needs attention - possibly glasses - before they can read comfortably.

- Hearing starts to decline steadily from about 10 years. Make sure you are sitting so that your student can hear you comfortably.
- Our short-term memory begins to decline so we need plenty of review activities to make sure the learning goes into long term memory. We also need greater time for reflection after learning activities to reinforce learning. We remember something best if we draw it back to memory often after the initial learning activity. For this reason, you need to encourage your student to do some 'homework' every night if possible. This might just be looking over spelling words, or new sight words, or 'having a go' at reading the newspaper, or writing a few lines in a diary. If they only open their books once a week when they are with you, they will undoubtedly forget whatever they learnt last week. They will experience failure once again and become frustrated. We forget most in the first 24 hours, and particularly the first hour, after the initial learning, so reviewing or practising what they have learnt very soon after the session with you is very important. It might, however, be best to avoid the term 'homework' as it may bring back unhappy school memories.

- Encourage your student to do some reading and writing at home or look over their work several times during the week.
- Give them plenty of opportunity to go over, or review, new learning.
- Adult literacy students who are successful are those who practise at home between tutoring sessions!

The positives

However, ageing is not all negative! There are some positive aspects to maturity which compensate for declining eyesight and short term memory etc.

- The role which experience plays is a powerful one.
- Motivation is likely to be high. Many, many adult literacy students say: *If only I had known when I was at school what I know now ...*
- Verbal ability usually increases with age.

References for this section

- Brookfield, S. 1996, *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning*. Open University Press
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Planning for success

Who is this section for?

Because all adult literacy students have different reading and writing needs and different skill areas that need to be worked on, every student needs a different learning program. There is no one program that suits everyone. For this reason, an assessment is crucial so that you are not wasting your student's time with something that they are not interested in, or don't need to read or write, or can do anyway. The first step in planning for success is therefore an individual assessment of the student's needs and goals.

The initial assessment

Before you can begin to help your student, you need to find out:

- what they want and need to be able to read and write
- what they can read and write now
- what their literacy strengths are
- what skills need to be worked on
- why they haven't learnt to read and write as well as they would like.

If your student has come to you from an adult literacy coordinator, this assessment will most likely have been done already. If not, then you need to work through these questions with your student. There are some forms at the end of this section to help you record some of the information.

- Remember, this is an informal assessment. You are not testing your student. You are trying to elicit information in an informal conversation that is focused around a number of issues.
- The assessment should start in your first session, but should continue over two or three or more sessions in order to get a complete picture. In fact, assessment is an ongoing aspect of your tutoring. The goals which your student is able to articulate on the first occasion may change. Their skills will almost certainly be better than they suggest to you initially.
- This will be a time of high anxiety for your student. It will help if you acknowledge the stress. Many of our students say this is the most difficult thing they have done in their lives.
- Spend the first part of the session just talking. Don't ask them to read or write anything until you have had a chat and they feel a little more at ease. Many students welcome the opportunity to tell 'their story': the reason why they can't read and write as well as they would like.
- You are assessing not only your student's needs but also their strengths. Try to make them feel good about what they can do.

1. Student background

It is important that you know something of the student's schooling and family background as this often explains why they didn't learn to read and write as well as they would like. Many students say, *I have got this dyslexia* or *I think I'm just dumb.* But when you start to talk to them you discover that they had five different schools before they were 9; or spent most of second class in hospital; or had undiagnosed deafness until they were 12 ... etc. Just being able to talk about that is often liberating for many students.

Examples of background information you will need to know:

- **Non-English speaking background?**
  What is their first language? Script ?
  How did they learn to speak English?
  Language usually spoken at home?
  Years of schooling?
  Post-secondary study or qualifications?
  English language classes since arrival in Australia?

- **Schooling background**
  How many schools?
  Any lengthy absences?
  Age left school and grade reached?
  How did they feel about school?
  Any ideas why they didn't learn as well as they might at school?

- **Health issues**
  As a child or now?
  Medication which may affect learning - as a child or now?
  Eyesight?
  Hearing?

- **Current personal details**
  Occupation?
  Interests?
  Family details - Children? Ages?

Remember, this is not a formal interview. Just keep these questions in mind to structure your conversation with your student over a number of weeks.

2. Goals and Needs

Very few (if any) of our students come along 'just to learn to read and write'. They want to learn to read and write in order to do something and you need to find out what this is. Some students may not know how to express their needs, and you will need to prod a little by asking questions about their lives and the reading and writing aspects of the daily tasks that they find difficult. Or ask them what things that they can't do now that they would like to do when they can read and write better.

It is really important that you help your student to establish short term and long-term goals. Just learning to read and write is a lifetime task. It needs to be broken down to achievable chunks to give feelings of success. For example, a student's long-term goal might be *to get a promotion at work*, but some short-term goals related to this might be *to learn to spell 10 work related words and write a change of shift report properly* in one month.

Most long-term goals can be broken down to several short-term goals. You also need to work out what reading and writing skills you need to work on in order to achieve those goals. For the student who wants to get a promotion at work, the goals and skills involved might look something like this:

Long term goals	Short term goals	Reading/writing skills needed
Get a promotion	1. Write an end of shift report properly	• Spell key words • Use appropriate format and language
	2. Write an accident report	• Spell key words • Use appropriate format and language • Develop proofreading and editing skills
	3. Read safety information	• Recognise key words • Develop reading skills of prediction using context clues
	4. Read other notices in workplace	• Recognise key words • Develop reading skills of prediction using context clues
	5. Write meeting minutes	• Spell key words • Use appropriate format and language • Develop proofreading and editing skills

At the end of this section is a form which you might like to use to record your student's goals, and another example of a student's short term and long-term goals. This is something you work on together and revisit every few months.

3. Interests

It is also important to know what your student's interests are, not only so that you know what things they would like to read and write about, but so you know a little more about them and can show an interest in them as a person. This can sometimes be difficult as many students don't know what to answer when you ask them what they are interested in. If you haven't been a reader, you don't know what you would be interested in reading. To ask them what sorts of things they watch on television can sometimes help.

4. What can your student read and write?

Before you ask your student to read anything for you, ask them what sorts of things they *can* read. You then avoid putting them in the situation of asking them to read something which is far too difficult.

When you ask them to write something for you, start with their name and address. If they can manage that, ask if they could have a go at writing a few sentences about themselves; perhaps about the kinds of things you have been talking about.

Tell them not to worry about the spelling - just have a guess at it because you need to know what sort of mistakes they make in order to help them. And it is best to walk away while they do this. None of us likes writing while someone is looking over our shoulder. Some students are very phobic about writing. It may be necessary to leave the writing until the next session.

Ticking off items which your student can read and write on the Reading and Writing Checklist included at the end of this section is often a good confidence booster. Go through this with them before you ask them to read and write anything.

You should prepare yourself with a range of reading samples, ranging from images of signs and labels (which you can find on the internet); a brief note such as you might leave for a tradesperson; advertising notices which come as junk mail, and the newspaper or magazines. Always ask your student first, *Do you think you could read this?* and start with pieces that are just a little bit easier than you think they can manage.

When your student has read a passage for you, ask if they can tell you what they've just read. Many students can read the words well enough, but don't really take in what they have read. Knowing this is an important part of the assessment.

5. Why is your student having problems?

While your student is reading, take notice of the kinds of mistakes they make. Do they try to 'sound out' the difficult words? And if so, do they seem to know the sounds, even though it might not help with the word? Do they make incorrect guesses which result in nonsense? Do they seem to be monitoring their reading in terms of *Does it make sense*? or do they make mistakes and keep reading on, even though they have just read nonsense? It may take some time to get a real picture of your student's reading strategies, but it is important information to help you choose appropriate learning activities. Below are some examples of appropriate activities to address particular problems:

Problem	Try this:
Does your student have little knowledge of the letter/ sound relationships? Are they not able to 'sound out' simple, phonically regular words?	**The beginner reader:** • Language experience • Phonics
Does your student make wild guesses and ignore the letter/sound clues?	**The intermediate reader:** • Cluster analysis
Does your student try to 'sound out' the difficult words without trying to predict what word might fit?	**The beginner reader:** • Language experience • Cloze **The intermediate reader:** • Cloze • Scan, question, read
Does your student read nonsense and not monitor their reading in terms of *Does it make sense?*	**The beginner reader:** • Language experience • Cloze **The intermediate reader:** • Cloze • Scan, question, read
Does your student read slowly, hesitantly and word-by-word?	**The beginner reader:** • Language experience • Read-along • Repeated reading **The intermediate reader:** • 100 words per minute
Does your student read something and not understand or remember what they have read?	**The intermediate reader:** • Scan, question, read • Mind mapping

The reading/writing checklist

At the end of this section there is a blank reading checklist and a writing checklist. You might find these useful to focus your discussion about goals at the first session. They are not exhaustive lists, but some suggestions to get you both thinking of the tasks that may be relevant to your student's life. Turn over the page and add more if you need to.

Tick off all the things your student can do, and then date one or a few of the things you are going to begin working on. Then date it again in the next column when your student feels reasonably happy with them. Then find something else to start on.

Reassessment

Every two or three months you should set aside some time for a *How are we going?* session when you help your student assess their progress and set new goals. Ask yourselves questions such as *Have we achieved this goal? ... If not, was it too ambitious or has it turned out to be unimportant after all? ... What has given most satisfaction? ... What has given most frustration? ... Why was this easy to learn?... Why was this difficult? ... What next?*

It is important also that you focus on how your student *feels* about their progress. Most students say they begin to feel more confident about their skills long before they have actually reached their goals. The first indication that progress is being made is often just a 'lifting of the chin' and it has long been argued that this self-confidence is the foundation on which progress in the skills is made. Is your student feeling a bit more confident about engaging in the tasks or events in their life where literacy is involved? Help your student acknowledge this as real literacy progress.

A student file

At your first session you should establish a student file. This should contain the reading samples and pieces of writing which your student does at the initial assessment and at each reassessment time. It should also contain the Reading and Writing Checklist and Goal Sheet. It is really important that you keep evidence of your student's progress as there will undoubtedly be periods when they (or you) feel that no progress is happening at all; when they hit a plateau. It is useful at these times to be able to demonstrate what progress has been made.

Lesson records

Make sure you keep a brief record of what you do each lesson, and keep this in the student file also. Ideally, the student should write this themselves, but they will probably need your help to know what to write at first. Encourage them to reflect and record how they felt about it also. It might just be *This was hard. ... This was confusing ... I enjoyed this...* or *... This was useful.* This kind of feedback is important for you to know but it is important also that the student is encouraged to reflect on their learning and feels that you value and respect their responses. Reflection is a very significant part of learning.

Getting organized

If your student has not been a successful learner in an educational setting, you may need to help them to get organized for this new learning venture. One of your early tasks will be to talk with them about *when* they are going to set time aside during the week to review the work that you have done with them: to practice their new spelling words, or do some writing, or just to do some reading of a magazine or a book. Help them to identify the quiet times and places in their lives when they won't be disturbed. And help them to make a commitment to themselves that they will engage in some kind of literacy activity every day. They will make little progress if they only attend to it once a week when they are with you. Help them also to organize *where* they do their work. Will they use a loose leaf folder, or an exercise book? What section will they put their new spelling words in, or their reflections on each lesson, or finished and edited pieces of work?

What next?

Improving our literacy is a life-long task for all of us. We constantly need to develop new literacy skills to approach new aspects of our life. Your job as a literacy tutor is to help your students develop the learning-to-learn skills that will help them to approach new literacy demands independently.

For this reason, your student's literacy learning will not be complete when your tutoring sessions cease, and it will be useful if you help them to set up some literacy activities or further goals that they might commit to. There is evidence that students who continue to engage in literacy activities after their literacy tuition has ceased, continue to make progress. Those who do not, lose the literacy gains that they have made. By literacy activities, we mean any activities in which their literacy skills are being used or challenged. That might mean, for example, doing another course (not necessarily a literacy course); joining the local library and committing to read a book every month; keeping a journal or diary and committing to write in it every week; keeping in touch with you by writing an email regularly; or taking on a role at work or a community group that requires them to challenge their literacy.

For this reason, helping them to develop and document some new goals before your sessions end, may help them to commit to this continuous improvement.

References for this Section

- Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds) 2010, *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 158-160
- Jacobson, E., Degener, S. & Purcell-Gates, V. 2003, *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners,* National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Boston, MA. pp. 26 – 41
- Schwab, I, Allemano, J, Mallows, D, McKeown A. (2015) *Training to Teach Adults English,* NIACE, Leicester, UK

Short and long term goals (example)

What are my goals?	What steps do I need to take to reach my goals? (short term goals)	What reading/ writing / numeracy skills do I need to work on to reach my short term goals?	Date when started	Date when OK
1. Get my forklift driver's licence	• Get a copy of the manual. • Get Alison to record it on my phone for me so I can read along. • Learn the information. • Learn how to answer the test questions.	• Learn to recognise the key words. • Learn how to understand and remember information. • Learn to understand the question format. • Recognise the key words in possible questions.		
2. Get a job as a forklift driver	• Write a resume. • Write covering letter or application form. • Read job ads.	• Study models of other resumes to work out possible format. • Study models of covering letters to work outpossible format. • Learn basic computer word processing skills so I can type resume and letters (with help). • Learn spelling of key words. • Learn to recognise and understand key words in ads. • Learn to scan computer website job ad pages for fork lift driver jobs.		

Short and long term goals

What are my goals?	What steps do I need to take to reach my goals? (short term goals)	What reading/ writing / numeracy skills do I need to work on to reach my short term goals?	Date when started	Date when OK

Reading Checklist

✓ if happy with			Date when started to work on	Date when OK (but still need more practice)
	Name and address			
	Family names			
	Shopping	Shop signs and directions		
		Labels		
	Forms	Medicare		
		Centrelink		
		Others?		
	Letters	Personal		
		Business		
	Notes/ text messages	From family/friends		
		From school		
	Newsletters	From school		
		From club or organisation		
	Driving	Driver's license manual		
		Road signs		
		Maps		
	Instructions	Food packages		
		Cleaning products		
		Gardening products		
		Do-it-yourself kits		
		Recipes		
		Medication		
	Digital	Automatic Teller Machine (ATM)		
		Mobile Phone		
		Text messages		
		email		
		internet		
	Work	Instructions		
		Safety information		
		Messages/ emails		
		Operating procedures		
		Meeting minutes etc		
	For a course			
	Newspapers			
	Magazines			
	Novels			
	Non-fiction			
	Other?			

Writing Checklist

✓ if happy with			Date when started to work on	Date when OK (but still need more practice)
	Name and address			
	Family names			
	Greeting cards			
	Shopping	lists		
	Forms	Medicare		
		Centrelink		
		Others?		
	Letters	Personal		
		Business		
	Notes	For family/friends		
		For tradespeople		
		School		
	Resume			
	Job applications			
	Work	Invoices		
		Quotes		
		Messages		
		Job card		
		Accident report		
		Change of shift report		
		Instructions		
		Meeting minutes		
	For a Course	lesson notes		
		Essays/assignments		
	Digital	Emails		
		Text messages		
		Forms		
	Other?			

What's in this section?

- The language experience approach
- Social sight words and environmental print
- Phonics
- Cloze
- Just reading
- Case studies and lesson plans
- References for this section

Who is this section for?

A beginning adult reader is not necessarily someone who cannot read anything at all. That may be what they say, but this is rarely the case. In this handbook, the term also refers to someone who may know the names of all, or most, of the letters in the alphabet, may be able to recognise or work out a few simple words and write a few words such as their name and address. They may have had some schooling in Australia or be from a non-English speaking background. However, it is assumed that they can speak English well enough to carry on a simple conversation.

Background to these teaching/learning activities

Reading

Before you go on, it may be useful to read or review the section *How do we read?*
In brief, reading is easiest when we are able to use four sets of cues or clues.
These are:

1. The sounds of the letters in the words
2. The flow or grammar of the sentence
3. The meaning of the text
4. The context of the text.

You need to help your student use all four sets of clues, not just the clues given by the letter/sound relationship. 'Sound it out' is not the only answer.

For this reason, it will be easier for your student if they learn to read using real language in real situations, rather than lists of isolated words and letters.

Your student may say, *I can't read at all. I need to start from the beginning*. This is very rarely true, and your first job is to boost their confidence and show them what they can read.

Your aim is to help your student:

- build up a bank of sight words which they can automatically recognise
- learn some of the letter/sound relationships (or how to 'sound it out')
- learn some strategies for predicting what the word might be. These clues will come from the context, the grammar and/or the meaning of the text.
- develop their confidence that they *can* do it.

The teaching/learning activities suggested in this section allow you to deal with these tasks almost simultaneously.

Writing and spelling

Your aim is to help your student:

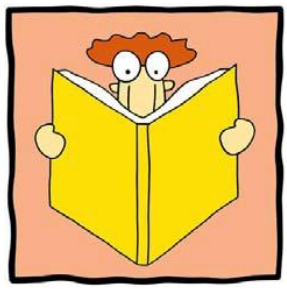
- manage the writing which they need to do now
- feel relaxed about writing
- learn to spell some important words
- begin to develop some spelling strategies.

Although developing reading and writing skills go hand in hand, they are separated into different sections here for convenience, but in practice, the separation is artificial, and development of one assists the development of the other.

Everyone has some need to write from time to time, so find out what your student's main needs may be. Is it filling out the job sheets or dockets at work, writing on greeting cards, emails to school or family, completing online forms, or job application forms? Begin by helping with these tasks and help them develop some models which can be used for future reference.

But the writing shouldn't end there. Every session you have with your student should include some writing activity, even though they may be a beginning reader/writer. For a beginner, the writing may initially just take the form of copying. They might copy out the language experience story which you have just written down, or you might help them write and learn to spell their address and the names of members of the family. However, as soon as they have developed some letter/sound knowledge, you should try to encourage them to move on quickly from copying to 'having a go first' at the spelling and attempting to compose small pieces of writing themselves.

The activities in this section are mainly focused on reading. For strategies to help with writing and spelling you should read the section on *Writing and spelling.* Most of the strategies there are relevant to all students, so are not reproduced here.
However, the difference is in the amount of writing which your student produces. For a beginner it may be only a sentence or two and they may only manage to learn one or two new spelling words a week.



The language experience approach

Your aim is to help your student:

- build a bank of sight words
- learn to use the grammar and/or meaning of the sentence to help predict what the word will be.

Suggested routine

- **Chat**

Chat with your student about something that interests them – something that happened during the week, a TV program, their job or hobby or sport or something about their childhood.

Don't try to get them to 'give a talk' about it. That will almost certainly make them dry up. Just have an adult chat with them.

- **Write**

Now write down what they said. You should keep as close as possible to their language. If they said *We done a real beaut job*, then you should write it down just like that. Remember that the reason for giving this activity is to make it easy to predict what the words will be. If you change that sentence to *We did a really good job* you will confuse them. They are not the words they expect to read. In addition, if you correct their grammar at this stage you will be giving the message that, as well as not being able to read very well, they can't even speak properly. While the job at hand is to help them to read, you should introduce written language the easy way. Using their language is one way of doing that. However, you should not try to write down pronunciation deviations such as *goin'* or *youse*.

Although they may not speak in complete sentences, and they may use lots of *'um's* and *ya know's*, it is not helpful to include them. Try to write what they say in tidy sentences without changing their language too much. Check frequently that what you are writing is in fact what was said.

You may write down a page or so of their 'story' or it may be just one or two sentences. Sit beside your student so that they can comfortably see you writing.

Now focus on one sentence at a time. First, rewrite the sentence. Print it in reasonably large clear print and say each word as you write it. It is useful to write it in their exercise book or folder so they keep it as a record. You should print in lower case letters, not BLOCK CAPITALS. If you are not confident that your printing style is the acceptable 'standard', consult the section on *Handwriting* (Section 5, page 28).

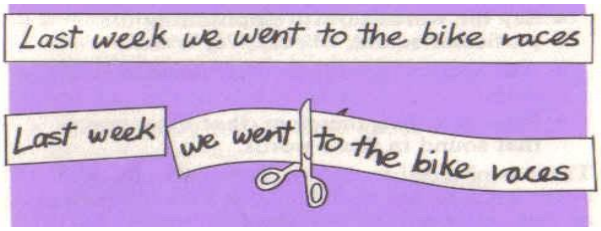
- **Read**

Re-read the sentence to your student several times while tracing under the words with your finger. Read slowly but naturally. You may need to do this several times. Then your student re-reads the sentence. They will be, in effect, reciting the sentence or memorizing what you have just said. That is OK. It is a good beginning.

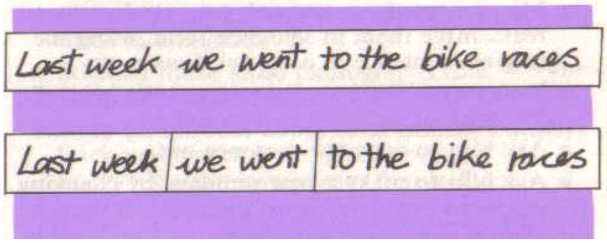
- **Help your student learn to recognise individual words**

Write the sentence again on a piece of cardboard. A manila folder is good. Remember to say each word as you write it.

Cut this sentence up into phrases and read each phrase as you cut it off.

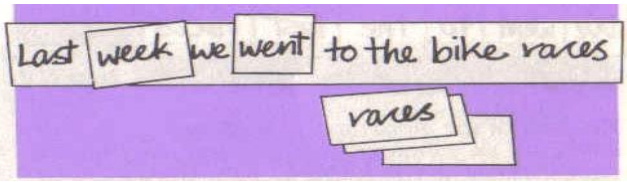


Now ask the student to reassemble the phrases into sentence form, using the original as a model if necessary.



Ask your student to cut the phrases into separate words and help them name each word as they cut it off. You now have some word cards to work with in a number of ways:

- Give your student one of these words at a time, name it and ask them to place it on top of the same word in the original sentence.
  This is the word week. Put it on top of the same word in that sentence.



- Now ask the student to point to a word that you name.
  Which is the word week?
  If they have trouble identifying any of the words, encourage them to read (recite) the whole sentence in order to work it out.

- Now do it the other way around. Point to a word and ask them what it is.
  What is this word?

- Mix the words up and ask your student to reassemble them in sentence form, using the original sentence as a model if necessary.

- When you think your student is ready, repeat the last step without the help of the model.

- Keep all these word cards in a large envelope or plastic sleeve. This is called the word bank. Do this until you have about 20–30 words which they have learnt as sight words. After that it becomes unwieldy. If they continue to have persistent difficulty identifying any of these words, then discard these unless they are really important words, such as address or family names. Only record successes – forget the failures. If they are important words they will turn up again at a later time, perhaps when the student is ready to learn them.

- Ask your student to copy the sentence out, perhaps beside your version in their book. If forming the letters is a problem, see Section 5 on *Handwriting*.

- This collection can now be used to generate new sentences or look for common letter/sound patterns (see section on *Phonics,* page 10) or to create cloze exercises (see section on *Cloze,* page 17).

What to talk about to start with?

You may find that you need to focus your language experience stories on some particular topic rather than just chat about what happened during the week.
Here are some suggestions:

- Write a story for their child about the child's antics – or make one up.

- Write about the family history for their children.

- Write out their favorite recipes to share.

- Stick all those loose photographs in a scrapbook and write captions under them.

- Keep a scrapbook about their hobby. Stick newspaper or magazine pictures in it and write their own stories or captions beside them.

- Write a mini-article about their hobby or area of expertise. If your student knows all about breeding dogs or fixing cars, then write it down for them.

- Ask them to bring in an object that is interesting or important to them and to tell you about it then write that down.

What materials do you need?

- Writing paper
- Exercise book
- Light cardboard (eg. manila folder)
- Pens (fine or medium felt tip pens are good)
- Scissors
- Large envelope or plastic sleeve
- Perhaps stimulus material such as photographs, magazines or interesting object.

Social sight words & environmental print

Your student will have an immediate need to learn to read a number of words in signs, advertising, forms, and work-related notices. Some of these are applicable to us all. For example:

STOP EXIT ENTRANCE DANGER HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED

Some will be applicable especially to your student. These may be related to their work or to shopping, driving, or filling in forms.

Your aim is to:

- add to your student's bank of sight words
- encourage your student to use the context to help read the word.

To begin with, find out what it is that your student needs to read and write most urgently and if possible, make a collection of real-life materials containing this language. For most students, a range of simple forms to give practice writing their personal details is an excellent place to start.

Your collection might include:

- various forms
- supermarket advertising
- grocery labels – packets, cans etc.
- medicine labels - packets and bottles (you can also download these from the internet)
- hardware store advertising brochures
- brochures about occupational health and safety (OH&S)
- OH&S signs (you can download these from the internet)
- drivers licence learners' booklet
- road signs (you can download these from the internet)
- other brochures from the Department of Motor Transport.

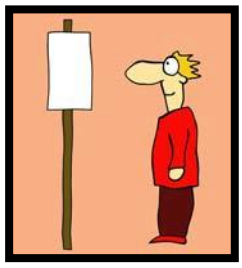
Start with a situation in which there are plenty of clues to guess what the word is, eg advertisements or labels in which there are pictures. For non-English speaking background students in particular, you need to provide plenty of context so signs such as *gents, ladies, exit* etc need to be shown in photographs or illustrations. You can find these on the internet.

- Help your student to identify words which they can guess from the picture or context clues.

This is an ad for a chicken. Which word do you think says chicken?

- Underline the words or highlight them in some way.

- Write the words on word cards.
- Ask your student to match the word cards with the appropriate pictures.
- Mix up the word cards and ask them to name them again, using the advertisement or picture as an aid if necessary.
- When they think they are ready, ask them to read the word cards without the aid of the pictures.
- Ask them to write (copy) the words. They may not be able to remember how to spell them next time but writing helps them to recognize or read the word.
- Add the word cards to their word bank envelope of sight words.



What materials do you need?

- Real life materials (brochures, advertisements etc)
- Pictures of signs or labels downloaded from the internet
- Highlighter
- Light cardboard for word cards (manila folder)
- Scissors
- Pens (fine or medium tip felt tip pens)
- Envelope for word cards

Phonics

One of the areas of skill and knowledge necessary for progress in reading is knowledge of the sound-symbol relationships in the language. This is called phonics. There are many approaches to the teaching of phonics, but the approach we recommend here follows the student-centred approach to literacy learning and is consistent also with adult education theory and its implications for practice. That is, we shouldn't treat adult students as if they are empty slates and need to 'start from the beginning'. Rather, we should reinforce and utilize what they already know about print and work from their strengths.

Assessment of the reading strategies they already use, and the extent of their phonic knowledge is the crucial starting point. It is important also to know how much phonics teaching they had at school. If it did form a strong part of their early schooling, how do they *feel* about it? Make sure you have this discussion with them. For some students who have unhappy memories of school and of phonics lessons with no success, a repeat of that phonics instruction can trigger strong negative feelings and is best avoided, or worked around, at least in the early stages.

Some of our students have developed quite good knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds, and others have not. Many have some knowledge, but it is patchy and might not extend to all sounds. If your student is a beginner reader, and especially if English is not their first language and they are new to the Roman script, then the teaching of phonics in an explicit and targeted way will be a particularly important teaching/ learning strategy. For others it may not be necessary at all.

Where it is indicated however, the teaching of phonics should occupy only part of a program of student-centred learning and should be taught in the context of other activities involving meaningful language such as those suggested in this section. It should be a part of a program in which the student is introduced to real, authentic texts which are meaningful to them.

First Steps

Your aim is to help your student:

- discover some of the letter/ sound relationships in known words.

You will notice in the suggested approach below, that we begin working from an understanding of:

the meaning of a word in a real text

↓

recognizing and saying the word

↓

analysing the letter/sound relationships in the word.

Before we go on, some important terminology:
The letters *a, e, i, o, u*, (and sometimes *y*) are called **vowels**.
The other letters are called **consonants**.

Remember

- Use real words - not nonsense words,
- in the context of authentic, adult texts (such as signs, labels, magazines, advertising flyers, school newsletters, work memos)
- Present this as just one of a number of reading strategies to be developed.

Once your students have a small bank of sight words (preferably words that are important to them) you can start to help them make discoveries about letters and sounds. They may know the names of the letters of the alphabet but this won't help them to read.

Take two or three (or more) words in the student's word bank that share a common first consonant and pronunciation. Their name and address or names of family members are a good place to start.

- Say the word slowly, emphasizing the particular sound.
- Ask the student to say it slowly and try to hear the sound it begins with.
- Point out that: that letter makes that sound in these words.
  This is the letter b. It makes the sound 'buh' in these words.

To start with, there is no need to do this systematically with every letter in the alphabet. Just look for patterns as they occur in your student's sentences and bank of sight words. First letters and last letters or letter clusters are the easiest to hear.

Don't worry too much about the vowels at the beginning. They are very unpredictable and represent a wide variety of sounds in different combinations with other letters. In the beginning stages of reading, they are simply confusing.

This process is as much about helping your student to hear the separate sounds in words as it is about matching them with letters. However, this is much more difficult than it often seems to an efficient reader and sometimes we cannot hear the separate sounds at all. For example, we don't hear the /n/ and /g/ as separate sounds in the -ing ending. Where two letters are pronounced together, these are called digraphs (e.g., -ch, -ou, -ar). Much caution is needed when asking your student to hear the sounds in a word. Moreover, if your student is from a non-English speaking background, this can be particularly difficult. If they don't appear to be able to hear and reproduce a sound, then don't persevere to the stage of frustration. Try another strategy (e.g., visual memory).

The Alphabet (letter names)

Note that your student also needs to know the letter names (*ay, bee, see*, etc). Most will know this, unless they are from a non-English speaking background that does not use the Roman script. In this case you will also need an alphabet chart, with upper and lower case letters, and practise the alphabet a few letters at a time (See *Handwriting* in Section 5).

Moving on

Your aim is to help your student:

- identify the sounds in the words they already know and use these to build up new, useful words.

- From the words already known, build new words. For example, change the initial consonant(s) in a short, known word and ask the student to read it. You may need to give a meaning clue. You might say a sentence and pause when you get to the target word.

  "*When you jump on one leg, you …..*"

  Shop – hop – top – stop
  Park – dark - bark

Make sure the student knows the meaning of each of these words. Put each one in a sentence and only use words they might understand. Don't use nonsense words.

If they suggest a word that rhymes but has a different spelling pattern (e.g. *meet - seat*), just acknowledge that, "yes, it sounds the same, but it is spelt differently. We'll work on that later".

Vowels

	Short vowels	**Long vowels** (Long vowels are pronounced as they are said in the alphabet)
a	*h**a**t*	*h**a**te*
e	*m**e**t*	*m**e**te*
i	*f**i**n*	*f**i**ne*
o	*c**o**p*	*c**o**pe*
u	***u**s*	***u**se*

- It is usually easier to start with short words containing short vowels, e.g. *hat*.
  Try changing the middle vowel in a list of short words (such as the first column above), and see how many real words you can make together. Make sure you have the discussion about whether they are *real* words.

- The silent 'e' at the end of a word is often called the magic 'e' because it makes the vowel in front of it 'say its name'. This is a useful phonic rule to know.
  Help your student understand how that works, with a list of words such as the list above, or words such as these: *mad, can, cub, at, rid, mat, not, fin …*

- Keep the initial letter constant and change the middle vowel or ending then ask the student to read it.

  rid – red – rod – rode – ride – rude – rule

Cluster Analysis

Once your student has learnt most of the consonants, and some vowel sounds, a strategy called **Cluster Analysis** is a useful approach to further developing phonic knowledge and to focusing on problem letter clusters as they arise.

Your aim is to help your student:

- Learn the relationship between common letter clusters and their sounds
- develop a strategy to work out unknown words
- focus on chunks or letter clusters in words
- use known chunks of words or letter clusters to work out unknown words.

Consider how you go about reading an unfamiliar word. The most useful strategy is to break it up into familiar 'bits' or 'chunks'. You don't necessarily break it up into syllables but sometimes you focus on larger bits and sometimes on smaller bits.

Trying to sound out a word one letter at a time is unreliable since particular letters, especially vowels, can represent a number of different sounds. However, in general,the larger the unit that we look at, the fewer alternatives there will be in trying to decide what sound it represents. For example, there are about a dozen different pronunciations of *-o* but only three possible alternatives for *-oo* (as in *brook, broom* and *blood*) while *-ook* and *-oom* have only one pronunciation.

The other reason for looking at words in chunks rather than one letter at a time is that working it out one letter at a time is slow and you are unable to concentrate on meaning. You can help your students see words in chunks or sound units by this procedure.

Suggested routine

- Select a few words that share a letter cluster which is pronounced the same in each word. For example, If you are going to concentrate on the *-ong* cluster you might choose the words *song, strong* and *longest*. The list should include at least one well known word.
- Write one word out several times beginning with the word the student knows best.
- Tell the student what the word is and make sure they know the meaning.
  This word is strong.
- Ask the student to draw a line under the letters that make a particular sound.
  In the word strong, which letters make the /str/ sound?
  Which letters make the /ong/ sound?
- Now repeat the procedure the other way around. You draw a line under the letter cluster and the student tells you what sound it makes.
  What sound does this make? str*ong*
  What sound does this make? st*rong*
- Now repeat the procedure with the other words you have chosen.

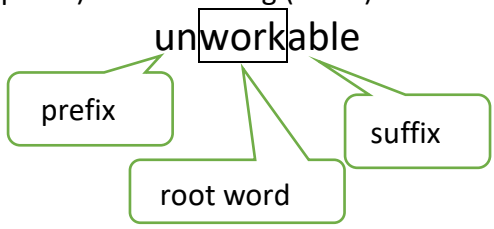
Always keep the whole word visible. You are helping your student to see small clusters in larger words while looking at the whole word.

Some common clusters which occur in the English language

at	ac	est	ing	ire	ore	ut
ab	af(f)	et	in	ink	old	ul(l)
able	ast	el(l)	ig	ish	ob	up
al	ane	eck	kind	fowl	tow	tion
all	as(s)	eam	ip	oss	od	
aw	ale	es(s)	il(l)	ot	ove	
air	ave	deaf	it	ock	og	
ar	care	en	ide	ost	ook	
ap	an	ew	ight	on	folly	
ame	ay	ear	ite	om	un	
ape	ad	eal	it	rol(l)	uf(f)	
ace	am	em	id	op	ush	
ang	ed	tea	is(s)	or	us	
ank	ent	ee	im	oke	ud	
ate	ev	eat	ick	one	um	
ake	er		if(f)	op	ug	

Prefixes and suffixes

Many long words are made up of a main word (the root word or base word) , and a beginning (prefix) and an ending (suffix).



It is useful to help your student break long words down into their root words and their prefixes and suffixes, and to become familiar with the common prefixes and suffixes.

Prefixes are letter clusters that change the meaning of the word. Some common prefixes are:
pre- (preview, premature)
un- (unnatural, uncommon)
re- (recall, review)
in- (incorrect, ineligible)
trans- (transport, translate)
under- (underline, undermine)
dis- (disagree, disobey)

Suffixes are letter clusters that change the grammatical function of the word. Some common suffixes are:
-ed (walked, cooked)
-ing (running, thinking)
-ful (thoughtful, helpful)
-ment (employment, payment)
-ly (correctly, slowly)
-able (capable, washable)

Word Games

Introducing word games can be a non-threatening way to practice and review your student's developing phonic knowledge. Moreover, word games such as those that appear in magazines and newspapers are authentic adult activities.

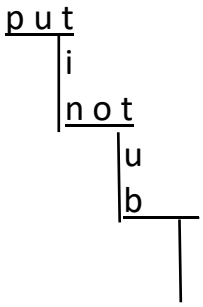
Remember, these word games are meant to be non-threatening, so make sure they are not too difficult and make sure you give the student all the support they need. Perhaps do them together and make it a joint activity.

- **Find-a-letter or letter cluster**

For beginners who are getting used to the alphabet, you might just give them a page or a section of print that is not too dense (such as a flyer that arrives in the letterbox) and ask them, for example, how many words ending in -ed they can find.

- **Word staircase**

You need to make a new 3 letter word, beginning with the last letter of the last word.



- **Find-a-word**

Create a block of random letters and include some words that they have learnt.
Ask them to find their target words.

dfegompegnp
ftshopbndayu
rstrongjtsong

You can make this easier by listing the words that they need to find, or more difficult by making it bigger. Some Find-a-Word puzzles have words going vertically as well as horizontally (like a crossword) but you should avoid this for beginning readers.

Or find some small words in a long word

handbook
vegetable
dressing

- **Make-a-word**

This is similar to the 9 letter word puzzles in many newspapers and magazines. See how many words you can make out of this: (They need to be real words.)

h i p
s e t
r c a

You can make up your own rules to suit your student. (E.g., do they have to be 4 letter words, or can they be 3 letter words? Do they need to use the middle letter of the puzzle in each word?)

If your student is keen on a more intensive phonics approach, there are a number of online resources that the teachers at the Reading Writing Hotline may be able to suggest.

What materials do you need?

- Word cards from the student's word bank
- Texts which are already familiar to the student
- Texts such as advertisements, labels etc.
- Scrap paper

References and further reading for this Section

Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds) 2010, *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 165-169

Cloze (fill in the blanks)

Your aim is to help your student:

- guess or predict what many of the words in a text might be
- learn to use clues from the context and meaning of the passage and the grammar of the sentence.

The term cloze is probably an unfamiliar one but it refers to a common teaching strategy of filling …. the blank words like ……

To summarize some important points about the reading process:

- Efficient, fluent readers do not need to focus on every letter or even every word. They can predict what many of the words are and they simply use the print to confirm their predictions.
- Many poor readers do not use this strategy of prediction effectively. They treat reading primarily as a mechanical process of letter/sound matching. Such readers need to be encouraged to look in the text for clues which will help them predict intelligently what is coming next.
- There are two sources of clues apart from the letter/sound clues:
    1. Clues from the context of the passage and our background knowledge of the world.

       ..... won the Soccer World ..... in 2006.

    2. Our feeling for the flow or grammar of the language.

       Italy won ..... Soccer World Cup ..... 2006.

Sometimes the clues come before the word and sometimes they come after. For example in the sentence Refuse is to be placed in the bin, the word refuse cannot be read accurately until you read a little more of the sentence.

Cloze procedure is used to encourage readers to rely less on the letter/sound clues and more on the language and meaning clues.

The tutor deletes words from a text as with the World Cup passage above and the student is asked to complete the deletions with appropriate words.

Activity
Do the following cloze exercise, and as you are doing it try to work out what clues you are using. Are they clues from your knowledge of the world? Are they clues from the flow of the language? Do the clues come before the deletion? Do you have to read on to get the clues after the deletion?

We were just leaving Sydney from a weekend at the Amaroo Raceway. The night sky..... rising over the horizon and fourteen motorcycles were pumping the adrenalin ..... their riders' .....
We ..... been on the Hume ..... for about one and a half ..... when one of the pillion passengers ..... ill. After a short discussion we ..... that it would ..... better for him to ..... home on the train. We had just ..... through a town about fifteen ..... ago so we turned and went back. Several side and back streets later we found a train station so we left Jack there.

(From a student written magazine)

Making a cloze exercise

Cloze exercises can be written or oral. For written cloze you need to write or type the material and leave blanks big enough for the student to write in (as with the exercise above). If you are typing them out the lines need to be double spaced for that reason.

For oral cloze you can black out words from a newspaper or magazine with a felt tipped pen. Or you can arrange the student's sight word cards in a sentence with some words left out.

You can leave the whole word blank or in some circumstances it is easier for the student (and more like the real reading process) if you leave the first, or first and last, letter printed.
E.g. The m... on the m.....n.

Do not delete words in the first sentence.
Delete no more than about one word in seven and less for real beginners.

Start by using material which is familiar, e.g. a language experience story or a passage learnt for read-along.

If you delete flow-of-the-language clues, make sure that the student is familiar with the language first before expecting them to use these clues. If your student is from a non-English speaking background, take particular care with these flow-of-the language words as they may not be sufficiently familiar with the grammar of the language to be able to complete it. One way to overcome this is to make sure that the student has previously learnt the passage well, as in Language Experience or Read-along. (Refer to Section 8, *Is your student from a non English speaking background?)*

If you delete meaning clues, make sure there are enough other clues in the passage or in the student's life experience to suggest what the word might be. The aim of the activity is to make it easy for the student to be able to fill in the blanks. You are trying to prove to them that they don't need a lot of those words anyway.

When correcting a cloze exercise, the only criteria for correctness is, *Does it make sense and does it sound right?* It doesn't have to be exactly the same word as the one that was in the original text.

What materials do you need?

- A copy of a familiar story rewritten with deletions
- Familiar newspaper or magazine articles with words blacked out
- Previously learnt sight word cards arranged in a sentence with blank spaces.

Just Reading

A part of any session with your student should consist of real reading of an extended text - even for beginners.

Your aim is to:

- introduce your student to the vocabulary and rhythms of written language
- introduce your student to the delights and benefits of reading
- increase your student's sight vocabulary
- encourage prediction on the basis of the grammar and meaning of the sentence.

First, find something your student may be interested in. Are they interested in sport or do they want to read their horoscope? You may be able to find a simply written adult literacy reader at your local library. Most libraries have an adult literacy collection of books with adult topics which are simply written.

Does your student have small children they would like to read to? However, a word of warning: if they have small children and they would like to read to them, that is a wonderful source of material to start with. But that is the only circumstance in which you should use children's books. If you are not convinced, read or review Section 1 on *The adult learner.*

Reading poetry (especially ballads) or the lyrics of songs they may know is also very useful because the rhythm and rhyme provide strong clues to the words. If you are able to get (or write) the words to songs they already know, this is an excellent way to begin.

Reading to your student

You might choose to read a few paragraphs of a magazine article or newspaper item or a few pages of an adult literacy reader.

- Before you start reading, talk about the context and content and discuss any photographs etc. This is called pre-reading.
  This is an article about buying a car. Would you like me to read a bit of that for you? I think it tells us what things you should look for.

- Sit so that the student can see the print and read reasonably slowly but still with the rhythm of natural reading. Make longer than usual pauses between commas and full stops rather than between every word.
- Trace under the words with your finger as you read.
- Your student won't be able to take in every word and may initially become frustrated, but encourage them to persevere.
- Stop occasionally to discuss the content. You are encouraging them to read for meaning - not just saying words. *(I didn't know that – did you?... I wonder if this is the case that was on the news last night …)* This not to test them, but to keep them focused on meaning.
- Then focus on a few of the key words which recur in the passage and draw their attention to them. Write them on a piece of paper.
- Re-read the passage and pause at these words for your student to say them while you are pointing to them. You could also pause at other words which you know they can recognise.
- If it is a newspaper or magazine, ask them to underline or highlight any words they can recognise.

Repeated reading

You can then take a paragraph or a few sentences of the text and help your student learn to read it.

- You re-read it several times while your student follows along, as above.
- Then they try to read it alone, with help from you.
- They re-read it several times until they can read it with no help from you. (They may be just reciting some of it from memory, but that's OK)

Read-along

This is the repeated reading strategy done with a recording of the passage.

- Read about half a page or less of an article or book onto the student's phone or other device. As above, read reasonably slowly but with a natural rhythm.
- Read it 'live' to your student first, while you trace under the words with your finger as suggested above. You may need to do this several times.
- The student then attempts to 'read along' with the recording while tracing under the text with a finger.
- The student replays the recording and re-reads several times until they have 'learnt' the passage.

This is a useful technique because your student can (and should) practise at home and it gives feelings of success at an early stage.

Some students resist these repeated reading methods because they feel it is cheating; that it is not real reading. However, if they are using some clues from the print to help remember the text, then the process is very much like real reading. They should not have to practise it to the stage where they can recite it without looking at the print.

As a general rule, when your student is reading with you:
Pause ... prompt ... praise

When your student doesn't know a word:

- Don't provide the word straight away. Give them time to think about it.
- Then give them some clues:

What letter does it begin with? Can you think of a word that begins with 's' that would fit there?

- Or you might tell them to read on a few words further and see if they can work it out.
- If that doesn't help, then just tell them the word.
- Make sure to praise their efforts. There will usually be some approximation to the print.

If your student misreads a word:

- Don't correct them straight away.
- If their mistake doesn't alter the sense of the passage, then ignore it.
- If it alters the sense of the passage or their reading results in nonsense, stop them and say, *Does that make sense? Does that sound right? Have another look at that.*

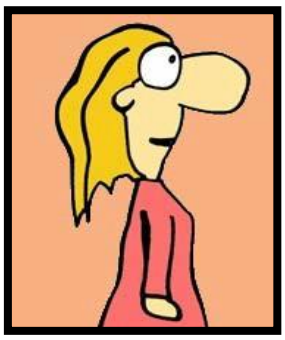
What materials do you need?

- Newspaper or magazine article or book which interests the student
- Paper
- Pens
- Highlighter
- Recording device

Case studies & lesson plans

Case study 1: Fatma

Background



Fatma is 55 and was born in a village in Lebanon. She had very little schooling, as was common at that time. She is therefore only minimally literate in her own language.

She came to Australia with her husband when she was 19 and went to work immediately in a factory where she spoke her own language with fellow workers.

She has three children and several grandchildren. The family spoke Arabic at home so that she has never been immersed in the English language. Her spoken English, while reasonably fluent, is not grammatical.

Her husband, however, was forced by his job to read and write English and she relied on him to attend to the family's literacy tasks. She managed the grocery shopping by herself, but he had to come with her to make any out-of-the-ordinary purchases. Now he has died and she is by herself. Her daughters do not live nearby.

Literacy ability

Fatma can write her name and copy her address. She can recognise a few words such as the name of her suburb and her children's names. She knows the names of some of the letters of the alphabet.

Interests

Her family
Cooking
Gardening

Immediate literacy needs

Form filling and other functional literacy tasks
Shopping
Writing greeting cards (her grandchildren do not read Arabic)
Reading train timetables and destination signs

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Fatma

Lesson 1

Introduction

In your first lesson you spend much time talking with her and getting to know each other. You ask her to write her name and praise her attempts.

Language experience story

She tells you a little about herself and you write a few sentences down and work on one sentence. She learns to recognise a few of the words so you put these in a word envelope.

Spelling

You help her write her street name. You write it in large letters and she traces this to start with then copies it underneath several times. You write it on her spelling practice sheet. (Section 5, page 19)

Handwriting

Since she cannot recognise or write all the letters of the alphabet you give her an alphabet sheet and get her to practise those she has trouble with. (Section 5, page 29)

Letter/sound relationships

Her name is Fatma and she lives in Fairfield so you draw her attention to the /f/ sound. The words Lebanon and live are in her language experience story so you work on /l /also. You make a personal dictionary for her and enter these words in the L and F pages. (Section 5, pages 18 and 28)

Just reading

You read a story from an adult literacy student magazine. You re-read a part of it and pause when you come to the word live and ask her what the word is. You ask her to look over the story and put a pencil dot under all the fs and ls.

At the end of the lesson

You ask Fatma to re-read the language experience story and write her street name again. You remind her to practise her spelling and alphabet letters, and to re-read her language experience story often at home.

Lesson 2

Review last week's lesson

You ask Fatma to read the sentence from last week's language experience story and read the jumbled word cards. She has trouble with this so you work on this a little more.

You ask her to write her street name, which you also need to work on a little more.

Language experience story

You work on the second sentence from the story which you wrote down last week and add a few more word cards to the envelope.

Handwriting

Using the alphabet sheet, you practise a few more letters.

Spelling

She lives in Fairfield so you help her learn this.

Letter/sound relationships

Several words in her language experience stories begin with w, h and m so you work on these sounds and add the words to her personal dictionary.

Immediate needs

It is her grandson's birthday so you help her write a greeting for a birthday card. She copies this carefully into her book so she can use it as a model in the future, and can write it on the card at home. She practises writing his name and adds it to the spelling practice sheet.

Just reading

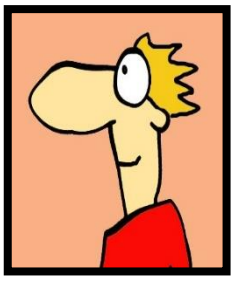
You read another story from an adult literacy magazine then you re-read the first sentence with her several times until she can read it without help.

At the end of the lesson

Practise all her spelling words again and read the two sentences from the language experience story then try some of the word cards. Remind her to go over her words and sentences often during the week.

Case study 2: Michael

Background



Michael is aged 33. He was the youngest of six children. Until he was 7 Michael attended a school in the capital city but he recalls very little of it except that the class seemed very big.

When he was 7 the family moved to a small country town. The following year his parents separated and the children stayed with their father. Their father could not read or write. Michael attended a one teacher school. The same teacher stayed there for most of Michael's schooling. Michael seems to have strong antagonistic memories of this teacher. 'He didn't care about the dumb kids. He just looked after the smart ones.'

Michael frequently 'wagged' school, had one year at high school and left as soon as he was able.

He worked as a farm hand then married and moved to a larger town where he and his wife now run a domestic cleaning business. He relies on her to do the reading and writing tasks. They have two children aged 6 and 4.

He is very interested in motor bikes. He has a bike which he races and would dearly love to be able to read the manual.

Literacy ability

He can read and write his own name and address. He recognizes and can write most of the letters of the alphabet, except for a few which he confuses. He recognizes or can work out a few sight words but is not able to read connected prose at all.

Interests

His bike and the bike club
Renovating a run down house
Sport (particularly the local football club)

Immediate literacy needs

He would like to be less dependent on his wife in the business. He cannot read notes left for them by the customers or the instructions on cleaning products.

He is worried that his eldest child will learn that he cannot read.

The ability to read would help him with the maintenance of his bike and make him a more active participant in the bike club.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Michael

Lesson 1

Introduction

In your first lesson you spend much time talking with him and getting to know each other.

You ask him to write his name and address so he can demonstrate what he can do and you praise this.

Spelling

You ask him to write down his wife and children's names and discover that he mis-spells his son's name. You write this out for him and he copies it a few times until he can write it from memory. You write it on a spelling practice sheet (Section 5 page 19) for him and on the appropriate page in a personal dictionary note book. (Section 5, pages 18 and 28)

Language experience story

He tells you about his business and you write down a few sentences. You work on this until he can recognise most of the words. You put these in the word bank envelope.

Just reading

You read an article from the sports section of the local newspaper. You point out the word *football* which occurs several times in the article. You write it out on a word card for him, and then ask him to find the word wherever it appears in the article.

At the end of the lesson

You ask him to write his son's name again and tell him to practise it again tonight and during the week. You ask him to re-read the words from the language experience story from the word cards and remind him to practice this during the week.

You ask him to bring along his motor bike manual and a commonly used cleaning product next week.

Lesson 2

Review last week's work

You ask Michael to write his son's name again on the spelling practice sheet and ask him to read last week's language experience story, then the words on the word cards in the envelope.

Cloze

You arrange the word cards from last week's language experience story as a cloze exercise for him to do orally.

Language experience story

You write down another few sentences about his business and work on this, then add the words to his word envelope.

Cluster analysis

His wife's name is Margaret, he lives in Arthur St and the words car and parked came up in his stories, so you work on the ar cluster.

Just reading

He explains one of the diagrams in his bike manual and tells you what he knows about the section you are about to read. Then you read a little. You re-read the first two sentences and get him to repeat it with your help. You do this till he can read it without your help. He can recognise three of the key words. You write them on word cards and add them to the word envelope.

Spelling

You help him write his children's names and his occupation (cleaner) and add them to the spelling practice sheet and the appropriate pages in his personal dictionary.

Environmental print

You work on the cleaning product he has brought along. You first ask him how he would use it and ask him what words he would expect to find written on the label (pre-reading). Then read the key parts for him. You pick out three key words to learn and add them to the word envelope.

At the end of the lesson

You ask him to write this week's spelling words again and read the new word cards for the week and remind him to practise them tonight and during the week.

What's in this section?

- Just reading
- Comprehension
- Reading fluency
- Cloze
- Phonics
- Cluster analysis
- Case studies and lesson plans

Who is this section for?

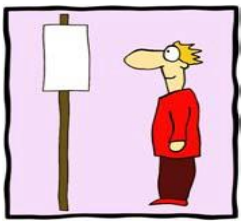
In this handbook, an intermediate reader is someone who can recognize most of the words in a short newspaper item and can try to sound out a word with an understanding of most letter/sound relationships. They will, however, probably read slowly with loss of comprehension and will have limited word attack skills to draw on when they reach a problem word.

Background to these teaching/learning activities

Reading

Before you go on, read or review the section *How do we read?*
In brief, reading is easiest when we are able to use these four sets of cues or clues:

1. The sounds of the letters in the words
2. The flow or grammar of the sentence
3. The meaning of the text
4. The context of the text



You need to help your student use all four sets of clues, not just the clues given by the letter/sound relationship. 'Sound it out' is not the only answer. For this reason, it will be easier for your student if they learn to read using real language in real situations (authentic texts), rather than lists of isolated words and letters.

Writing

Writing is not dealt with in this section. This section contains a number of strategies for improving your student's reading. However your student should also be doing a lot of writing as this will help with reading; the two go hand in hand. For ideas about writing and spelling you should also read Section 5 on *Writing and Spelling*.

Just reading

A part of any session with your student should consist of real reading of an extended text. That is, not just learning-to-read exercises.

Your aim is to:

- Introduce your student to the vocabulary and rhythms of written language.
- Introduce your student to the delights of reading.
- Increase your student's sight vocabulary.
- Encourage prediction on the basis of the grammar and meaning of the sentence.
- Help your student to develop their own problem-solving strategies.
- Encourage your student to reflect on and think critically about what they are reading.

First, find something your student may be interested in. Are they interested in sport or do they want to read their horoscope? You may be able to find a simply written adult literacy reader at your local library. Most libraries have an adult literacy collection of books with adult topics which are simply written.

Does your student have small children they would like to read to? A word of caution: if they have small children that they would like to read to, then that is a wonderful source of material to start with. But that is the only circumstance in which you should use children's books. If you are not convinced, read or review Section 1 *The adult learner.*

Shared reading

You might choose to read a few paragraphs of a magazine article or newspaper item or a few pages of an adult literacy reader.

- Before you start reading, talk about the context and content and discuss any photographs etc. (pre-reading).
  This is an article about buying a car. Would you like me to read a bit of that for you? I think it tells us what you should look for.

- Sit so that the student can see the print and read reasonably slowly but still with the rhythm of natural reading. Make longer than usual pauses between commas and full stops rather than between every word.

- Trace under the words with your finger as you read.

- You will probably read faster than your student and they may not be able to keep up with you and won't be able to take in every word. They may initially become frustrated, but encourage them to persevere.

- Stop occasionally to discuss the content: (*I didn't know that – did you...? I wonder if this is the case that was on the news last night….)*
  This is not to test them, but to keep focused on meaning.

As a general rule, when your student is reading with you:
Pause ... prompt ... praise

When your student doesn't know a word:

- Don't provide the word straight away. Give them time to think about it.
- Then give them some clues:
  What letter does it begin with? Can you think of a word that begins with 's' that would fit there?
- Or you might tell them to read on a few words further and see if they can work it out.
- If that doesn't help, then just tell them the word.
- Make sure to praise their efforts. There will usually be some approximation to the print.

If your student misreads a word:

- Don't correct them straight away.
- If their mistake doesn't alter the sense of the passage, then ignore it.
- If it alters the sense of the passage or their reading results in nonsense, stop them and say, *Does that make sense? Does that sound right? Have another look at that.*

What materials do you need?

- Books, newspapers and magazine articles which interest the student.

Comprehension

Your aim is to:

- help your student engage with a text so that they understand it and remember what they have read.
- Encourage your student to reflect on and think critically about what they are reading.

Sometimes a student will be able to recognise most of the words and have quite good word attack skills but will complain that they don't remember what they're reading about. If that sounds like your student, then they need to be taught ***how*** to read for meaning. Knowing that they will be asked comprehension questions at the end will be little help.

Some general points to consider

- Make sure that the text you are reading is something that the student is interested in. We all lose concentration if we are reading something we are bored with. So to start with, find something they really want to read.

- We all find reading easiest when we are reading about a topic which we are already familiar with. If your student is reading something they are really interested in, then the chances are they will already understand something of the topic. They will then have a framework of understanding on which to 'hook' the information they are reading about. The more new concepts we encounter, the more difficult the reading becomes.

- Clarify any difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary before you start, especially the key words. If you don't do this your student's focus will be on identifying unfamiliar words, and they will not be thinking of the meaning.

- The problem may be that their reading lacks fluency. Readers who have developed a habit of slow, word by word reading are not able to concentrate on meaning. See the next section on *Reading fluency.*

Scan ... question ... read

We get most information from a text when we read it with certain questions in mind which we are seeking to answer. As experienced readers we are used to picking up the paper and asking ourselves questions such as, *I wonder if this is the case I heard about on the radio.... I wonder if the victim died…I wonder where it happened ….?*

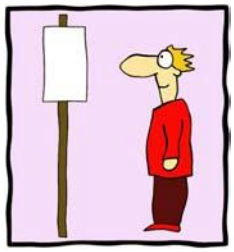
These questions may not be clearly formed in our minds but they are there nevertheless.

In other words, we have predicted something about the text and we are reading to see if our predictions are right. Your student may be so used to focusing on the individual words that they have not developed this approach to their reading. You can encourage them to engage with the text in this questioning way by just talking about what you are reading in a natural, adult way.

- Make sure your student starts to read with an active mind and is not just reading words or 'barking at print'.

1. Scan the title, cover design of a book, sub-headings, illustrations and captions, graphics etc.
2. You might discuss the clues you can get from the title and cover design of the book or from headings, photographs and captions in newspapers and magazines. Discuss the information your student gives you and help them make predictions and form questions. *Is this going to be a murder mystery? ... What country do you think it is set in?*
3. Then read. During the reading you might ask questions such as, *Who do you think was in that car? ... Where do you think the man with the black hair is going?* Then a little later, *Have you changed your mind about where he was going?*

... but don't believe everything you read!



Much of the print material we encounter is in the form of advertising or brochures persuading us to buy something or adopt a point of view, or news items or commentaries on news items. A literate person is one who can not only read the words and understand what the author is saying, but can also 'read between the lines'. Some adults who have been locked out of the world of print develop an unhealthy reverence for the printed word and we need to help them to develop a healthy scepticism.

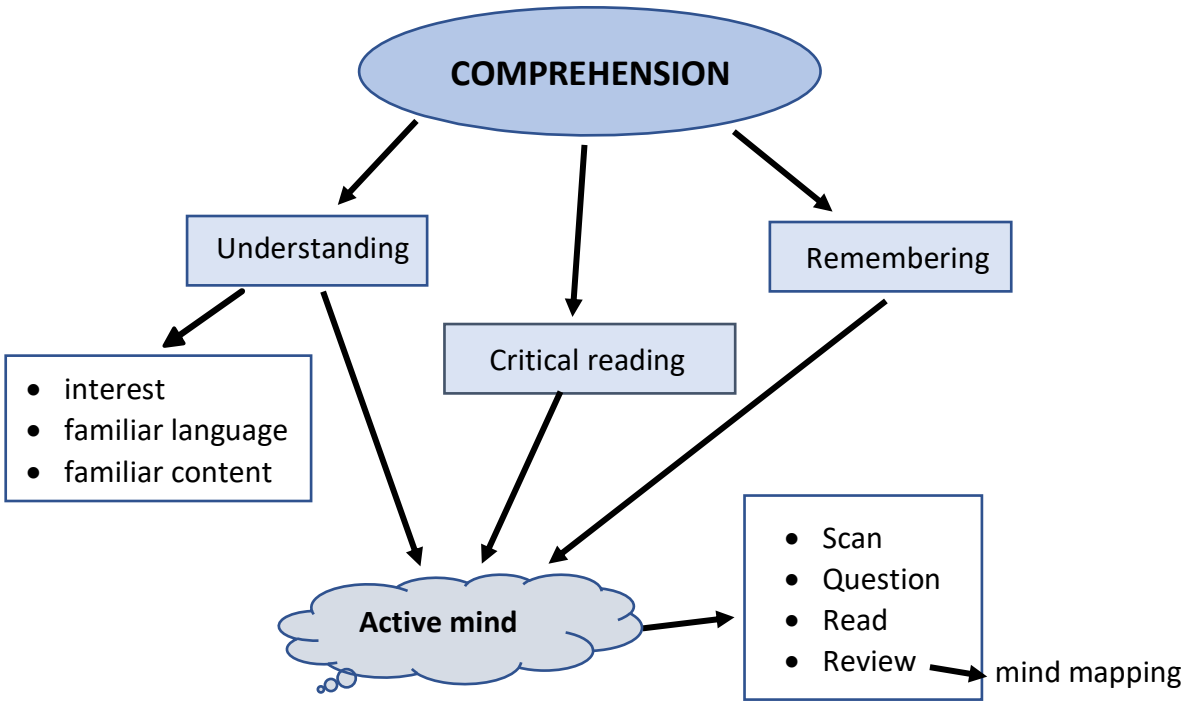
Encouraging questions such as, Why was this written? ... What does the author want me to do? ... Who paid the writer? ... Were they paid by the organisation that is trying to sell the item or point of view, or are they independent? … What words has the writer used that would cause me to question the material (eg cheapest, best, world renowned)?

Review: remembering what you have read

Reading with an inquiring, questioning mind as suggested above, will help with memory as well as comprehension. However, sometimes students need some extra help to commit something to memory if, for example, they have to remember something for work or for a course they are doing, etc.

In this case, there is another step after scan, question, read, and that is **review**. To review something simply means to think back over what you have read; to draw it back to memory and to try to make sense of it, or to organise it in your mind. It is what efficient readers do with texts which interest them.

Reviewing something immediately after you have read it is the best time to do this. A good way to help your student review a text is to help them make a **mind map** of what they have just read. A mind map is a representation or diagram of the main points in a text, using the key words with arrows and other symbols (eg + or =) to show the relationship between them. To make a mind map you have to organise the information in your mind, and this is the key to remembering. For example, a mind map of this section might look like this:



Everybody's mind map will be different. The act of creating the mind map is the important factor.

For more ideas to help your student study and remember a text, see Section 4 *The Vocational Student – Reading for understanding - Text book prose*.

What materials do you need?

- A book or article that interests your student

Reading fluency

Very slow hesitant reading can be frustrating and an embarrassment for people who need to read aloud in public, for example at meetings, or who want to be able to read to their children. It can also interfere with comprehension. Readers who concentrate so hard on saying the words can lose track of the meaning so that they are not able to predict ahead and they are not holding 'chunks' of meaning in their head.

The eyes of efficient readers do not rest on every word. They bounce along the line and take in only as much of the print as is needed. (See the section *How do we read?)* However, the eyes of an inefficient reader have developed a motor habit of stopping on each word. One of the things such readers need to do is to break this motor habit and to take in more words with each fixation of the eyes.

Your aim is to:

- help your student develop a motor habit of moving their eyes quickly across the page
- prove to your student that it is not necessary for the eyes to rest on every letter and every word in order to read.

Some solutions

- **Reading with your student**

Select something that is a little more difficult than your student's independent reading level but something that they are interested in.

Clarify any difficult vocabulary first and give an overview of what it is about.

You read it aloud with them. Your reading should perhaps be a little slower than usual, but still fluent. Try making slightly longer pauses at commas and between sentences. Don't try to slow down to your student's 'word calling' pace. This can sometimes be difficult so it may be better to tell your student to read along with you 'in their head' while you read aloud.

As you are reading, trace your finger along under the line; not pointing at each word, but moving your finger fluently along. Make sure you are sitting so that the student can see the book comfortably and easily.

The student is not to worry about making errors or falling behind. If they make errors, they should just keep going.

You may need to 'sell' this method to your student. Many adults see it as cheating or they complain that they can't keep up with your voice. This is probably because they are still trying to look carefully at every word and that is precisely the habit you are trying to break. It may need several sessions of 10 to15 minutes for them to get used to the method but it is well worth persevering.

- **Read-along**

This is similar to the procedure above except that you make a recording of your reading. Record your reading of the story on the student's phone or other device. Again, your reading should be a little slow, but not so slow that it loses normal intonation and fluency. Take care that your reading is accurate and that you have no mistakes recorded. Replay it to check this as making mistakes is easier than we think! It is a normal aspect of the reading process but for this exercise, your reading needs to be absolutely accurate.

The amount you record will depend on your student's reading ability and the nature of the text. If it is a magazine article it could be the whole article and if it is a book then not less than a few pages.

- **Alternate reading**

Another way to read with your student is to take turns reading alternate paragraphs or passages. That way, you are modelling fluent reading and taking the pressure off your student a little. They are able to concentrate on meaning while you are reading, and this helps when it comes to their turn to read.

- **Repeated reading**

It is useful to encourage your student to learn passages by reading them over and over until they can read them fluently. They may start off by reading with you as suggested above, and then read the passage several times alone or with the recording until they feel they can read it fluently. Again, some students resist this method because they feel itis cheating, but if they are using some clues from the print to help them remember the story, then the process is very much like real reading.

If your student wants to read to their children, or needs to read something at meetings or has similar reasons to read aloud, then this method is ideal. By practising the material they have to read, they can meet those needs almost immediately, before they are really an independent reader.

- **Practise skimming**

Make sure your student gets used to skim reading. That is, reading faster than is comfortable to get the main ideas. If they spend a few minutes a day practising skimming, they may find their normal reading speed has increased. Skimming is a very useful skill. Give your student a passage or a page and see how quickly they can find some specific items of information.

- **100 words per minute**

This is the repeated reading strategy, but with a short term goal. There is evidence that a reading speed of about 100 words per minute is the critical speed for optimal comprehension.

You will need several passages of about 100 words long. The passages should be just a little more difficult than the student's independent level of reading and ideally, something that interests them. You also need a stop-watch function on a phone or similar.

As with the repeated reading strategy, read the passage through with your student to make sure they can recognise all the words. Then they re-read it silently several times, timing themselves each time until they can read it in one minute. Then move on to another passage.

It is a good motivator to record the time taken for each reading. The next page has a blank record sheet for you to use.

What materials do you need?

- Books, newspapers or magazine articles that your student is interested in
- Phone or device to make a recording
- Stop-watch function on watch or phone

100 word per minute record sheet

Name of Passage	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken
	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs
	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs
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Cloze (fill in the blanks)

Your aim is to help your student:

- learn to use clues from the context and meaning of the passage and the grammar of the sentence to guess or predict what many of the words might be

The term cloze is probably an unfamiliar one but it refers to a common teaching strategy of filling … the blank words like ……

To summarize some important points about the reading process:

- Efficient, fluent readers do not need to focus on every letter or even every word. They can predict what many of the words are and they simply use the print to confirm their predictions.

- Many poor readers do not use this strategy of prediction effectively. They may treat reading primarily as a mechanical process of letter/sound matching, or they may guess wildly at words. Such readers need to be encouraged to look in the text for clues which will help them predict intelligently what is coming next.

- There are two sources of clues apart from the letter/sound clues:
    1. Clues from the context of the passage and our background knowledge of the world.
       ..... won the Soccer World ..... in 2006.

    2. Our feeling for the flow or grammar of the language.
       Italy won ..... Soccer World Cup ..... 2006.

Sometimes the clues come before the word and sometimes they come after. For example in the sentence, Refuse is to be placed in the bin, the word refuse cannot be read accurately until you read a little more of the sentence.

Cloze procedure is used to encourage readers to rely less on the letter/sound clues and more on the language and meaning clues.

The tutor deletes words from a text as with the World Cup passage above and the student is asked to complete the deletions with appropriate words.

Activity
Do the following cloze exercise, and as you are doing it try to work out what clues you are using. Are they clues from your knowledge of the world? Are they clues from the flow of the language? Do the clues come before the deletion? Do you have to read on to get the clues after the deletion?

We were just leaving Sydney from a weekend at the Amaroo Raceway. The night sky..... rising over the horizon. Fourteen motorcycles were pumping the adrenalin ..... their riders' .....

We ..... been on the Hume ..... for about one and a half.....when one of the pillion passengers ..... ill. After a short discussion we.....that it would ..... better for him to ..... home on the train. We had just ..... through a town about fifteen ..... ago so we turned and went back.

Several side and back streets later we found a train station so we left Jack there to..... the next train home.

(From a student written magazine)

Making a cloze exercise

Cloze exercises can be written or oral. For written cloze you need to write or type the material and leave blanks big enough for the student to write in as with the exercise above. If you are typing them out the lines need to be double spaced for that reason. For oral cloze you can black out words from a newspaper or magazine with a felt tipped pen.

You can leave the whole word blank or in some circumstances it is easier for the student (and more like the real reading process) if you leave the first, or first and last, letter printed.
E.g. The m..... on the m .....n.

Do not delete words in the first sentence. Delete no more than about one word in seven. Start by using material which is familiar, for example a passage which the student has already read.

The aim of the activity is to make it easy for the student to be able to fill in the blanks so make sure there are plenty of clues to suggest the word. You are trying to prove to your student that they don't need a lot of those words anyway.

When correcting a cloze exercise, the only criteria for correctness is: *Does it make sense and does it sound right?* It doesn't have to be exactly the same word as the one that was in the text originally.

If your student is from a non-English speaking background, take care with the 'flow of the language' words which you delete as they may not be sufficiently familiar with the or flow of the language to be able to complete it.

What materials do you need?

- A copy of a story rewritten with deletions
- Newspaper or magazine articles with words blacked out

Phonics

Your aim is to help your student:

- develop a strategy to work out unknown words
- focus on chunks or letter clusters in words
- use chunks of words or letter clusters which are known to work out unknown words.

Students at this level probably have quite a good knowledge of letter/ sound relationships, but it may be patchy. In addition, they may not always use that knowledge to work out unknown words, so some attention to phonics, even for intermediate students may be necessary.

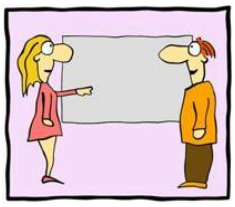
Consider how you go about reading an unfamiliar word. The most useful strategy is to break it up into familiar 'bits' or 'chunks'. You don't necessarily break it up into syllables but sometimes you focus on larger bits and sometimes on smaller bits. Trying to sound out a word one letter at a time is unreliable since particular letters, especially vowels, can represent a number of different sounds. However, in general, the larger the unit that we look at, the fewer alternatives there will be in trying to decide what sound it represents. For example, there are about a dozen different pronunciations of *o* but only three possible alternatives for *oo* (as in *brook*, *broom* and *blood*) while *ook* and *oom* have only one pronunciation.
The other reason for looking at words in chunks rather than one letter at a time is that working it out one letter at a time is slow and you are unable to concentrate on meaning.

Cluster Analysis

You can help your students see words in chunks or sound units by a procedure called cluster analysis.

Suggested routine

- Select a few words which share a letter cluster which is pronounced the same in each word. If you are going to concentrate on the *ong* cluster you might choose the words *song, strong* and *longest*. The list should include at least one well known word.



- Write one word out several times beginning with the word the student knows well.

- Tell the student what the word is:
  This word is strong.

- Ask the student to draw a line under the letters that make a particular sound.
  In the word strong, which letters make the /str/ sound? Which letters make the /ong/ sound?

- Now repeat the procedure the other way around. You draw a line under the letter cluster and the student tells you what sound it makes.
  What sound does this make? str<u>ong</u>
  What sound does this make? st<u>rong</u>

- Now repeat the procedure with the other words you have chosen.

Always keep the whole word visible. You are helping your student to see small clusters in larger words while looking at the whole word.

Be careful not to separate into different clusters letters which are pronounced as a unit. For example, in the *ing* cluster don't separate the *in* and *g* because, in isolation, they are sounded differently from *ng.*

Some common clusters which occur in the English language

at	ac	est	ing	ire	ore	ut
ab	af(f)	et	in	ink	old	ul(l)
able	ast	el(l)	ig	ish	ob	up
al	ane	eck	k<u>ind</u>	f<u>owl</u>	t<u>ow</u>	tion
all	as(s)	eam	ip	oss	od	
aw	ale	es(s)	il(l)	ot	ove	
air	ave	d<u>ea</u>f	it	ock	og	
ar	c<u>are</u>	en	ide	ost	ook	
ap	an	ew	ight	on	f<u>olly</u>	
ame	ay	ear	ite	om	un	
ape	ad	eal	it	r<u>ol(l)</u>	uf(f)	
ace	am	em	id	op	ush	
ang	ed	t<u>ea</u>	is(s)	or	us	
ank	ent	ee	im	oke	ud	
ate	ev	eat	ick	one	um	
ake	er		if(f)	op	ug	

References and further reading for this Section

Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds) 2010, *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 165-169

Case studies and lesson plans

Case study 1: Joy

Background

Joy is 28 and was one of seven children and the eldest girl in the family. Her mother was frequently ill and the care of the family fell largely upon Joy who consequently missed much schooling.
Her father was a seasonal worker and the family moved home many times, further interrupting her schooling. She left school as soon as she was able and worked as a domestic helper.

Her husband cannot read very well either. They have three children, aged 9, 7, and 4. Joy has a casual job at a fast-food outlet but would like to get another job when her youngest child goes to school, and perhaps improve her education by doing some sort of course.

She enjoys cooking although she cannot really follow a recipe. She would like to go to the Parents & Citizens meetings but has 'never got around to it'.

Her eldest son has had frequent visits to the dentist which have required his absence during school hours. She has to communicate this with the school digitally which causes her much frustration.

Literacy ability

Joy can read a little. She can recognise or 'work out' most words and can read simple children's books although she is a word-by-word reader. She gets frustrated reading things such as magazine articles since it takes her so long and she doesn't really understand what she is reading. She feels that her main problem is spelling. She is very sensitive about it and will not attempt to write except for her name and address.

Interests

Her family
Cooking

Immediate literacy needs

Help the children with their homework.
Read school newsletters etc. and communicate with school digitally.
Read magazines
Read recipes
Prepare for job-seeking tasks such as filling in application forms
Research job opportunities and possible courses

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Joy

Lesson 1

Introduction

In your first lesson you spend much time talking with her and getting to know each other.
You get her to point out the words she can read in a supermarket ad and write her name and address and her children's names so she can demonstrate what she can do and you praise this.

Shared reading

You find a short article in a magazine that she seems interested in and after discussing what you think it is about, and making sure she can read the key words, you read it to her while she follows along. You then re-read it by taking turns reading alternate paragraphs. You discuss the article, then you ask her to read it by herself.

Spelling

You ask her to fill out a simple model form. She cannot spell her place of birth or nationality. She practises these and you write them on her spelling practice sheet. (Section 5, page 19)

Writing

Joy needs to be able to email or text a note of absence for her daughter's school. You help her compose a sentence and list all the possible words she might need (eg words for common illnesses). She writes this sentence and the words in her book to use a model in future, and adds three of these words to her spelling practice sheet.

At the end of the lesson

You ask her to re-read the article she read earlier. She tries her spelling words again on the spelling practice sheet.

Lesson 2

Review last week's work

Joy writes her words again on the spelling practice sheet and she re-reads last week's short magazine article.

Cloze

You have re-written part of the article as a cloze exercise and she completes this.

Writing

You ask her to practice writing some texts to send to school to explain a number of different absences.

After talking with her about her life you ask her to write a few sentences about herself. She is hesitant so you compose the sentences together and encourage her to make up the spelling. She proof-reads it then chooses three words she would like to learn to spell. You work on the spelling of these and add them to the spelling practice sheet.

Spelling

Several of her spelling words have the *ea* pattern in them so you work on this by dictating a number of words with that spelling pattern for her to write.

Shared reading

You find the latest school newsletter on the school app. She finds an item she would be interested in and you discuss what you both think it might be about and why the information might be important for her to know. You read it for her, then re-read it by reading alternate paragraphs with her. She then reads it again.

At the end of the lesson

She tries her spelling words again on the spelling practice sheet and reads the school newsletter item again. You tell her to practise re-reading it during the week.

Case study 2: Li

Background

Li was born in Vietnam and is 43 years old. He has been in Australia for 18 years, is married with three teenage children and owns an import business.

Until recently he employed a secretary to manage the office for him. However, the business is not doing well and he has had to put her off and cope with the reading and writing tasks himself. His wife is not literate in English and they have relied largely on the children to do the reading and writing for the family.
He has recently discovered that some family members, who were thought to have been killed, may be living in Canada and he is trying to trace them.

Literacy ability

Li attended English classes when he arrived in Australia. His spoken English is quite good and he manages to read the newspaper reasonably well with some problems with vocabulary and lack of fluency. His spelling and grammar and familiarity with 'business English' are his main problems.

Interests

His business
Tracing his extended family

Immediate literacy needs

Read and write business letters. He is at present in dispute with his landlord and wants to resolve it without the expense of a lawyer.

Correspondence with various government departments and agencies in Canada.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Li

Lesson 1

Introduction

In your first session you spend much time talking with him and getting to know each other.

Reading

You find an item in the newspaper that interests him, discuss it and take it in turns to read sections of it, clarifying any difficult vocabulary as you go.

Writing

You ask him to write a little about himself and his family. This allows him to demonstrate what he can do and you praise this.

Spelling

You ask him to fill out a simple model form to check that he can spell his personal details. You work on those he mis-spells and put them on his spelling practice sheet. (Section 5, page 19)

Writing

You ask him to add a little more to the piece he wrote about himself and proof-read it himself. There were a few grammatical errors and only three spelling mistakes, all of which he identified so you work on learning these.

Grammar

The main problems with his writing were grammatical ones, in particular verb endings. You talk about the *ed* past tense ending and give him practice with this. You write out a number of sentences as cloze exercises with *ed* verbs omitted.

Writing/grammar

You ask him to write a few sentences summarizing the article which you had read, being particularly careful of the past tense verbs.

At the end of the lesson

He tries the spelling words on the spelling practice sheet again. You ask him to bring along any business letters which he needs to reply to. You remind him to practise his spelling words.

Lesson 2

Review last lesson

Li tries his spelling words on the spelling practice sheet again. You have written out another cloze exercise with a lot of past tense words deleted and he completes this.

Writing

You have brought in a number of business letters as models of the conventional format. You discuss the letter he needs to write to his landlord and help him make notes of the facts.

You then look at a number of the model letters and analyse the common features and parts of the letters.

Together you compose his letter and he writes it and proof-reads it.

Together you perfect it and he rewrites it. He learns the problem spelling words and adds them to the spelling practice sheet.

Spelling

He has mis-spelt *Tuesday* and *November* in his letter so you ask him to write all the days of the week and months of the year and work on those which he mis-spells.

Grammar

You have brought in a passage written in the present tense. You ask him to re-write this in the past tense.

Reading

You find an item in the newspaper which interests him. You discuss it and take it in turns to read it, clarifying any difficult vocabulary as you go.

At the end of the lesson

He tries his spelling again.

What's in this section?

- Reading for understanding – text book prose
- Reading fluency
- Writing exam and assignment questions
- Study skills
- Case studies and lesson plans
- Useful references for this section

Who is this section for?

The activities in this section are designed for students who are enrolled in a vocational course, such as a TAFE course, and who are struggling with the reading and writing demands of the course. A vocational course is any post-school course such as hospitality, plumbing or business etc. The section may be useful for tutors who are helping such students individually, and also for teachers who want to support such students in their vocational classes. Many of the activities suggested here are suitable for whole class use, though some may need some adaptation. For class teachers, it is worth remembering that approaches and activities that are helpful for the students who struggle with literacy, will be helpful for all your students.

What materials to use?

If you have been asked to help a student who is enrolled in a vocational course, then they will have very immediate needs. It is possible that by the time you have your first session, they have assignments which are overdue, reading which hasn't been done and an assessment looming next week! The immediate nature of the task will dictate the content of your sessions and the materials you use. For this reason, you should always use reading material and teaching/learning activities which are directly related to the course.

If it is possible to talk with one of the course teachers, you may be able to borrow some other texts or notes related to the course. Working in coordination with the course teacher is the ideal situation. You can then find out what are the most immediate needs and most pressing problems.

Your role

Many students in this situation just want someone to do the assignments for them. This however, is not your role. (Although you will be surprised how adept you will get at knowing how to install a hot water heater or design a diet for a two year old or lay a tiled floor...!)

Your role is to:

1. assist with the reading and writing skills needed for the immediate tasks such as preparing for an assessment or doing an assignment.

2. help the student to develop reading and writing and study skills which will allow them to become independent learners.

The nature of the assistance you give to your student will depend largely on the course they are doing and the particular literacy demands it makes on its students. For example, some students are required to read text books, to do research in the library and to write essays, whilst others only have to work from a manual or course notes and their assignments require no more than short answers to questions.

Your first job therefore is to find out what your student will be required to read and what type of writing is required. If you are not in a position to be able to speak to the teacher, then get your student to bring along as much information about the course as they have been given, so you can try to work it out together.

What about maths?

This section does not cover the maths needed for the student's course or trade. If basic maths is a problem, refer to the section on *Everyday numeracy,* but you will need to speak to their vocational teacher to decide if you are able to help with specialist mathematics.

Reading for understanding – text book prose

The strategies suggested here should be useful for readers who have trouble understanding or remembering material they need to read for study. These readers can probably recognise and 'sound out the words' but still have trouble taking it all in.

Your aim is to help your student:

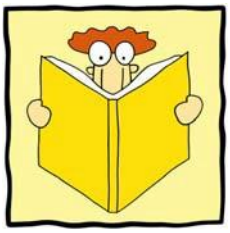
- manage the immediate reading tasks needed for their course
- develop the skills required to read with understanding
- develop the reading skills required to become an independent learner.

Background

Is your student having trouble reading and understanding text book material? There can be a number of sources of problems here:

1. Concepts

First, the reading matter may be overloaded with concepts that are totally new. We all find reading easiest when we are reading about a topic that we already know something about. The more new concepts we encounter, the more difficult the reading becomes. We need to understand something of the topic in order to 'hook' new concepts on to it, since we learn by assimilating new information into something we already know about. It may help to find a book or article covering the same or similar topic written in a simpler way. Perhaps try the internet, or get someone to talk about it. The reader will then have a framework on which to attach the new information when they go back to the problem text.



2. Vocabulary

Secondly, if the material has a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary, the reader can't predict what words are coming on the basis of knowledge of the topic. This will slow down the reading and it will become laboured and hesitant. (See *How do we read?* in Section 1.)

3. Grammar

Sometimes text book prose can be written in a style which may be unfamiliar. That is, the grammar of the sentence unfolds in an unfamiliar way. Think of legal language. This will also result in laboured, hesitant reading. (See *How do we read?* in Section I.) If this is the problem, it will help if you read it aloud to your student first. Perhaps record it on their phone or other device to replay until they get used to the rhythms of the language.

4. Organisation of the ideas

It helps to understand how the ideas are organised in a chapter or article. For example, we can more easily predict what is coming if we know that the sections are arranged, for example, as: introduction, causes, effects, solutions …. etc.

5. An inactive, unquestioning mind

If your student has developed the habit of just reading words without an active, questioning mind, they will have trouble remembering what they read. Such students often try to rely on rote learning without attempting to make sense of what they have read.

6. Unclear purpose

Efficient readers read in different ways for different purposes. We don't always have to read a text carefully in its entirety. For example, we might just skim a text to get the main ideas or to see if we really want to read it. Or we might need to scan a text to get particular information, such as what time the next bus leaves, or what is the dilution rate of a certain product you are using. Your student may need to learn the importance of deciding on their purpose for reading, and may need to develop these skimming and scanning skills.

7. Reading fluency

Maybe your student can recognise or 'sound out' most of the words but has developed a habit of slow, hesitant, word-by- word reading and as a result, has trouble with comprehension. Very slow hesitant reading can be frustrating and an embarrassment for people who need to read aloud in public, for example at meetings or in class. It can also interfere with comprehension. Readers who concentrate so hard on saying the words can lose track of the meaning so that they are not able to predict ahead and they are not holding 'chunks' of meaning in their head.

The eyes of efficient readers do not rest on every word. They bounce along the line and take in only as much of the print as is needed. (See the section *How do we read?*) However, the eyes of some inefficient readers have developed a motor habit of stopping on each word. One of the things such readers need to do is to break this motor habit and to take in more words with each fixation of the eyes.

Some solutions

Reading fluency

If reading fluency is your student's problem, there are a number of strategies that should help.

- **Reading with your student**

Clarify any difficult vocabulary first and give an overview of what it is about.
You read it aloud with your student. Your reading should perhaps be a little slower than usual, but still fluent. Try making slightly longer pauses at commas and between sentences. Don't try to slow down to your student's 'word calling' pace. This can sometimes be difficult so it may be better to tell your student to read along with you 'in their head' while you read aloud.

As you are reading, trace your finger along under the line; not pointing at each word, but moving your finger fluently along.

Make sure you are sitting so that the student can see the book comfortably and easily. The student is not to worry about making errors or falling behind. If they make errors, they should just keep going.

You may need to 'sell' this method to your student. Many adults see it as cheating or they complain that they can't keep up with your voice. This is probably because they are still trying to look carefully at every word and that is precisely the habit you are trying to break. It may need several sessions of 10 to 15 minutes for them to get used to the method but it is well worth persevering.

- **Read-along**

This is similar to the procedure above except that you make a digital recording of your reading. Again, your reading should be a little slow, but not so slow that it loses normal intonation and fluency. Take care that your reading is accurate and that you have no mistakes recorded. Replay it to check this, as making mistakes is easier than we think! It is a normal aspect of the reading process but for this exercise, your reading needs to be absolutely accurate. The amount you record will depend on your student's reading skill and the nature of the text. It may just be a few pages or it may be a whole chapter.

- **Repeated reading**

It is useful to encourage your student to learn passages by reading them over and over until they can read them fluently. They may start off by reading with you as suggested above, and then read the passage several times alone or with the recording until they feel they can read it fluently.

- **Practise skimming**

Make sure your student gets used to skim reading. That is, reading faster than is comfortable to get the main ideas. If they spend a few minutes a day practising skimming, they may find their normal reading speed has increased. Skimming is a very useful skill. Give your student a passage or a page and see how quickly they can pick out the key words and main points.

- **100 words per minute**

This is the repeated reading strategy, but with a short term goal. There is evidence that a reading speed of about 100 words per minute is the critical reading speed for optimal comprehension. You will need several passages of about 100 words long. The passages should be just a little more difficult than the student's independent level of reading and of course, something that interests them. You also need a digital clock or watch.
As with the repeated reading strategy, read the passage through with your student to make sure they can recognise all the words. Then they re-read it silently several times, timing themselves each time until they can read it in one minute. Then move on to another passage. It is a good motivator to record the time taken for each reading. There is a blank proforma record sheet for you to use at the end of this section.

Comprehension

There are a number of important and useful teaching/ learning activities to help your students develop helpful comprehension strategies. Just knowing that they will have to answer comprehension questions at the end does not help. That just *tests* comprehension. It does not help the student *develop strategies* to improve their comprehension. Activities to help develop comprehension strategies can be before-reading, during-reading or after-reading.

Before-reading activities

These activities are also called pre-reading activities and are really important reading activities. Your student should be encouraged not to pick up a text and just start reading words, but to begin by skimming or scanning and posing questions to themselves before they start to read.

- **Skim**

Skimming is reading rapidly in order to get a general overview of the material. First read headings, sub headings, look at illustrations and graphics and their captions. Search for clues as to the organisation of ideas in the chapter. The first paragraph and the sub headings will usually help here. Then encourage your student to skim, or read the difficult text superficially to start with, just to get the broad picture but not to get bogged down in the details.

When finished, talk with your student about what they can remember of the main ideas, and brainstorm what they might already know about the topic. Then, when they return to re-read it they have a big-picture framework to build on.

- **Clarify new vocabulary**

Start to clarify some of the unknown vocabulary. However, remember that with technical language, a dictionary type definition is sometimes not very much help. Some of the words may not be understood properly until the whole concept is clear.

- **Question**

Discuss with your student the questions that pop into their mind. *What am I going to learn from this? ... What do I need to know? …Is it a historical survey of the topic? ... Does that chart tell me about the increase in recent years? ... What on earth does this term mean? ... Is this about the video we saw in class? ...*

The questions may not turn out to be really pertinent. That doesn't matter and you are not really looking for answers at this stage. The important thing is that your student is reading with an active, questioning mind which is what all good readers do subconsciously when they are reading.

In order to help your student get used to this, it may be helpful to draw up a three column chart:

What I know	What I want to know	What I learnt

They jot down some ideas in the first two columns after skimming and discussion, then consider the third column after reading and reflecting on it.

During-reading activities

Your student will now be reading for a purpose. As they are reading, encourage them to continue with the questioning mind, making predictions about the text.

- **Pause and predict.**

As they are reading, encourage them to pause at significant points to predict what is coming next. *"I think the next step will be to combine the ingredients".*

- **Pause and question.**

Encourage them to pause at significant points to ask themselves a question about the section of the text just read. "*What does that mean?"… "I wonder why the writer told us that?"*

- **ReQuest**

Sometimes called Reciprocal Questioning, this is a technique in which the tutor and student take turns at asking the questions. In this way, you are modelling the type of questions that the student needs to ask.

After reading a couple of sentences, you ask whatever questions occur to you about the material or the vocabulary. *What does that mean? ... What does that refer to? ... What's this chapter going to be about?*

The student reads another few paragraphs and then takes a turn at asking the questions ... and so on. Encourage the student to predict answers to some of these questions, then read on to confirm or disconfirm. However, don't break up the reading with too much of this talk.

After-reading activities

We understand and remember information best if we have to **do** something mentally with it. These activities are not just activities to *test* comprehension, but to help your student understand and remember what they have read.

- **Relate the information in a different mode**

For example, ask your student to draw a diagram or a flowchart to represent the text they have just read.

- **Label** a diagram, a drawing or a chart with information from the text**.**

- **Match key terms** to synonyms or definitions**.**

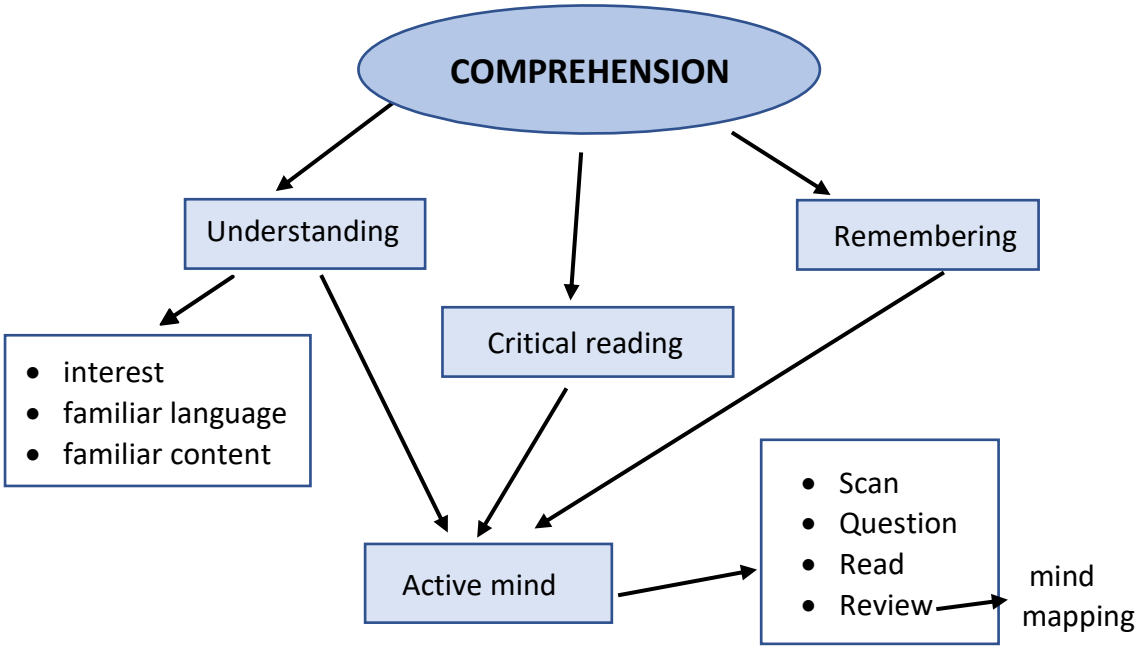
- **Re-order text.**

Learners are given the text with paragraphs or steps in the wrong order and asked to re-order them.

- **Mind mapping**

A mind map is a representation or diagram of the main points in a text, using the key words with arrows and other symbols (eg + or =) to show the relationship between them. Mind maps can help students to see relationships between ideas, which in turn can help recall. It is much easier to recall interrelated chunks of information than isolated items of information. The act of creating the mind map in itself will help memory. An added bonus is that our recall of graphic information (diagrams etc) is much greater than for slabs of text. There is no one correct way to do a mind map. Each person's mind map of a particular text might look different.

A mind map of the information in this section might look like this.



- **Classification**

The technique called classification is very much like mind mapping in that it helps the reader organise the material in their mind. It is a simpler procedure than mind mapping and is more suited to smaller pieces of text.

After reading the passage, perhaps a few times, until the reader has grasped the central ideas, ask your student to underline or highlight a number words in the passage which are crucial to the meaning (key words).

Once they have selected their words, they write them on pieces of cardboard.
Then they arrange the cards in a way that virtually re-tells the text. They can put in arrows to connect the words and ideas together.

When they are happy with the pattern they have chosen, they tell the tutor what the article was about using the cards as a prompt. Stress that there is no right or wrong way to lay out the cards – each reader would probably make a different pattern.

- **Cloze exercises**

The term cloze is probably an unfamiliar one but it refers to a common teaching strategy of filling … the blank words like …… You create a text with words deleted and the student fills in the deletions.

Cloze exercises can be written or oral. For written cloze you need to write or type the material and leave blanks big enough for the student to write in. If you are typing them out the lines need to be double spaced for that reason. Choose the words which you delete very carefully. They should be words which the student should know or should be able to work out from the passage. For example:

> As the flux expands from the centre it cuts the .....
>
> When the current stops.....the field collapses, again
>
> cutting the conductor. Because a moving magnetic field
>
> induces a .....in a conductor, there must be a .....
>
> voltage induced in the very conductor producing the field in
>
> the first place.

For oral cloze you can black out words from a copy of the text with a felt tipped pen, and the student reads the text and predicts the word deleted.

You can leave the whole word blank or in some circumstances it is easier for the student if you leave the first, or first and last, letter printed.

> E.g. The m..... on the m.....n.

As a general rule, when your student is reading with you….

Pause ... prompt ... praise

When your student doesn't know a word:

- Don't provide the word straight away. Give them time to think about it.
- Then give them some clues:

What letter does it begin with? Can you think of a word that begins with 's' that would fit there?

Or you might tell them to read on a few words further and see if they can work it out.

- If that doesn't help, then just tell them the word.
- Make sure to praise their efforts. There will usually be some approximation to the print.

If your student misreads a word:

- Don't correct them straight away.
- If their mistake doesn't alter the sense of the passage, then ignore it.
- If it alters the sense of the passage or their reading results in nonsense, stop them and say, *Does that make sense? Does that sound right? Have another look at that.*

What materials do you need?

- The text book or manual or course notes
- Possibly a simpler book on the same or similar topic
- Dictionary
- Possibly a recording device
- Paper and pens
- Blank word cards

References – Further Reading

Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds) 2010, *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 176 - 207

100 word per minute record sheet

Name of Passage	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken	Date and time taken
	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs	Date: min : secs
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Answering exam /assignment questions

This section has suggestions for students who may be able to manage everyday personal writing (a personal email or a note) but have trouble with the particular type of writing required to answer assessment or exam questions or complete assignments.

Your aim is to help your student:

- understand the literacy skills involved in understanding and answering exam and assignment questions
- develop these skills so they can use them independently.

First, find out what sort of writing your student needs to do. Do the assignments and assessment tasks only require short answers, that is, a sentence or maybe a paragraph? Or are longer pieces, maybe essays, required? In either case, the first task, and often the most important task, is to help your student understand what the question really wants them to do.

How do I answer this?

- **Analyse the question**

Most questions have two, or sometimes three, important parts to them which need to be identified:

1. What is the question about? That is, what is the general topic and the focus of the topic?

2. In some questions the student also needs to take note of any limitations there may be to the topic. For example:
   Summarise the nutritional needs of children ***between 3 and 5 years.***

3. What do I have to do with the topic? Look for the verbs or task words which tell you how to answer the question. For example:
   Summarise *the nutritional needs of children between 3 and 5 years.*

Here are some of the commonly used terms or task words and their meanings:

Task word	Meaning
Describe	Give a written, detailed account.
Explain	Interpret the facts, clarify reasons and examine the 'how' and 'why'.
Illustrate	Use examples, a figure or diagram to explain or make clear.
Outline	Give an account, indicating main features or general principles.
Summarise	Give a brief account of the main points, omitting details and examples.
Compare	Note the similarities and differences.
Contrast	Compare by showing the differences.
Discuss	Examine by argument or debate, giving reasons for and against.
Review	Make a survey of and examine the subject critically.
Define	Clarify the precise meaning of a word, term or phrase.
Evaluate	Make a judgment of the worth of something or some idea.
Justify	State your reasons for a conclusion.
Trace	Give the development, or history of an event or idea.

- ## Talk first ... then write

Your student may have a good grasp of the practical aspects of their course but has trouble transferring this to writing. Encouraging them to talk about the topic is a good way to build a bridge between the practical and the written task. Encourage them to be explicit. Ask questions and encourage them to consult their notes or text book for anything which they're not sure of.

- **Look at model pieces of writing**

Your student needs to be clear also just *how* the information is to be presented. The format and the way the language is used will differ depending on what they are asked to do with the topic (that is, what the task words are). For example, if they have to discuss an issue, the writing will take a very different form from that used to describe a process.

There are different rules or conventions concerning these different types of writing which you may intuitively understand but which need to be made explicit for your student. These different types of writing are called genres. The table on the following page lists some common genres which your student may need to write, and some of the language features which they should be aware of. There is no need to bother your student by introducing them to more of these text genres than they need. Just look down the list and see which ones match the kinds of writing they are required to do.

The best way to help your student understand how to write in the appropriate genre is to find some models and examine them together. For example, if an assignment question asks them to *describe the process for sewing seed into garden beds*, you could find other examples of descriptions of a process in the text book, which could be used as a model. Together you could look for the language features which are listed against the procedure genre in the table below.

Some common text types (genres) (For more common text types, see Section 5)

Genre or text type	Features

Recount
(Telling what happened)
	• Structure usually consists of:
	  ○ orientation (who, when, where)
	  ○ then detail the events, usually time sequenced.
	• Use past tense
	• Action verbs (went, did, thought …)
	• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next …)
	• May include personal reactions.

Procedure
(How to do something -eg recipes, instructions)
	• Structure usually consists of:
	  ○ the goal (sometimes just a heading)
	  ○ materials (listed)
	  ○ method (sequentially in steps).
	• Verbs are action words and commands usually placed at or near the beginning of the sentence (take, beat, screw …)
	• Usually set out in point form or a series of numbered steps.

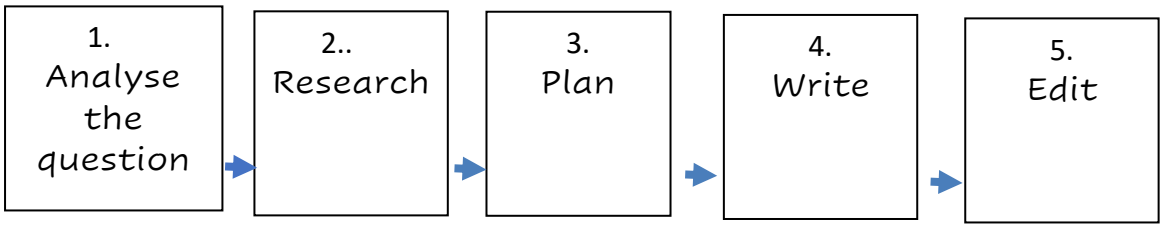
Argument (or point of view)
Presents only one side of the case, ie. for or against.
	• Avoid the use of over emotive words
	• Verbs are mainly simple present tense
	• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however …)
	• Structure usually consists of:
	  ○ statement of the point of view first
	  ○ then development of the argument point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts
	  ○ restatement of the position at the end.

Discussion
(Similar to an argument but presenting two or more points of view)
	• Avoid the use of over emotive words
	• Verbs are mainly simple present tense
	• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however …)
	• Structure usually consists of:
	  ○ introduction - states the issue and the points of controversy
	  ○ then statement of the argument *for*, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts
	  ○ then argument *against*, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts
	  ○ then conclusion - a recommendation based on the weight of evidence.

Explanation
(How or why something happens)
	• Verbs are simple present (or sometimes past) tense
	• Structure usually consists of:
	  ○ a general statement
	  ○ a sequenced explanation of how or why, usually a series of logical steps in the process, in the order in which they happen
	• Linking words to do with time (first, following, finally …) or to do with cause and effect relationships (if/then, as a result, since …)

Writing an essay - or longer piece of writing

Some courses require the students to do sustained pieces of writing, or essays. There are a number of steps to be worked through in writing an essay. The most basic of these are:



1. Analyse the question

See above, pages 12, 13.

2. Research

It is useful for the student to begin by jotting down initial ideas. This will help guide the reading. Making a simple mind map of what they already know is also a good way to start.

It is best to begin reading by getting an overview of the topic - this is probably given in the textbook or course notes. Then move to more detailed, specific references. Having found the appropriate text or texts, note taking is the next consideration. Many students take copious notes, rewriting whole slabs of text. They should be encouraged to write notes in their own words and take care to note the full reference details including page numbers, of anything they make note of or any photocopies they make.

3. Plan

It is now time to plan the essay or to return to the initial rough plan the student made before beginning their research. The plan should include the information which will be included and the order in which it will be presented, or the structure of the essay.

Every essay should consist of:

- **Introduction**
  Restate the question as a statement and say briefly, without detail, what perspective you are taking on the topic. This might be about 10% of the essay.
- **The body**
  Explain each point you wish to make, in detail.
- **Conclusion**
  This draws together all that you have said. No new information should be written in this section. Ideally, this should be about 10% of your essay.
- **References**
  If you have used any.

It is difficult to try to write the introduction or the conclusion until the body of the essay has been written. The writer doesn't know exactly what they are introducing until the body of the essay has been properly developed. At this stage it is a waste of time to worry about refining it too much. Encourage your student to concentrate on the body first.

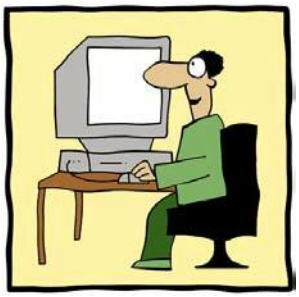
The instructions or task words will give some direction as to how the paragraphs in the body are organised. For example, if the task is to 'discuss', the student is required to explore an issue from different points of view, giving arguments for and against. The paragraphs in the body of the essay will then be arranged as a series of logical points which are each developed. Or it could be organised as arguments for, then arguments against.

However, if the task is to 'trace the development of ...' the body of the essay will be organised in chronological sequence of events.
(See *Look at model pieces of writing*, this Section, pages 13, 14.)

Encourage your student to give a heading to each point they are going to include, and list them in the order in which they are going to present them. Note that traditional essay format does not include headings. Your student should check with the teacher for guidelines. Headings are however a useful planning tool, and may be removed before the final draft is written.

4. Write

Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, usually at the beginning of the paragraph. This tells the reader what the paragraph is about. Ensuring that there is a clear topic sentence near the beginning of each paragraph is one of the keys to clear, logical, reader-friendly writing.
Remember, this is the first draft. The student should concentrate on getting their ideas down clearly and logically and not worry about spelling, punctuation etc at this point, as that will only distract them from the main task.



5. Edit

The next step is for your student to proofread what they have written. This is a two step procedure: the spelling and punctuation and then the ideas.

1. It is probably best to start by fixing the spelling. Tell your student to put a line under any words which they think may be wrong or which they weren't sure of then have another try and check in the dictionary, or you may have to help.

   Then it is useful to get your student to read it aloud so that they can hear what they have written and try to pick up any omitted words or parts that just don't sound right (that is, they are not grammatical). Reading aloud also helps to identify where the full stops should be.

2. Then they need to look at the way the ideas have been developed. Is it logical? Has anything been left out? Is there anything that is irrelevant? Is there any 'waffle' that should be left out? Are the introduction and conclusion appropriate?

   Also, they should re-read the question to make sure they've answered it!

   Encourage your student to write in plain English. Students often try to write like a text book and end up writing passages which the reader simply can not understand. If this is the case for your student, it often helps to ask them to tell you what they want to say - then tell them to write it down like that (or almost like that).

What about spelling?

If your student is a poor speller, you will need to help them with this also. But be realistic about the progress that is possible in the time that you have available.

Your aim is to help your student:

- learn to spell the important words related to their course or occupation
- develop a routine for checking their written work and finding and fixing most of their errors.

Work on the errors that your student produces in their written work. Perhaps develop a spelling list of the key words for their course or their occupation.

How do we spell?

When we are spelling or learning to spell, we are using three senses as well as our knowledge about the language.

1. The visual memory for the appearance of the word. This is perhaps the most important factor in learning to spell.

2. The sound of the word is also important. You should check that your student is saying the word correctly and hearing the sounds in the word. You should be aware however, that even the most careful speakers do not pronounce words the way they are spelt. For example, when we say *walked* we do not pronounce the ending as it is spelt. What we are actually saying is more like *workt*. People from a non-English speaking background in particular will have trouble with this aspect of spelling.

3. The feel of the word as we write it is also important in learning to spell. Many people say that a mis-spelling can actually feel wrong.

4. We are also drawing on our knowledge of the meaning of the word and its context.

How can I help my student?

Encourage your student to 'have a go' at problem words

When your student asks *How do you spell...?* encourage them to try it first. Chances are they will have most of the word right and will then know which part they have to learn. Eventually you might have to help them with it or help look it up. You should also help them to find their way around a dictionary.

Set up a learn-to-spell routine

Concentrate on the words needed for the course or occupation. Telling your student how a word is spelt this week doesn't mean they will remember it next week. They have to put some effort into learning to spell.

- Write the words out clearly on a sheet of paper. You should print in lower case letters. Or ask your student to copy it out from the dictionary or the text book or course notes.
- If it is a long word, help break it into syllables and pronounce it that way. For example, eng/in/eer/ing.
- Ask the student to copy the word carefully. If it is a long word encourage them to study the word and try to remember it in chunks rather than copying it letter by letter. Then ask them to underline the difficult bit which causes the mistake and to ask themselves why they got it wrong and work out a way to remember it.
- They then re-write the word several times while spelling it to themselves. Writing words over and over usually seemed like punishment at school, but it is really a most effective way of learning to spell a word. You are reinforcing the three senses; the look of the word, the sound of it and the feel of it.
- They should then cover it over and try to write it from memory then check it.
- Ten minutes later, try again.
- At the end of the session, try again.
- During the week, try again … and again … and again
- Next session, try again.
- Keep a record of these selected words. The student might choose to record these words in the back of an exercise book or in a small notebook.

If your student is a very poor speller and you want some more suggestions, look at Section 5, page 20 *Writing and spelling - Some more helpful hints for learning to spell.*

What materials do you need?

- Any information you can gather about course requirements
- Assessment/assignment schedule, past exam questions etc
- Text books, course notes etc
- If possible, model essays or assignment answers
- Paper and pens, highlighter, etc
- Dictionary

Study skills

Your aim is to help your student:

- organise their study routine
- learn how to learn.

Organise

One of the earliest tasks in your first session with your student is to help them to organise their notes and hand-outs.

Make sure that:

- they have a separate, easily identified section in their folder for each subject
- they write the subject or teacher's name and the date on every handout they are given, if it is not already printed on the sheet.

Sometimes the course teacher will take responsibility for helping the students to organise their notes, but it may still require constant monitoring and reminding. Otherwise their job as a learner and yours as a helper will become very difficult.

Now study

Purpose

Make sure that your student knows how to read in different ways for different purposes so that they don't waste time trying to read something carefully and deeply when they are just looking for some specific information. Give them practice in:

- **Skimming** This is looking quickly over a piece of text to try to understand the main ideas. It is the reading we do when we are looking to see if something is worth reading. Give your student a section of text or a chapter and see how quickly they can pick out the key words and main ideas.

- **Scanning** At other times scanning will be sufficient. Scanning means you are looking for specific information in a text. Give your student a section of text or a chapter and see how quickly they can find a specific piece of information.

For many students, studying means simply reading and rereading their notes and texts in a passive way, hoping that something will sink in. That is not studying, and the student will remember very little. In order to memorise information, we need to do something with it. The activities below will suggest some ways of doing this. Again, you should find out what form of exam or assessment questions your student can expect.

In technology/trade courses there might be:

- multiple choice questions
- cloze (fill in the blanks)
- label diagrams
- complete tables, diagrams, charts
- short answers (1 or 2 sentences)
- true/false
- matching information.

In other courses there are more likely to be essay type questions. You should give your student plenty of practice answering the kinds of questions they are most likely to encounter.

Review/study strategies

Some of the following suggestions may not represent the form of questions which are likely to be encountered in the course, but they will nevertheless provide your student with good learning practice. Many were explained in full in the section on Comprehension in this section (p. 6).

- **Cloze exercises**

A cloze exercise is a passage with a number of words deleted which the student has to predict using the clues given by the rest of the sentence or passage. (See this section, p. 9)

- **Labelling diagrams**

Photocopy or copy a diagram from the text or notes without the labels and ask your student to label it.

- **Complete tables, diagrams, charts**

Photocopy or copy a table, diagram or chart from the text or notes, with some information missing, which your student has to complete.

- **Mind maps**

See this Section page 8.

- **Sequencing activities**

If there are steps in a procedure to be memorized, write them in random order and ask your student to re-order them. Or get them to write them on pieces of card or paper themselves, mix them up and re-order them.

- **Make up own exam/assessment questions**

All of the above activities are much more effective if your student makes up their own exercises (with your help). They might make up a cloze exercise or copy a diagram with the labels left off, or a table with some of the information missing, and complete it at home or in your session next week.

- **Turn headings into questions**

Give your student practice in turning the headings in the text book into questions, then see if they can answer them.

- **Explain what you have read**

After reading a section of the notes, get your student to explain it to you and encourage them to do this when they are studying alone. They should explain aloud to themselves what they have just read. Saying it aloud and explaining to yourself activates additional parts of the brain and helps you memorise the information.

- **Make notes**

Making notes in your own words is useful. Copying out slabs of the text is not. Learning is about making sense of new ideas and hooking the new concepts onto your existing knowledge. You need to put it into your own words for that to happen. However, it is best not to make notes while reading. Encourage your student to read a section at a time then put the book aside and try to summarise it. The quality of their reading will improve, just knowing that they are going to summarise it.

- **Review**

At the end of a study period, or at the end of a session with you, it is very important to review what has just been learnt. A short review immediately at the end of the study period, rather than at a later time is really helpful in retaining the information. Just ask your student to tell you what has been covered in the session, using any notes etc as a prompt.

- **Scan ... question ... read ... review and ReQuest**

Look at some of the activities in the earlier section *Reading for understanding*, in particular the *Scan ... question ... read ... review* and the *ReQuest* sections. (pp 6, 7)

What materials do you need?

- Text books, notes and handouts
- Pens, highlighters and paper

Case studies and lesson plans

Case study 1: Margaret

Background

Margaret was not a successful student at school but has always passionately wanted to work with children. She just scraped into the Child Care course, mainly as a result of the obvious commitment to the career which she displayed at interview. She is now having a struggle with the written work required of her. She failed her first assignment and is struggling with the second one. She has considered dropping out of the course but has decided to try once again with some help from a tutor.

Literacy ability

Margaret's literacy ability allows her to cope quite well with everyday tasks. She can read articles which interest her in popular magazines; she uses the computer and sends emails to her friends (albeit with spelling mistakes). She has some small cousins who she baby-sits regularly and can read stories to them and read and write messages to the children's parents.

Immediate literacy needs

She is, however, having trouble coping with the reading and writing demands of her course.

Reading: She says that she starts to read the text book but she can't take anything in. She can 'read' all the words and can work out most of the difficult ones but that doesn't help her understand what it is about. She has started Chapter 1 several times but gives up in frustration.

Writing: The problem with her last assignment was that she didn't answer the question and the ideas were clumsily expressed and didn't seem to flow logically anyway. There were a few very basic spelling errors.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Margaret

Lesson 1

You spend a lot of the session going through her course information, course objectives, course notes etc. and helping her organise them in her folder.

She has mentioned her problem reading the text book so you introduce her to the Scan ... Question ... Read ... Review routine.

First you browse through the text book, looking at the chapter headings and table of contents and modeling questioning behaviour such as: *What is the book about? ... Does it only cover the theoretical background or will it give me practical advice about caring for children?... Is it about child development? ... What will it tell me about child psychology? ...*

Then you do the same with the first chapter, then the first section of the chapter.

Then you start to read. If she is sufficiently confident, she can read it herself or you could take turns.

At the end of each paragraph or so, you stop and ask questions *(ReQuest)*. It doesn't matter whether the questions can be answered yet. The important thing is that she is reading with a questioning mind.

When you have finished with a section, ask her to review it. She tells you what she can remember of it then you help her to make a mind map of this information.

She has an assignment due soon so you help her to analyse the question.
You help her make a rough plan or mind map of what she thinks her answer might look like.

The information needed will be found in her handouts, her notes and her text book, so you introduce her to the skill of skimming to find the relevant information and show her how to use the index in the text book.

You help her with a rough draft of the first part for her to finish during the week.

You review the reading and writing skills you have introduced her to during the session.

Lesson 2

You help Margaret edit her assignment:

Spelling
Before you look at the draft, you tell her to look over it and try to find any spelling mistakes, and to put a line under any words she thinks may not be right. You write out the correct spelling for her. (At a later date you will help her find her way around a dictionary to check on these herself, but today the assignment is urgent.)

Grammar
You praise her achievement at writing so much etc ... etc, then ask her to read it out loud to you, stopping her once or twice to ask *Does that sound right? ... Perhaps you could you have said that differently? ... Do we need a new sentence there?...*

Content
Then you help her look at the content of what she has written. *Has she answered the question? ... Do the ideas flow logically? ... Has she given enough details and examples?* You help her scan her text book for more examples and some quotes.

She takes the edited draft away to rewrite at home and you praise ...praise ... praise the achievement so far.

She had a few spelling mistakes on words which are central to her course and which she will need to write often so you set up a learn-to-spell routine for her using three of these words.

You look at the first assignment which she did and failed, and talk about how it could have been better. In particular you help her analyse the question**,** do a rough plan of what she should have included and scan the text book and notes for the information which she should have used.

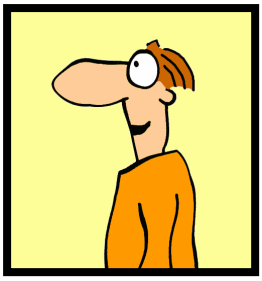
Together you read the next section of the text book, modelling the Scan ... Question ... Read ... Review and *ReQuest* techniques and reviewing by making notes or mind maps.

Since her reading is slow and hesitant you ask her to read the same section over and over till she can read it more fluently and tell her to do this several times during the week (Repeated reading technique).

You review what you have talked about and ask her to have another try at her spelling words.

Case study 2: Ahmed

Background



Although Ahmed was born in Australia, his parents were recent migrants and they did not speak English at home. They had very little literacy in English and were not able to help Ahmed with his schoolwork. He did not speak very much English by the time he started school and he struggled with reading and writing throughout his schooling. Although he stayed at school till the end of year 10, his Year 10 qualification was a very minimal one.

Ahmed was always very keen about cars and since his uncle owned a panel beating business, he offered him an apprenticeship. He loves working in the workshop but his days at TAFE are a challenge.

Literacy ability

Ahmed does not read anything for pleasure. He flips through motor magazines and looks at the pictures but has no confidence that he could read anything very much. When pressed however, he proves that he can read many words and can have a go at sounding words out. That is, he knows what sounds the letters might represent, but he has no real confidence in attacking unknown words.
His spelling is very poor, and he avoids writing as much as possible.

Immediate literacy needs

The course reading material consists of a set of course notes and an occasional handout. The end of each section in the notes contains a review page which the students are expected to complete at home. Ahmed feels he is unable to do this as he can't read it well enough. The only one he has done was copied from another student.

Most of the questions require only one word or one sentence answers, or are cloze exercises, sequencing exercises or exercises where the student is expected to label a diagram or complete a table.

Ahmed needs to:

- understand what the question is about and how he is expected to answer it
- recognise the key words in his notes
- develop some reading strategies to allow him to predict what an unknown word might be
- scan his notes for specific information
- develop a learn-to-spell strategy.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Ahmed

Lesson 1

In your first session you spend some time sorting out his hand-outs and helping him to organise a system for the hand-outs.

Together you go through the course notes and help him become familiar with the organisation of the manual. You look at the table of contents and match it up with the course objectives which he has been given in his course information hand-out. You ask him what has been covered so far in the course and find the sub-headings which match this. You show him how to use the table of contents to find information.

Together you read a section from the notes and model the Scan ... Question ... Read ... Review technique. *Let's read this section ... What is the chapter heading? ... Tell me in your own words what it might be about ... Do you think it will just tell us about the structure of the chassis or will it give us information about how to repair a problem? ... Is it just about cars or does it cover heavy vehicles also? ... Look at this diagram... What is it about?*

You check that he recognises some of the key vocabulary. These will probably be words in the heading, sub-headings and captions of diagrams. If there are any he doesn't know, you write them on a piece of paper for him and get him to copy them and say them.

Now start to read. If his reading is very slow and hesitant, you take it in turns to read a paragraph each, remembering the pause ... prompt ... praise routine. You continue modelling the questioning behavior by 'wondering out loud' at the end of each section. *Do you know what X means? Let's see if it tells us in the next part …*

You help him review by asking him to tell you what it was all about and you model a very simple mind map for him.

You help him find the section in his review questions which covers this part of the notes and help him to analyse the questions. Then you help him to do a few questions.

You set up a learn-to-spell routine for him for two or three key words.

You review the reading skills you have introduced him to in the session.

Lesson 2

You review the reading and writing skills you introduced Ahmed to last week and the content of the section you read together. With the notes open you ask him to tell you in his own words what it was about.

Following the Scan ... Question ... Read ... Review routine, together you read another section of the notes.

Because his reading is so slow and hesitant, you get him to practise repeated reading of a section and tell him to continue to practise this at home.

In order to encourage him to use the skill of prediction in his reading, and to give him practice with the format of many of the review questions in his book, you make a cloze exercise of a paragraph in his notes which he has already read and which he is familiar with.

You ask him to make a cloze exercise out of the next paragraph. Next week you will ask him to complete this.

You help him to recognise the different types of questions that recur in his review questions by going through a few of them and asking him to pick out all the cloze exercises, or questions where he is asked to *list* some things or *label a diagram* or *match the information in the first column with the words in the second column* etc.

You help him do some more of his review questions by helping him with the skills needed to analyse the questions and skim his notes for the information.

You work on some spelling mistakes which he has made.

You review the reading and writing skills that you have talked about and the content of the section of his notes which you read.

You remind him to do some repeated reading practice at home and to practise his spelling words.

What's in this section?

- Writing
- Spelling
- Handwriting
- Useful references for this section

Who is this section for?

This section is relevant to all adult literacy tutors. Even if your student says they have no need to write, and just want to concentrate on reading, the two go hand in hand, so some attention to writing and spelling is necessary. Suggestions are included for beginners and more advanced students.

By 'writing' we mean getting ideas on paper, rather than handwriting style. If your student is concerned with handwriting style, or is new to the Roman script, then consult the separate sub-section on handwriting at the end of this section.

Writing

Your aim is to help your student:

- manage the writing which they need to do now
- develop some strategies for coping with their writing needs in the future
- feel relaxed about writing.

Everyone has some need to write from time to time, so find out what your student's main needs may be. Is it filling out the job sheets or dockets at work; writing on greeting cards; emails to school or family; or job application forms? Begin by helping with the problems which arise with these tasks and help them develop some models which can be used for future reference.

But the writing shouldn't end there. Every session you have with your student should include some writing activity, even if your student is a beginning reader/writer. For a beginner, the writing may just take the form of copying to start with. They might copy out the language experience story which you have just written down, or you might help them write their address and the names of members of their family. However, as soon as they have developed some letter/sound knowledge, you should try to encourage them to move on quickly from copying to 'having a go first' at the spelling and to composing small pieces of writing themselves.

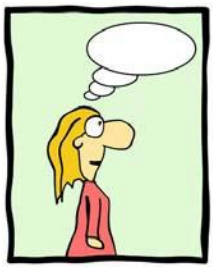
The best way for your student to improve their writing (and reading) is to write often. Their progress will be very slow if they only write once a week when they are with you. They need to write nearly every day.

Not many people actually enjoy sitting down writing. Most of us find lots of excuses to put it off until tomorrow ... tomorrow ... tomorrow; even authors who write for a living. So your student is in good company if they don't much like the thought of putting pen to paper. You probably don't either.

By writing we mean composing, writing down your thoughts for the day, reminiscences, notes or letters. Writing does not refer here to handwriting style.

The writing process

1. Pre writing - thinking time



There is an important stage in writing for all of us before we pick up the pen or sit down at the computer, and that is the thinking stage: thinking about what we are going to write and mustering our ideas. The writer needs time to rehearse a topic, perhaps to think up a good phrase to use or a good beginning sentence. Ideas will come while driving to work or doing the washing up. This is especially important for novice or reluctant writers.

2. Looking at other models

It is also important that your student is familiar with other examples of the type of writing which they are about to do. Even if are they are writing in a journal or a diary or writing a postcard, don't assume that they know what sort of things to write about or what sort of language to use. If they are about to do some journal or diary writing for example, you might need to write some models for them. Or if they need to write a business letter you could bring along a number of similar letters and look carefully at the way they are laid out and the way the language is used. See *What kind of writing does your student want or need to do?* (page 7). That section deals with this in more detail.

3. Modelling the writing process

The best way for you to discover the difficulties of writing is for you to write to and with your student. You might, for example exchange stories about your school days, or your township as you remember it when you were young. You might exchange letters or emails with them. Write a letter or email to your student one week and ask them to write a reply during the week or at the next session. This will give them time to think about what they are going to write, and you have given them a model to work from.

If you do start to write with your student, you will discover, for example, that it is often not possible to know exactly what you are going to write until you start to write it. The old school rule of planning a composition before you start to write it usually does not result in good writing. You sometimes just have to start writing whatever comes into your head first and it will fall into shape as you are writing or you can shape it in the redrafting stage.

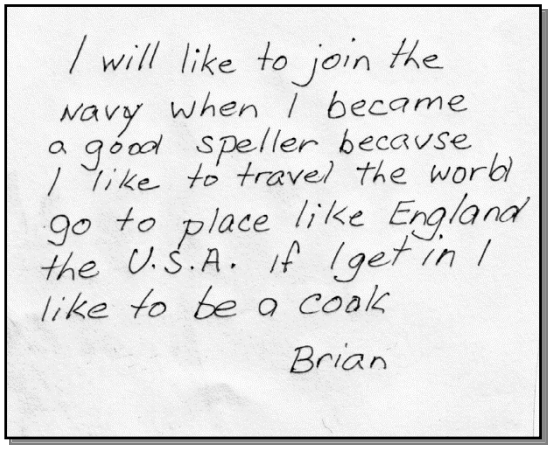
4. The first draft - getting ideas on paper

We need to help our students focus on one thing at a time. To start with, you should encourage your student to concentrate on the composing part of the process. In this first step they shouldn't worry about the spelling. Tell them to try to make it up. The first aim is to get them to do a lot of writing and to feel happy about doing it. If they have to stop at every second word to ask, *How do you spell ...?* or to consult a dictionary, they will

forget what they were going to say in the first place and the process will be frustrating. If they can't even guess at some of the words then they could write part of the word and fill in the rest with a dash like *th*--. After all, this is just the first rough draft. It is just for them to look at and they will know what the word is meant to be.

We are not suggesting that spelling is not important. It is. But we deal with that later. This approach will also help a student avoid another problem with writing; that of leaving out words, of writing incomplete sentences or ungrammatical sentences. We are referring here to students who have a good grasp of the oral language but who write ungrammatical sentences which they would not say orally. The issue of grammar for students of a non-English speaking background is referred to elsewhere. (See Section 8: *Is your student from a non-English speaking background?)*

Consider this piece of writing. What advice would you give the writer?


I will like to join the navy when I became a good speller becavse I like to travel the world go to place like England the U.S.A. if I get in I like to be a cook

Brian

At first glance we might be tempted to say that Brian is a careless writer and must be encouraged to slow down and take more care. However, Brian's writing is in fact the result of a very careful and painful process. He is a very poor speller but an avid dictionary user. He would have consulted the dictionary for many words in this piece. He is so concerned with the spelling that he can't hold a whole sentence in his head as he is writing. The result is that he loses control of the sentence and ungrammatical sentence fragments result.

Just as poor readers who try to sound out nearly every word, don't understand what they are reading because they are concentrating on letters and sounds, so also writers who have to concentrate on spelling can't have their mind on the overall flow of the sentence. Just as one piece of advice to the poor reader would be to read faster by guessing what the problem words might be, so the advice to the poor writer would be to write faster by guessing at problem spellings.

This procedure, writing quickly in the first draft would help avoid many of the errors in Brian's writing. He also needs to be taught to proofread what he has written very carefully. In the long run, however, Brian's writing errors will only decrease with a lot of writing practice. Only practice will help him hold a whole sentence in his head while he is working on part of it.

5. Proofreading

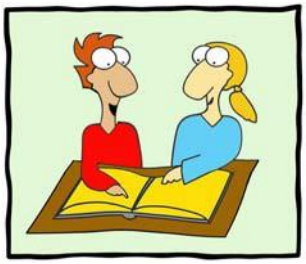
Having done a quick first draft, your student needs to be taught to proofread and correct it. This is a two step procedure: the spelling and punctuation and then the ideas. It is probably best to start by fixing the spelling. Tell your student to put a line under any words they were not sure of or which they think may be wrong, and to have another try at them if they can.

To fix the punctuation (only worry about full stops and capital letters initially) and to make sure they have used complete sentences, it is useful to get them to read it aloud so that they can hear what they have written and try to pick up the omitted words and parts that just don't sound right. They may be able to correct a lot of it themselves at this stage.

Then look at the ideas. Have they said what they intended to say? Have they left something out? Does one idea flow naturally to the next?

Your role

When your student gives you their text to read, respond to the ideas first. Remember, it is a piece of communication, just as if they had told you an anecdote orally. *(Yes, I know just what you mean ...)* Then help them work out the correct spelling or just write it for them. (See the next section on *Spelling*.) Some pieces of writing, such as journal or diary entries, may be just left at that point. The exercise has provided some writing practice and your student will learn some spelling words from it.

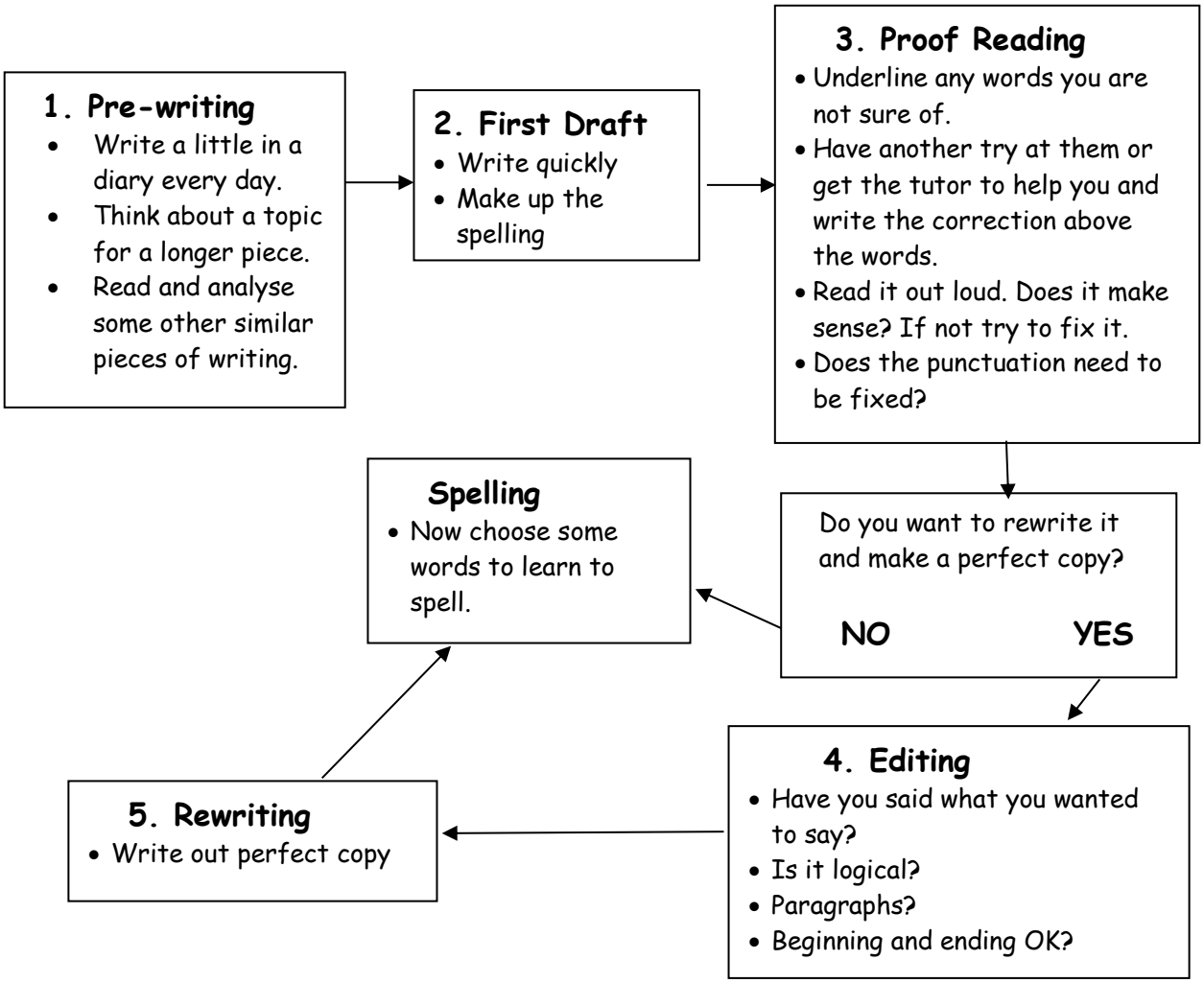


However, it is good to encourage your student do some pieces of writing which are rewritten again until they are perfect. In this case you help them correct all the spelling errors and punctuation then help them edit it if necessary. You might decide together that it needs a better introduction or they might decide to leave out something which turns out to be irrelevant. The best way that someone else can help a writer is to help them talk about it. To ask *What is it mainly about?* helps to clarify their ideas and sort out the irrelevant parts much better than the red pen. You should avoid the role of critic.

6. The final draft

Then the student copies it out as a final draft if necessary.

The writing process



What kind of writing does your student want or need to do?

Think of some different occasions when we need or choose to write, and the different styles or types of writing which we adopt:

Everyday writing such as:

- messages on greeting cards
- formal business letters
- letters to family or friends
- emails
- text messages
- diary or journal writing
- poetry, short stories
- notes to family or household

Work related writing such as:

- invoices
- end of shift reports
- accident or incident reports
- quotations
- log records
- instructions
- emails

There are different rules or conventions concerning these different types of writing which your student needs to learn also. We use language differently according to the purpose for which we are using it. The rules governing the way the boss uses language to write a staff memo are different from the rules governing the way we might write a note to the family to tell them dinner is in the oven. Don't assume your student knows these rules.

Think of the type of language we might use if we had to write an accident report and compare it with the language we might use in an email to tell a friend about that accident. These are called different text types. You have probably unconsciously absorbed the different conventions for writing these different text types but they need to be made explicit for your student.

These different text types are also called genres**.** Below are some of the common genres which your student might need to write and some of the common features of each. You should note however, that sometimes we use several genres in the same piece of writing. A personal letter for example may contain one part which is a recount and another which is a description.

Some common text types (genres)

Genre or text type	Examples	Features

Recount
(telling what happened)
This may be the most common type of writing your student does.
	• A personal letter
	• Journal entry
	• End of shift report
	• Accident report
		• Structure usually consists of:
		  ○ orientation (who, when, where)
		  ○ then detail the events, usually time sequenced
		• Use past tense
		• Action verbs (went, did, thought …)
		• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next …)
		• May include personal reactions.

Narrative
(like a recount but with a twist)
	• Short stories	• Structure usually consists of:
		  ○ orientation (who, when, where)
		  ○ then detail the events, which contain one or more twists or complications
		  ○ then conclusion or resolution
		• Use past tense
		• Action verbs (went, did, thought …)
		• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next …)
		• Lots of describing words

Description	• Journal entry • Study assignment	• Lots of describing words • Use of comparisons

Procedure
(how to do something)
	• Recipes
	• Do-it-yourself instructions
	• Equipment instructions
		• Structure usually consists of:
		  ○ the goal (sometimes just a heading)
		  ○ materials (listed)
		  ○ method (sequentially in steps).
		• Verbs are action words and commands usually placed at or near the beginning of the sentence (take, beat, dampen, screw …)
		• Usually set out in point form or a series of numbered steps.

Social action	• Letter of complaint	• Structure usually consists of:
		  ○ statement of events/facts
		  ○ statement of results of the problem
		  ○ request for it to be fixed. What next?
		• Avoid the use of over emotive words.

Some more common text types (genres)

Argument (or point of view) Presents only one side of the case, ie for or against.	• A letter to the editor • Study assignment • Exam question	• Avoid the use of over emotive words • Frequent use of passive voice (The man was hit by the car.) • Verbs are mainly simple present tense • Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however …) • Structure usually consists of: o statement of the point of view first o then development of the argument point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts o restatement of the position at the end.
Discussion (similar to an argument but presenting two or more points of view)	• Study assignment • Exam question	• Avoid the use of over emotive words • Verbs are mainly simple present tense • Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however …) • Structure usually consists of: o introduction - states the issue and the points of controversy o then statement of the argument for, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts o then argument against, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts. o then conclusion - a recommendation based on the weight of evidence.
Explanation (how or why something happens)	• Study assignment • Exam question	• Verbs are simple present (or sometimes past) tense • Structure usually consists of: o a general statement o a sequenced explanation of how or why, usually a series of logical steps in the process, in the order in which they happen • Linking words to do with time (first, following, finally …) • Linking words to do with cause and effect relationships (if/then, as a result, since …)

Different text types - a helpful teaching/learning approach

1. Look at a number of examples of the type of text your student needs to write.
   - What is the purpose of the text? (to inform ... to instruct ... to tell what happened... to argue a point of view?)
   - Who is the audience? (Family or friend ... the boss ... unknown bureaucrat?)
   - How is the text laid out?
   - What sort of language is used? Are the verbs in the present or past tense? Is the language warm and friendly or distant and formal?
   - Do the texts have a particular structure? What does the author write about in the first and last paragraphs?
   - What information does the author include?

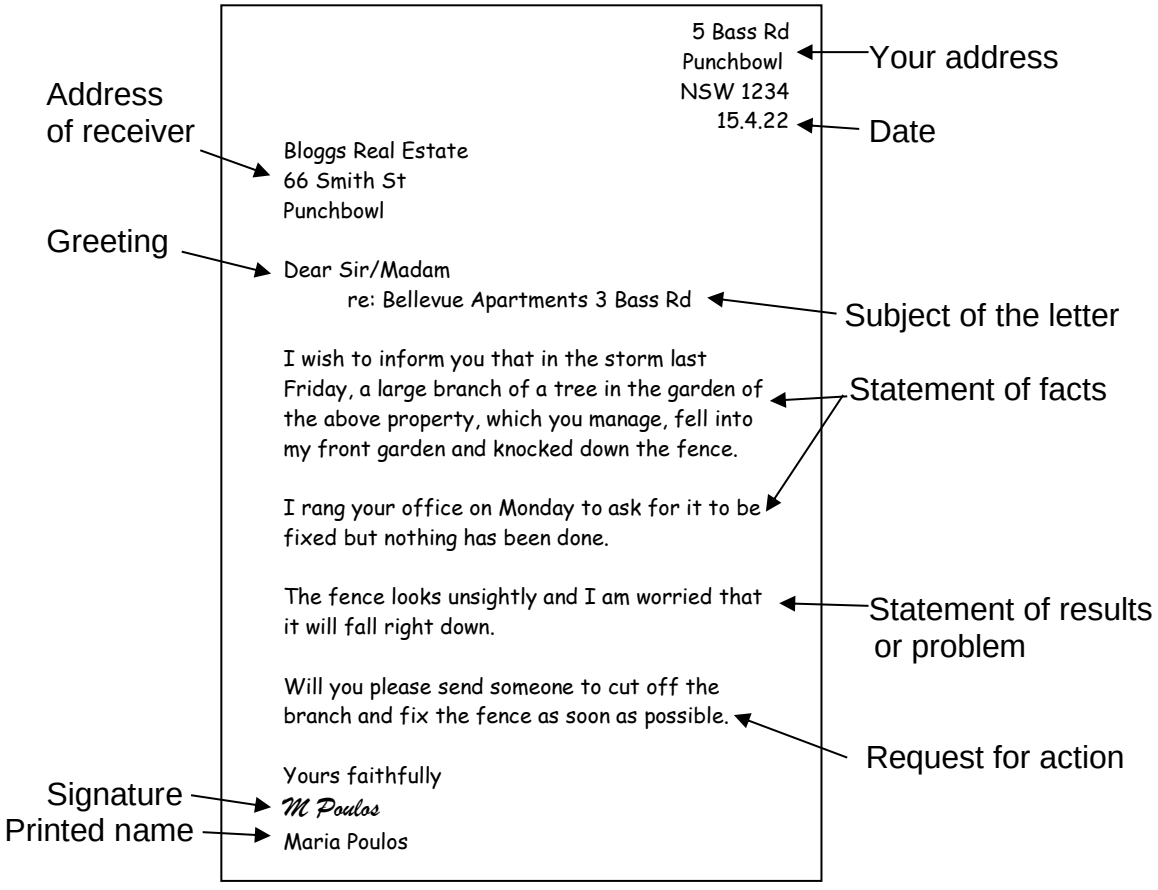
2. Work with your student to jointly write an example.

3. Now your student writes one by themselves.

A model

Your student needs to write a letter to the real estate agent to complain about a leaking roof.

1. You look at some letters with a similar purpose and audience, such as this one:



2. Look at:
    - the way the letter is set out
    - the language used - that is, slightly formal and a bit distant, but polite.

2. Gather the information needed to write your student's letter (address, dates of events etc).

3. Write the letter together.

4. Set another scenario for your student to write a practice letter with less help from you.

5. After your student has proofread it and is happy with it, edit it together and if necessary they write a perfect copy.

6. Your student should keep this as a model to use in the future.

What to write about?

Apart from the writing that your student needs to do, you need to find topics to write about so they get plenty of writing practice and hopefully start to enjoy it. These are some suggestions which you might like to consider (together). It is also a good idea to get a copy of an adult literacy magazine with student writings in it as a stimulus for other ideas. Most states in Australia have one or more organizations which publish student writings.

A diary

It is a good idea to encourage your student to keep a diary or journal and to write a few sentences every night. It might be about something that happened during the day or maybe something they heard on the radio or TV has prompted some thinking. The diary may be something they choose not to share with you - somewhere to make their own mistakes and that's okay.

It may be useful for you to model diary entries - for you to keep a diary which you share. The entries may be centred on your sessions together - what activities you did, how you felt about it etc.

Email

If you both have access to a computer, help your student register for an email address and email each other regularly.

Longer pieces of writing

If your student gets used to keeping a diary they will develop a list of topics which they might like to expand when they get time to sit down and do a longer piece of writing.

They will feel happier about working on successive drafts and perfecting them if they are writing for a real purpose rather than just writing for you. They may like to:

- Send their most interesting pieces to an adult literacy student magazine to be published.
- Write a birthday letter or email to a friend or relative.
- Write a story for children or grandchildren about the funny things they get up to.
- Ask an older relative to talk about the family history and write it up for the family.
- Write about their country of birth and arriving in Australia for younger generations of the family.
- Write out favourite recipes and put them in a booklet.
- Stick all those loose photographs in a scrapbook and write captions under them.
- Make a scrapbook about a hobby. Stick newspaper or magazine pictures in it and write captions or stories beside them.
- Find an interesting item in the house, or something that they own that has importance for them. Ask them to tell you about the item, then write about it.
- Write a mini-article about an area of expertise - breeding dogs or fixing cars or growing tomatoes.

What materials do you need?

- Pens
- Writing paper for drafts
- A folder or exercise book to keep completed work and models for future reference
- Examples or models of different text types (eg postcards, business letters, journal entries, recipes)
- Stimulus materials (magazine articles, adult literacy student magazines, photographs)

References for this Section

- Hughes, N. 2010, Writing, in Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds), *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 209-245, 256-261

- Grief, S. & Chatterton, J. 2007, *Writing*, NIACE, Leicester

Spelling

Your aim is to help your student:

- learn to spell the words which they need to use often
- develop a range of strategies for dealing with spelling problems as they arise.
- practice difficult words until the spelling becomes automatic.

The problem with spelling

The buoy and the none tolled hymn they had scene a pear of bear feat in the haul outside hour rheum.

Reading this passage gives us further insights into the reading process. It also gives us insights into the problems with English spelling. The words in the above sentence are just a few of the many in the English language for which there are two or more spellings for words which are pronounced the same.

Here are some more. You could easily add to them.

sea see	course coarse
where wear we're	write right
their there they're	pair pear pare
hear here	to two too
great grate	

In other words, the English language does not have a 1:1 correspondence between letters and sounds. The same sound can be represented by different combinations of letters.

Consider the different spelling of the /sh/ sound in these words:

chaperone	mi**ss**ion	**s**ugar	fu**sch**ia
o**c**ean	**sh**oe	na**ti**on	

Moreover, the same letters can be represented by different sounds. Consider the different pronunciation of *nat* in these words.

nature	**nat**ion	**nat**ional	**nat**ivity

It is understandable therefore that your students will have trouble with spelling. In general, progress with spelling is slower than with reading because with reading there are other clues to help us predict what the word will be.

The problem is due, in part, to the influence of other languages on the English language. For example the /sh/ sound is spelt sh in Old English words but the same sound is spelt ch in French and we have imported a number of French words such as chef, chauffeur, chateau. Words which are spelt with ph pronounced /f/ are of Greek origin, so we have words of Greek derivation such as phantom alongside English words in which the /f/ sound is spelt with an f.

The other main reason for the problem with spelling is that English is a living, changing language and changes in pronunciation occur faster than changes in spelling. For example, words which now have silent letters would once have been pronounced as they are spelt. knot would once have been pronounced with the /k/ and should would have been pronounced with the /l/. Consider also the wh words such as when, where and why. They were once spelt and pronounced hwaenne, hwaer and hwy. However, that pronunciation was clumsy so the /h/ was, in time, dropped from pronunciation and simply moved to second position in spelling.

Of course this adds to the wonderful richness of the English language but people who are struggling with the spelling don't always see it that way. Don't forget however that a great many words are spelt as they sound. In fact 50% of English spelling is regular and follows a pattern.

What do *you* do when you have a spelling problem?

It is important that your student knows that even people who consider themselves good spellers occasionally have a spelling query and the rest of us strike problems very often. The main problems seem to be:

- deciding whether to use double or single consonants in a word
- working out which vowel to use – especially when it is the indeterminate vowel (schwah). This ia the /uh/ sound which can be represented by any of the vowels.

Most of us would say we deal with these problems by:

- Writing the word in alternative ways to see which one looks right.

This is not very useful for someone who is struggling with literacy and who doesn't have a very large bank of words in their visual memory.

- Consulting a dictionary. To begin with this is not very helpful for your student either. You need to be able to spell the beginning of the word and know how to find your way around a dictionary to start with.
- Asking someone. However most of our students don't feel secure enough about their literacy to be able to expose themselves by doing this.

It will help your student if you model this *How do I spell* ...? behaviour for them frequently. Admit that you are not sure about a word and use the dictionary often.

Learning to spell

When we are spelling or learning to spell, we are drawing on:

- **Three senses:**
  1. The **visual memory** for the appearance of the word. This is a really important factor in learning to spell.
  2. The **sound** of the word is also important. You should check that your student is saying the word correctly and hearing the sounds in the word. You should be aware however, that even the most careful speakers do not pronounce words the way they are spelt. For example, when we say *walked* we do not pronounce the ending as it is spelt. What we are actually saying is something like *workt*. People from a non-English speaking background in particular will have trouble with this aspect of spelling.
  3. The **feel** of the word as we write it is also important in learning to spell. Many people say that a mis-spelling can actually feel wrong, once the spelling has become automatic.

- **Our knowledge** of the meaning of the word and its context, and our knowledge of how the word is put together. Drawing on our knowledge of how the word is put together is called the **morphemic approach** to spelling. A morpheme is the smallest unit of identifiable meaning in written English. Morphemes include prefixes, suffixes, and bases or roots. Each part (or morpheme) carries its own meaning.

Some words have only one morpheme, e.g. work. Some have two morphemes made up of two root words, e.g. weekend.

LOOK at the word carefully. Photograph it in your mind.

Feel the flow of it as you write.

HEAR the sounds in the word. Spell it to yourself and say it slowly.

THINK about the difficult bit. How is the word put together? Why did you get it wrong?

Learning to spell routine

Selecting words to learn

Your student will have two sources of words to learn. One source is from the 'survival words' which they need to learn. These may be words for filling in forms, for work or in other contexts. The other source is from their writing.

- When the first draft of a piece of writing is finished make sure your students first proofread it themselves. Tell them to put a line under any words they think may not be right, then have another try at them, perhaps with prompting from you. (*It's almost right but have another look at the ending. Can you think of another way it could be spelt? …)*
- Praise the attempts. Very few mistakes will be all wrong so reinforce the parts that are correct.
- You write the words which they have identified as mistakes correctly on the piece of writing, perhaps above the mistake or at the bottom of the writing.
- Then help the student select a number of words to be learnt during the week. Don't try to work on all the mistakes as they will probably become confused and dispirited. If there are any words which are important words for the student that they need to use often, and that are not selected as possible mistakes, then you might point these out also. The number of words which you choose will depend on the student. For a beginner, two or three words a week may be enough to start with.
- Don't go through the piece and correct all the mistakes unless of course the piece of writing is for someone else to read, such as a letter or unless the student wants to rewrite it to produce a perfect draft just for their own satisfaction.

Work at committing the words to memory

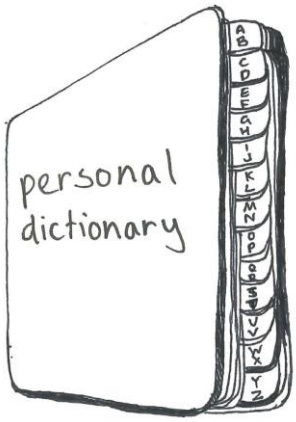
- Write the words out clearly on a sheet of paper. You should print in lowercase letters. (If you are not confident with this, see the section on *Handwriting,* p. 28)
- If it is a long word help the student to break the word into syllables and pronounce it that way. For example un/for/gett/able.
- Ask the student to copy the word carefully. If it is a long word, encourage them to study the word and try to remember it in chunks and not to copy letter by letter.
- Then ask them to underline the difficult bit which causes the mistake and ask themselves why they got it wrong and work out a way to remember it (a memory jogger). For example, they might write the difficult bit in red.
- The student then re-writes the word several times while spelling it to themselves. Writing words over and over usually seemed like punishment at school, but it is really a most effective way of learning to spell a word, and for the spelling to become automatic. You are reinforcing the three senses: the look of the word, the sound of it and the feel of it.

Self testing

- The student should then cover it over and try to write it from memory, then check it themselves.
- Ten minutes later, try again.
- At the end of the session, try again.
- During the week, try again
- Next session, try again.

Keep a record of these selected words

You might choose to record these words in the back of an exercise book or in a small notebook. Many adult literacy students keep a small notebook with an alphabetical index down the side (eg an address book) This becomes their **personal dictionary**. It serves two purposes - to review what has been learnt, and also to serve as a reference to consult when the need arises.



For a beginner writer who is not familiar with the letters of the alphabet, it is useful to stick a picture on each page (from a magazine or the internet) depicting a word which begins with the particular letter. (See *Handwriting* p. 28)

Or you may like to use a spelling practice sheet such as the one on the next page.

Spelling Practice Sheet

WORD	Memory Jogger	1st try 10 mins later	2nd try 1 hour later	3rd try next day	4th try next week

Some more helpful hints for learning to spell

Some words take a little more effort to learn or maybe your student has to unlearn an incorrect spelling. This section will suggest some activities which they might find useful. Experiment until you find which activities work for your student. If they need to sharpen up their visual memory, then concentrate on the visual strategies. If they have trouble hearing the sounds in the words, then concentrate on the auditory strategies also. Some of these suggestions are just variations on the 'write it again and again' instruction, included here to give a little variety to the spelling diet.

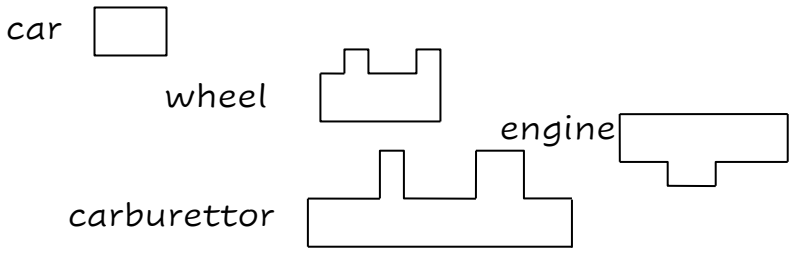
- Stress the **rhythm** of the word as it is said. Break it into syllables and give a stress to each syllable. **A syllable** is a group of letters in a word which sound as if they belong together and which contain one vowel sound . E.g. beautiful has three syllables.
  beau/ ti/ ful (Note that beau has one vowel *sound*, made up of three vowel *letters*.)

- It may help to **exaggerate the pronunciation** of some words so that the spelling pattern is heard in the pronunciation. This is useful in words which have silent letters in them. For example:
  parl/ i / a / ment Wed/ nes/ day lib/ ra / ry

- **Colour** aids the visual memory. Try writing the word with the problem bit in red as a memory jogger.
  embarrassment February

- Use **flash cards** to sharpen the visual memory for the way a word looks. Write a word the student wants to learn on a piece of paper or flash card and allow a quick peep at it. Just a flash. During that peep the student has to try to photograph it in their mind. Then they write down as much of it as can be recalled. If they can't recall all of it then allow another peep and try again. Then let them check it themselves.

- Another way to help a student become conscious of the appearance of words and sharpen up their visual memory is to get them to match some words to their **outline shapes**. This is particularly useful for learners who are not familiar with the Roman alphabet. You might start by getting the student to draw the outline shapes, taking into account the letters that go below the line (g,j,p,q,y) and those that go above (b,d,f,h,k,l,t). Then mix them up and a little later, ask them to match them up again.



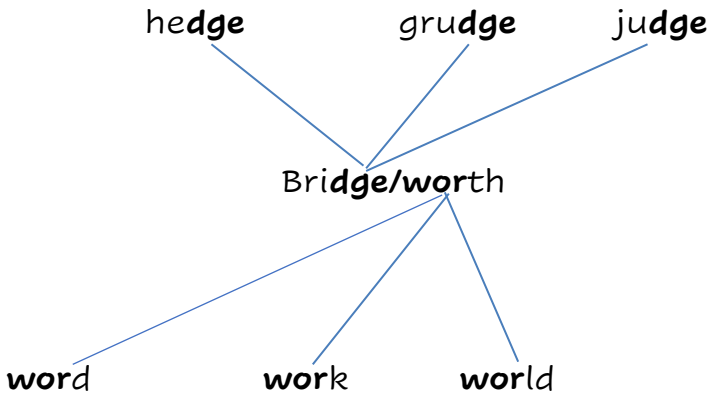
- **Speed copying** is another way to improve the visual memory and fluency of handwriting. Ask your student to copy out three or four lines of writing as quickly as possible and time each effort. The trick is to encourage picturing larger and larger chunks rather than copying a few letters at a time. This will help with reading fluency also.

- Encourage **curiosity about words**. Encourage your student to take notice of the words all around us in environmental print - in advertisements, signs etc, and try to remember the spelling of one or two words they have noticed during the week.

- Help your student to build lists of words which share **similar spelling/sound patterns** using their personal errors as a basis. For example, they have just learnt to spell light. Then add might, sight, flight, fright, right, tight.

- **Using a hook** is a variation of this approach. Take a longish word which your student knows how to spell, for example, their name, the name of their street or town etc. and use parts of it to remember other spellings or to 'hook' other spellings on to.

  For example, the address is Bridgeworth Rd.



- **Mnemonics** or trick ways of remembering spellings.
  For example:
  Which is correct?
  necesary, necessary, neccesary, neccessary

  You could remember that it is necessary to have one Collar and two Socks. That is, one C and two S's.

Which is correct?
embarassment, embarrassment, embarrasment, embarasment

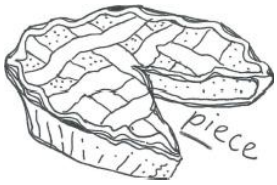
You could remember that when you are embarrassed you have two Rosy ears and two Scarlet cheeks. That is, two R's and two S's.

Which is the correct spelling?
piece, peice, peace

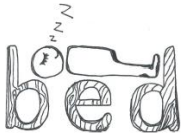
If you can spell pie then you can remember a **pie**ce of pie.

Of course we can't remember a mnemonic for every word we need to learn to spell but it is sometimes useful to make up a trick way of remembering the ones which we find most troublesome. Moreover, your student will remember them better if they are mnemonics which they have made up for themselves.

- **Visual mnemonics** are also useful.



Confusion over b and d? Get your student to think of bed. It looks a bit like a bed but if you turn the letters around the other way (deb) then there is not much room to lie in.



- Another way to drill a difficult word over and over is to ask your student to try writing it out several times, each time with one letter missing. After half an hour they should go back and see how quickly they can **replace the missing letters**.

Feb_uary
Februa_y
F_bruary
Febr_ary
Fe_ruary
Febru_ry

- You can create a **crossword puzzle** to practise spelling words. Use your browser to search for crossword puzzle maker or generator, and you can create your own crossword, using the student's spelling words, and print it.

- Thinking about the **meaning** of a word can help connect it with other words with similar meaning and this will help with the spelling.

  For example, which is correct? med**e**cine or med**i**cine

  The /uh/ sound in the middle is the problem here. It could be spelt either way. However, if you think of *medical* or *medic* you can hear that the problem vowel is clearly *i*.

  You can remember that there is a silent *g* in *sign* if you know that it is linked in meaning to *signature* and *signal*.

  Sometimes parts of words carry their own meaning (morphemes). For example, we usually add *s* or *es* to words to indicate the plural. It will help your student to remember that rule when they are tempted to write *I washed up the dishers*. It sounds like /ers/ but only *es* is necessary to give the 'more than one' meaning.

  For the student who can't remember how to spell the number *two*, think of *twin, twice, twenty, twelve*, all words which are linked in meaning and which share the same spelling pattern. Incidentally, the *w* in two would also have been pronounced long ago, but is now dropped from the pronunciation but not from the spelling.

  It is a general rule then, that words which are linked in meaning share spelling patterns but may not be pronounced the same (but there are exceptions).

- Understanding about **root words and prefixes and suffixes** will also help your student to see words in smaller, meaning based chunks (morphemes) which are easier to remember. Longer words which are built up in this way are usually spelt in a phonically regular way.

  The rule is that when we add a prefix (the bit at the beginning), we just add it and don't change the spelling of the base or root word:

  dis + similar → dissimilar un + natural → unnatural

  However, when we add a suffix (or ending) we sometimes have to change the spelling of the root word.

  replace + ing → replacing

Take some common beginnings (prefixes) and endings (suffixes) and see how many you can add to some root words to make real words:

Beginnings	**Endings**
trans-	-ion
un-	-ation
pre-	-able
re-	-er
anti-	-ly

- Knowing about **compound words** can also help with the spelling. A compound word is a word made of two (or more) words which would make sense by themselves, and are put together to make one word. E.g. *weekend, moonlight, breakfast, everyone.*

- Knowing the **origins of a word** can often help us remember the spelling. For example, which is correct? *coconut or cocoanut*

  It helps if we know that the word is not linked with *cocoa* but comes from *coco*, a Portuguese word meaning *goblin*, the reference being to the monkey-like face on the coconut.

  Knowing a little of the history of words helps to understand some of the apparently illogical aspects of the English language. It also helps develop a sense of curiosity about the language which is a very useful learning tool. E.g., words with *ph* pronounced /f/ are Greek in origin. Many words related to mathematics and science have Greek or Latin origins. E.g., *tri* meaning three as in *tricycle, triangle,* and *trinity*; *bi* meaning two as in *bicycle, bisect, biannual.*

- Some words sound the same but have different spellings (*to/too/two, here/hear, there/their*). Don't tackle these easily confused words at the same time, since things that are learnt at the same time tend to be associated in the mind. Instead, tackle one member of the confusing group on one occasion and the other some weeks later.

What about spelling rules?

There are a number of spelling rules which usually work, but most people don't remember them, other than perhaps *i before e except after c.* Nevertheless, your student may find it interesting to find out what some of these rules are. It helps to overcome the feeling that the language is very random and they will never master it. However, helping your student to make discoveries about these rules is a much more interesting way to go about it, and they are much more likely to remember them or work them out again at another time. (See *Some spelling rules or patterns* p. 26) Select patterns for attention as they arise in your student's writing rather than working systematically through a book.

Using a dictionary

Your student will need to be taught how to use a dictionary. First, check that they know the alphabet sequence. If not, teach it by breaking the alphabet into four or five chunks and practice them.

They then need to know how to find their way around the dictionary. For example, they need to know that other tenses of a verb are listed after the main word and not as a separate entry. Most dictionaries have a section which will help you with this.
A speller's dictionary will probably be a useful friend for your student. This is a dictionary which also lists common mis-spellings or phonetic spellings with the correct spelling beside. There are several of these dictionaries on the market.

What materials do you need?

- Lists of words that the student needs to write (eg for work)
- Pieces of writing that they have done
- Pens and scrap paper to practise spelling
- Coloured pens
- Somewhere to keep a list of personal spelling words, such as a personal dictionary note book
- A spelling practice sheet
- Dictionary

References and websites for this Section

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/ An excellent site, written for adults, with exercises in literacy and numeracy.

- Hague, M. & Harris, C. *SpellingWorks: a workbook of spelling strategies,* Heinemann. spelling-works.pdf (wordpress.com)

- Hughes, N. 2010, Writing, in Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds), *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 246-256

- Kindler, L. & Hagston, J. 2018, *Spelling*: *a strategic approach*, Multifangled, Yarraville, Vic. (Teacher Resource and Student Workbook)

Some spelling rules or patterns

Spelling rules don't always apply and your student won't remember them anyway. (Do you?) Nevertheless, it is sometimes interesting to see how they work.

In order to talk about spelling rules we need to know a few simple terms:
Vowel – a e i o u (sometimes y)
Consonant – all the other letters
Long vowel sound – The sound the vowel makes when you say its name in the alphabet. m<u>a</u>te, h<u>e</u>re, ripe, r<u>o</u>pe, t<u>u</u>be
Short vowel sound – m<u>a</u>t, m<u>e</u>t, rip, t<u>o</u>p, t<u>u</u>b

In general, if you are talking about spelling rules, it is best to help the student discover the rule. For example:

We usually add s to words when we mean more than one of them.
one apple many apples
However, look at these words:
baby - babies fly - flies
lady - ladies cherry – cherries
berry - berries enemy - enemies
These words do not just add s to the singular to make the plural form. Can you work out what rule is used? Your rule should go something like this:
Words which end in .... change the ..... to .... and add ...

Some useful rules

1. Silent e at the end of a word can change a short vowel sound into a long vowel sound.
   mat - mate rip – ripe tub – tube

2. q is always followed by u plus another vowel. Sounds kw.
   quiet, queen, squash (except QANTAS - which is an acronym.)

3. A single s or z at the end of a word is always followed by a silent e.
   horse, cause, sneeze

4. f, l and s are doubled at the end of most words of one syllable
   ball, full, loss, dress, sniff

5. i before e (piece, quiet) except after c (receive, ceiling) or when it sounds like long a (reign, weight)

6. The sound i at the end of a word is written y (reply, spy)

Forming plurals

Most words make their plural form by adding s. apple – apples

- Words which end in s, sh, ch or x form their plural by adding es

bus – buses church - churches
bush – bushes fox – foxes

- Words which end in f or fe form their plural by changing the y to i and add es.

calf – calves knife - knives wife - wives
(A few exceptions including roofs)

Adding other endings

- When a word ends in a consonant + y, change the y to i before adding –er or –est.

silly – sillier funny – funniest

- Drop the silent –e at the end of a word before adding –er, –est, –ing or –ed.

write - writer ripe – ripest shine – shining
bake – baked

- Some short words with short vowels in them double the final consonant before adding – ing, –er, –est, or –ed.

run – running slip- slipped fat – fatter
red - reddest

Handwriting

The tutor
You should print when you are writing for your student, using lower case letters rather than BLOCK CAPITALS. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that lower case letters are easier to read. If you are not sure of the right way to form some of the letters, check the alphabet chart on the following page.

The beginning reader/writer
The beginning reader/writer should be taught to print rather than to attempt running writing. Likewise, they should learn to print using lower case letters rather than block capitals.

If your student is from a non-English speaking background and is new to the Roman script, or for some other reason has not learnt to write at all:

- Introduce one or two letters at a time, both upper and lower case, accompanied by a word which begins with that letter. This should be a word which is familiar to the student and which can be used as a memory prompt.

- You can build up a word book or personal dictionary like this and they can add more words to the page as they learn to spell them. It is useful to begin with the letters in their name and address.
- Now print the letters in reasonably large print several times and ask your student to trace over them.
- Then ask them to copy the letter, perhaps ten or fifteen times.
- It may help to group together letters that are formed in a similar way. Forexample, r, n, m, h all start with a downward stroke.

The post-beginner student
If your student has had some schooling and is confident about forming the letters, then let them write in whatever style they are comfortable with. In general, if their writing is legible, don't worry too much about handwriting style – they probably have more pressing learning needs. However, there are exceptions to this. If messy writing causes embarrassment at work or in other contexts, or if they print and particularly want to learn how to do joined-up or 'running writing' they may see their handwriting as one of their priority needs.

If your student wants to tidy up their printing style, follow the suggestions above. If they want to learn to do joined-up writing, the best advice would be to buy a book from a bookshop or find some worksheets online. There are a number of different styles of running writing and the style used in schools in each state is different. For example, the style used in NSW is called Foundation Style.

A a	B b	C c	D d
E e	F f	G g	H h
I i	J j	K k	L l
M m	N n	O o	P p
Q q	R r	S s	T t
U u	V v	W w	Y y
Z z			

What's in this section?

- Determining your student's numeracy needs
- A few general principles
- Addition
- Subtraction
- Multiplication
- Division
- Fractions
- Percentages
- Estimation
- Calculator
- Weights and measurement
- Useful references for this section

Who is this section for?

As adults, our understanding of numerical information is intertwined with and integrated with our use of literacy skills in many, many everyday tasks such as; reading utilities bills, going shopping, reading and interpreting recipes or DIY instructions or medication packages.

Some tutors won't have to worry very much about helping their students with numeracy as their students may be able to manage their everyday numeracy tasks well enough. For others, however, their numeracy knowledge and skills may be patchy and they may ask for some help with tasks such as calculating change or measuring, or they may not really understand the concepts involved in everyday mathematical language such as *percentage, ratio, average* or *fraction*.

This section will give some ideas to help students to approach everyday numeracy tasks, but it will not offer suggestions for teaching the maths required for helping children with their homework, or preparing for the maths needed in a course, or making up for the 'school' maths your student may feel they missed out on. This section deals with basic, everyday numeracy concepts.

NOTE: If your student needs more work on their numeracy or maths than you feel confident with, there are a number of free, very helpful and accessible websites suggested at the end of this section which you can work on together.

Determining your student's numeracy needs

You don't need to be a maths whiz to help your student with everyday numeracy and you don't need to remember the school maths that you may not have used in many years. As with literacy, many students' numeracy skills are often better than they think. On the other hand, for many of our students, anything related to numbers is likely to bring on a well-known response known as 'maths anxiety'. This is possibly a response to the abstract way in which maths was often taught in school. The main job then is to help the student develop the self-confidence to have a go, and realize that they can work a lot of it out for themselves (with a bit of help with the basics). In the process, you may find that you discover as much about mathematical concepts as your student does.

Find out what your student's immediate needs are. Don't test; just ask about or observe the areas they are not confident with. For example:

- recognising numbers and counting
- calculating change
- measuring and weighing
- calculating time
- the calculator
- estimation
- addition and subtraction
- multiplication and simple division
- simple fractions
- decimals
- the concept of percentages

What is numeracy?

Helping your student with numeracy is not the same as teaching maths. When we think of maths, we think of pages of numbers and 'sums'. On the other hand, numeracy involves understanding how to approach numerical information in everyday problems. Unlike traditional mathematics, numeracy is mathematics embedded in a context and with a purpose, and it involves understanding the language around the mathematical information.

For adult literacy students in particular, it involves developing the *confidence* to approach these problems instead of saying, *I don't understand that. I have never been any good at maths*.

A few general principles

- Find out what your student *can* do and make sure you give genuine praise for this. For most students, in-the-head calculations to do with money will be a place to start. This is because money is not an abstract concept; it involves hands-on, concrete objects and constant practice.

- Praise any method that your student uses to solve a problem or get to an answer using some mathematical logic. Even people who are good at maths (including maths teachers) may have many different ways of approaching a particular problem and of doing calculations. You may have an alternative method, or one that you believe is more efficient, but avoid giving the impression that your student's method is *wrong*.

- Developing confidence and feelings of success are really important. For students with a history of failure in this area, it is not good to place them in a testing situation in which they will probably fail again. When you help your student review something, make sure it has been well learnt and practised first. For this reason practice ... practice ... practice is important.

- In the main, you will be helping the student to develop an understanding of the way in which numbers and mathematical concepts work, rather than just rote learning of the mechanics. Helping the student to *discover* underlying number principles will result in much more effective learning than simply *telling* them.

- Since discovery learning should be your principal aim, it is important to use practical activities and hands-on materials to help the discoveries. By this we mean making use of everyday items such as measuring cups, kitchen scales, tape measures, money, straws, paper clips etc (for counting).

- Always deal with numeracy tasks in their proper context. This usually means that the use of numeracy skills is integrated with the use of literacy skills.

  For example, if you are helping your student interpret the electricity bill, there are words to be understood but also numbers to be interpreted. *How is 10% GST worked out? ... Look at the simple bar graph comparing present and past usage on the back of the bill ...* This could then lead to some more work, over a number of weeks, on percentages and simple graphs.

  A lesson in which you exchange recipes for your favourite dishes could lead to some work on measurement or even fractions or multiplication and division.
  This recipe makes 12 tarts. How would I work out what quantity of the ingredients I would need if I only wanted to make 6? Or if I wanted to make 24?

- Make sure the student understands the concepts behind the maths language which we take for granted, for example, *percentage, three quarters, ratio, digit* and *decimal place*. If your student is from a non-English speaking background in particular, you will need to pay attention to this.

- Constantly talk about, and encourage your student to talk about, what you are doing. Ask your student to explain how they are approaching a problem. This will often help you to pick up a misunderstanding about the logic of the problem or the mathematics or calculations involved.

- In the real world, most of us use a calculator, and increasingly a phone, for calculations such as long division, multiplying large numbers or calculating percentages. There is really no point in wasting time with teaching these pen and paper calculations when the student probably has more important skills to learn. One of the most important everyday numeracy skills you can help your student with is how to use a calculator.

The four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division)

Your aim is to help your student:

- understand the concepts involved
- relate these to real life situations
- memorise some basic number facts.

Place Value

Understanding the concept of place value is the basis for our numerical system and our understanding of the four operations. This term refers to the value placed on a digit in longer numerals. For example, in the numeral 222, there are three 2s but each 2 means something different. The digit 2 has a different value for each position in that numeral. Whether the 2 stands for 2 hundreds, 2 tens (twenty) or 2 units (two) depends on the position of the digit in the number; its place value.

222			
Thousands	**Hundreds**	**Tens**	**Units**
	IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII	IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII	II

Most adults are familiar with the meaning of large numbers, but may not really understand the implications of place value for calculating with large numbers. That is, we need to understand that the digits have to be in their appropriate column. Being able to visualize the columns as above helps with understanding concepts such as carrying and borrowing with pen-and-paper calculations.

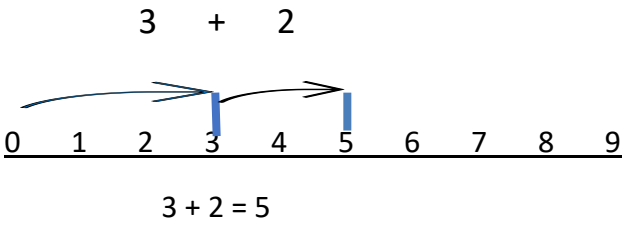
Addition

Most students are anxious about not knowing their multiplication tables but in fact the addition facts for numbers up to ten are even more useful.

- Start with a ruler and help your student work out some simple additions. Then show them how it is written, horizontally (4+3=7) then vertically:

  4
  +3
  =7

- The concept of counting on is a useful first step, preferably with the use of a number line or ruler. Don't forget you need to start with 0.



- Plenty of practice with similar visuals and hands-on, concrete objects will be necessary before the facts go into long term memory.

- Show your student how to work out the addition combinations which give particular numbers, starting with the combinations which give 10 (1+9, 2+8, 3+7 ...)

- Show your student short cuts. For example, 9+7 is the same as 10+6.

- Draw up an addition table and help your student fill it in, then look for patterns in the table and see if you can work out an explanation together. Have your student fill out the grid randomly; otherwise it can become a simple exercise in counting.

Addition Table

+	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

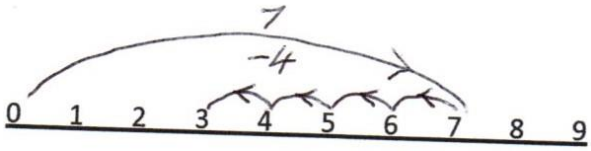
- When you introduce numbers beyond 10 it is useful to use concrete items such as drinking straws bundled into 10s to represent the 10s column and individual straws in the units column.

Hundreds	Tens	Units
	IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII IIIIIIIIII	IIII

Show how this equals 34.
If you add another 6 straws to the units column, you have made another bundle of 10 which you can move to the 10s column.

Subtraction

- Work in a similar way to the suggestions for addition. Use the term 'take away' when you are talking about the process.



$7 - 4 = 3$

Multiplication

- Introduce multiplication as 'lots of' and use drinking straws, paper clips etc. For example, 4 lots of 3:

- Show that it means the same as 3+3+3+3.

- Relate it to real life problems. *If my fares to work each day cost $6, how much do I pay in a five day working week?* Show your student how this is written down.

- Do a number of problems like this, using short multiplication (no carrying) and helping your students to use, or visualise, some concrete objects as they do them.

- If your student wants to commit multiplication tables to memory, it will take a lot of practice, using as many different activities as you can devise, in addition to just rote learning.

- Start by helping your student count by 2, 3, 4 and 5, up to about 20.

- Show how to multiply by 10 and 100.

- Help write out the multiplication tables to use as a reference, using concrete objects if necessary as counters.

- Look for patterns in the multiplication grid below and together see if you can work out an explanation for the patterns.

Multiplication Grid

X	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24
3	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36
4	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48
5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
6	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60	66	72
7	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84
8	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80	88	96
9	9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	90	99	108
10	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120
11	11	22	33	44	55	66	77	88	99	110	121	132
12	12	24	36	48	60	72	84	96	108	120	132	144

Division

- The everyday language of division can be confusing, but it is best thought of in terms of 'sharing out'. It can also be thought of as the opposite of multiplication.

  3 lots of 4 make 12. 12 shared among 4 is 3.

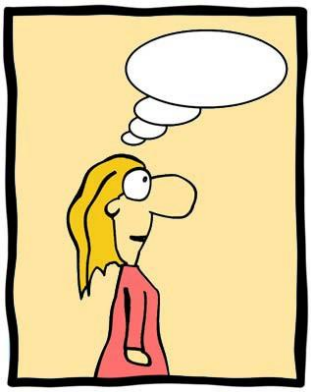
- Begin by demonstrating the concept of simple division (no borrowing and carrying) with concrete objects, and show how it is written.
  I have 9 paper clips and I want to share them among 3 people. How many does each person get?

  Relate it to real life problems. *I pay $20 in fares to work each week. How much is this per day for a five day week?* And show your student how it is written down.

- Introduce the concept of the 'remainder' or 'left over'.
  10 sausages shared among 4 diners gives 2 each with 2 left over.

- Show your student how to divide by 10 and 100.

- Long division is probably best done with a calculator.



Fractions

Your aim is to help your student:

- visualize some common fractions
- name some common fractions
- use the written symbols
- understand and use everyday fractions.

- Start with several circles of paper, the same size and preferably in different colours.

- Cut one circle in halves, one in quarters, one in eights, thirds, fifths etc.

- Show the student how these fractions are written (½, ¼ etc).

- Ask the student to write the correct fraction on each piece.

- Explain what the numbers at the top and the bottom mean:
  The number at the bottom means how many parts we have divided the thing into.
  The number at the top is how many of those parts we have.

- Ask the student to explain what some of the fractions mean. Make sure that they can see or hold the appropriate fraction pieces.
  This is a quarter. It means the whole is divided in four equal parts and I have one part.
  This is two thirds. It means that the whole was divided into three equal parts and here are two of those parts.

- Draw the student's attention to the fact that the larger the number at the bottom, the smaller the fraction is and ask them to explain it.

Equivalent fractions

Experiment to see how many quarters fit on a half, how many eights fit on a quarter ... and on a half ...
Can we make any number of thirds fit exactly onto a half? etc

Write down the fractions that match exactly, eg:

2/4 = 1/2
4/8 = 1/2
2/6 = 1/3

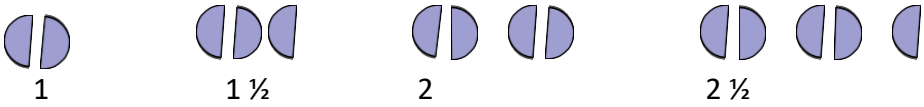
Explain that we usually refer to one half rather than four eights, etc. If we have equal fractions, we usually refer to the one with the smallest number at the bottom.

Improper fractions

This is the term used to refer to whole numbers and fractions, eg 1½.

- Cut several circles in halves and lay them out as:

- Imagine they are halves of a pizza and arrange them like this:



You could also do these activities with strips of paper, or using measuring cups filled with water or kitchen scales and foodstuffs such as rice.

Don't try to introduce the formal rules that are involved here. It is important that they can visualise what the fractions are and make sense of them that way.

Everyday problems involving fractions

Make sure your student can do simple number operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) or can use a calculator to perform these operations.

Recipes

Take a recipe and ask your student what amount of each ingredient is needed to make twice the amount, half the amount, etc.
If the recipe asks for 6 eggs and you only have 3 eggs, how much of the other ingredients would you use?

Time

Look at a clock face (not digital):
How many minutes are in ¼ hour? How many minutes are in ¾ hour?
You leave home at ¼ past 8. It takes you half an hour in the train and a quarter of an hour walk. What time do you get to work?

Take care with written calculations of time. They are often incorrectly written in a form resembling decimals (~~3.15~~ pm). However, that should be written 3**:**15 pm since the minutes do not represent decimals. The **:15** represents 15 out of 60 (minutes).

Money

George takes home $800 per week. He pays $200 rent. What fraction of his pay is this?
He spends 1/8 of his total pay on a loan repayment. How much is this per week?
He spends $25 on lunches each week. What fraction of his pay is this?

Decimals

Your aim is to help your student:

- relate some common fractions to decimal values
- understand the importance of place value when calculating using decimals
- name and use the written symbols
- understand and use decimals in everyday language.

'Decimal' simply means based on ten. Our numbers are organised in a system based on multiples or sub-multiples of ten.

The most common use of decimals is with money and you can use this knowledge to introduce decimals. A decimal point is used to separate the dollars from the cents. Most of our students are familiar with how the decimal system works with money and many can manage in-the-head calculations without really understanding how the decimal system works in other contexts.

Knowledge of the decimal system is also intrinsic to understanding everyday measurement of length, weight, mass etc.

- Decimal notation allows us to show values of less than 1. Help your student visualize this by extending the place value chart. (In everyday use, we usually don't go lower than hundredths or two decimal points)

Hundreds	**Tens**	**Units**	**Decimal point**	**Tenths**	**Hundredths**
			•		

- Discuss the difference between tens and tenths, hundreds and hundredths, and the importance of 0 as a 'place holder'. For example, $2.05 is not the same as $2.5.
- Write a number of money and measurement values such as $10.20, $5.05, 2.75ks, 2.07ks, in the place value chart. Ask your student to say them.

Everyday problems involving decimals

Everyday money and measurement problems will involve decimal calculations.

- Find examples in newspapers and advertising of the use of simple digital notation involving money and measurement. Write them on the place value chart. Relate them to equivalent fractions.

Percentages

Your aim is to help your student:

- understand the meaning of percent
- be able to visualize percentages
- do simple calculations with percentages
- understand and use everyday percentages.

- Make sure your student knows what *percent* means (per hundred).
  10% discount means $10 off each $100.

- Look for references to percentages in newspapers, magazines and advertising fliers and discuss what they mean without necessarily trying to work out the maths involved.
  25% off means that if the mattress cost $100, it would be $25 less or $25 off each $100. So if it was $200, it would be $50 off.
  30% of the people surveyed means 30 of every 100 people surveyed.
  Discuss what 100% means (all). *100% Australian owned, 100% wool.*

- Take a metre ruler or tape measure and show that :
  - 1 metre is 100 centimetres.
  - 50 cms is 50%,
  - 25 cms is 25%,
  - 10 cms is 10% etc.

  Make the connection to simple fractions: half, quarter, three quarters, one tenth.

- Draw several bars 10 cms long and ask your student:
  - *Imagine this is the number of people who answered a survey. 30% answered no to a question. Shade this in on the bar.*
  - *This bar represents your income. 15% is spent on car repayments. Mark this on the bar. 20% is spent on food. Mark this on the bar.*

- If we first find 1% of a number, we can use that answer to find any percentage of the same number, eg: What is 3% of 500?

  1% of 500 = 5 3x5=15 therefore 3% of 500 = 15

- Show your student how to calculate:
  - 1% by moving the decimal point 2 places to the left
  - 10% by moving the decimal point one place to the left
  - 7% by working out 1% and multiplying by 7
  - 20% by working out 10% and multiplying by 2 etc …

- If you need to calculate 50%, 25% or 75% of a number, it is usually easiest to convert the percentage to a fraction to work it out.

Everyday problems involving percentages

First, make sure your student can do simple number operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) or can use a calculator to perform these operations.

- You want the shop to hold a pair of shoes that cost $90. You have to pay a deposit of 10%.
  How much do you leave?
  You have to leave a deposit of 20%. How much do you leave?

- George's income tax is 30%. How much does he pay in each dollar? He earns $900 a week gross. How much of that does he pay in tax?

- A shop adds 50% to the cost of their goods before they sell them.
  They buy towels from the manufacturer for $20 each. How much would they sell them for?
  They buy sheet sets for $60 each. How much would they sell them for?

Estimation

Your aim is to help your student:

- understand when and why it is important to estimate
- use the rounding off method of estimation.

- It is often not necessary to make an accurate calculation of something, but it is important to get a rough idea. For example, when we are shopping and buy a number of items, we need to know if we have enough money before we get to the check-out.

- Estimation is also important in order to check the reasonableness of an answer which we have worked out either on paper or with the calculator. It is easy, for example to get the decimal point in the wrong place, or to do the wrong operation in a complex problem (to multiply when we should divide, for example). We need to look at the answer and decide whether it is reasonable.

- The usual process of estimating involves rounding off. Show your student how to round up or down to the nearest 10 or 100. You might need a ruler or tape measure to help the student visualize this.

  For example, if three items in the supermarket cost:

$3.15	this is closer to 3.00 than 4.00 so we round down to	3.00
$7.85	this is closer to 8.00 than 7.00 so we round up to	8.00
$4.65	this is closer to 5.00 than 4.00 so we round up to	5.00
		$16.00

We know our items will cost about $16.

Everyday problems involving estimation

- Give your student a menu and ask them to estimate quickly what they could buy if they had $22.25 to spend.

- Give your student a supermarket advertisement and a short list of items that they need. Ask them to estimate which of these they could buy if they only had $17.80 in their account or their wallet.

Calculator

Your aim is to help your student:

- perform simple calculations on a calculator.

- Encourage your student to use a calculator, if they don't already. Many students feel it is cheating and they want to learn to do it the proper way. Impress on your students that we need to understand the maths involved in what we are doing before we can use a calculator. We have to know what to tell it to do, so it's not cheating. It just does the hack work. And even people who consider themselves to be good at maths, use a calculator very, very often.

- Most everyday uses for a calculator are best performed with simple calculators that have the four operations plus %, √ and a simple memory function. Scientific calculators are not necessary unless your student needs to use one for work or for a vocational course.

- Students first need to understand decimals. They also need to understand that our money system is a decimal system when working out money problems on the calculator. *50c* is *$0.5* so is entered in the calculator as ***.5***

- It is easy to hit the wrong key, so to begin with, encourage your student to check the display each time they enter a number. They should then be encouraged to estimate the answer and check the 'reasonableness' of what the calculator says.

- Remind the student that the order in which you enter the numbers for subtraction and division is important. 10-8 is not the same as 8-10 (although 8+10 is the same as 10+8).

- Different calculators work differently, so it is important for your student to find out how their particular calculator works but in general, the four operations are straightforward.

- Apart from the four operations, finding a percentage of a given total is a useful and simple operation. Show your student how to do this and give them plenty of practice (because it is not intuitive).

Weights & measurement

Your aim is to help your student:

- visualise common metric measurements
- estimate weight and size.

Length

- On a metre ruler or tape measure, show your student 1 mm, 1 cm, 1 metre.

  Ask them to count how many mms in a cm? How many cms in a metre?

  10 mm = 1 cm 100 cms = 1 m 1000 mm = 1 m 1000 m = 1 km

It may help to remember this if you know that:

- *milli*- means one thousandth
- *centi*- means one hundredth,
- *kilo*- means one thousand

- Using this information, ask your student to explain what the words *millimetre, centimetre* and *kilometre* mean.

- For future reference, it may help to remember that:
  - 1 mm is about the thickness of a 5c coin
  - 1 cm is about the width of an index fingernail
  - 1 m is a long stride or the length from your fingertip with your arm outstretched, to your opposite shoulder
  - 10 cms is about the width of a hand, across the knuckles
  - 2 m is a standard door height

Everyday problems involving length

Ask your student to estimate:

- the width of their index finger
- the height of the door
- the length of a small car
- the width of their hand
- the thickness of a 5c piece
- the distance from where you are sitting to the front fence

Then measure them.

Weight

Weight is sometimes called mass.

- On a set of scales show your student a kilogram, a gram and a milligram.
  Ask your student to estimate how many milligrams in a gram?
  How many grams in a kilogram?

  1000 mg = 1 gram 1000 g = 1 kg 1000 kg = 1 tonne
  (Remember *milli*- means thousandth, *kilo*- means thousand)

- Using this information, ask your student to explain what the words *milligram* and *kilogram* mean.

- For future reference, it may help to remember that:

  - 1 milligram is about the weight of an ant's egg
  - 1 gram is about the weight of 2 paper clips
  - 5 grams is about a 10 cent coin
  - 1 kilogram is a small packet of sugar or a litre of water
  - 1 tonne is about the weight of a small car

Everyday problems involving weight

- Give your student practice in estimating the weight of some objects in the room etc. Then measure them.

- Help your student investigate prices for different sized packets of the products they buy and decide which might be the cheapest way to buy these things.

Liquid volume

- Using a measuring jug, ask your student to estimate how many millilitres in a litre.
  1000 mL = 1 litre
  (Remember, *milli*- means thousandth, *kilo*- means thousand)

- For future reference, it may help to remember that:
  - 1 mL is about 1/5 teaspoon
  - 5 mLs is one teaspoon
  - 250 mLs is one metric measuring cup
  - 1 L is a bottle of milk
  - 1 kL is a cubic metre of water

Everyday problems involving volume

- Give your student practice in estimating the volume of some containers or products in the kitchen etc. Then measure them.

- Help your student investigate prices for different sized containers of the products they buy and decide which might be the cheapest way to buy these things.

Useful Websites

http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/ .An excellent site, written for adults, with exercises in literacy and numeracy.

Marr, B. 2014, *Building Strength with Numbers*, VALBEC, Melbourne
Building Strength with Numeracy resources (valbec.org.au) An Australian site, this is an excellent source of practical ideas. Written for teachers of class groups, but easily adaptable for tutors of individual students.

What's in this section?

- Students with a learning disability
  - ADHD, ADD
  - Dyslexia
- Visually impaired students
- Hearing impaired students
- Students with an intellectual disability
- Students with a neurological disability
- Students with a psychiatric disability

Who is this section for?

Do not assume that just because your student has literacy problems, they have a 'disability' as we normally understand it. Many otherwise extremely capable people have just never got the hang of reading and writing for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, some adults with a disability do ask for literacy help and your student may be one of these.

For example, if your student went to a special school or is on a disability pension or in supported accommodation then it is possible that they have been diagnosed with a disability which will affect their literacy development. On the other hand, some may have some sort of disability that has not been diagnosed.

However, even if your student does have a disability, most of the strategies suggested elsewhere in this handbook will be appropriate. Nevertheless, there may be a number of other issues which you should be aware of. The first strategy will be to talk to the students themselves about their difficulties. As adults, they will be the experts in their own disabilities or difficulties. They will already have a good idea of what works for them and how you will be able to make the learning easier for them.

Below is a very brief overview of some of these considerations. If your student does fall into one of these categories, then you should try to seek further professional advice and make sure your student has had an assessment by a professional teacher of adult literacy.

Students with a learning disability

The term 'learning disability' is used to describe people who have problems processing information or who learn *differently* from those who are neurotypical. This is not the result of intellectual or emotional difficulties or inadequate educational experiences. In fact, many people who have been given this diagnosis are shown to have above normal IQ. However, only an educational psychologist can provide an official diagnosis of a learning disability. Such official confirmation can be expensive and time-consuming and may not be necessary. You can offer helpful strategies without this formal diagnosis.

It might be more helpful to think in terms of a learning *difference.* The term neurodiverse is used to capture this concept. Much interesting research is currently being done in the field of neuroscience, and there are many questions still to be answered.

Many adult literacy students, (especially younger ones), have been diagnosed with the most common of these learning disabilities, which are:

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

This is a neurological disorder, characterized by difficulty concentrating, short attention span, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

This is also a neurological disorder characterized by difficulty concentrating, but rather than being hyperactive, people with this diagnosis are described as being dreamy and forgetful.

Possible strategies

- Short, focused periods of learning
  Since focus and concentration will be a challenge, you will need to provide short periods of learning, with breaks and an opportunity for a stretch.

- Slow and logical
  Your student may also have trouble following complex instructions. You may need to be very explicit, clear and logical in your instructions and to break tasks down into small achievable parts. You may need to slow down the pace of the lesson and provide plenty of opportunity to review and revise.

- Distraction-free environment
  Such students will have trouble focusing their attention on what is relevant to the task. It is important therefore that you choose somewhere for your lessons which is free from the distractions of noise, other people and other activity.

Dyslexia

People who have been diagnosed with dyslexia fall into the category of learning *differently* from those who are neurotypical. Some may have been diagnosed with ADHD or ADD, with the problem of concentration adding further challenge to their literacy problem. Although these disabilities may co-occur, one is not the cause of the other. Most people with dyslexia have been found to have problems with identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds, a key factor in their reading difficulties.

However, do not assume that your student necessarily has some sort of learning disability even though they may have been 'diagnosed' with dyslexia. It is a very loosely used term and many of our adult students tell us that they have been 'diagnosed' with dyslexia by other professionals such as the family doctor, when a short conversation with them would suggest it is more likely that the problem has arisen from educational issues in childhood such as moving schools often, illness or undiagnosed hearing problems.

For others however, it is possible that the problem does have a neurological basis; that they do process print *differently* from most of us. However it is important that such adults realise that they can learn to read and write just as well as anyone else; it may just take a little longer, and your student may also need help from a specialist literacy teacher.

As the tutor, it is also important that you help your student identify their learning strengths and weaknesses. Which learning strategies do they find useful, and which cause frustration? You can then use the strengths to work on the weaknesses. Ask your student what they need. Because dyslexia affects everyone in different ways, your best information will come from the students themselves. For some people, reading maps is their most difficult challenge; for others, any problem requiring shifting between numbers and words is hard.

Having a label like dyslexia can be comforting for some students; it can offer them freedom from thinking they're stupid. However, for others it may well be debilitating and prevent them from moving forward. *'I can't … because I've got this dyslexia'.* If your student has had the label of dyslexia applied to them, this may be something you need to discuss with them.

Possible strategies

- <u>Make use of the concrete and visual</u>
  It is possible that your student's memory for information which is presented visually and graphically may be better than their rational, logical memory. You will need to stress the importance of strategies such as mind maps and using colour when trying to memorise material, or the importance of the visual memory of a word when learning to spell.

- Practice and repetition
  Your student may need more practice and repetition of newly learnt material before it goes into the long-term memory. You may find that you need to review the same material over and over in different ways. A word learnt today may not be remembered tomorrow and it is very important that you and your student don't become frustrated with the slow pace. For this reason it is better, for example, to set just a few spelling words to be learnt each week, rather than a long list which will undoubtedly be forgotten.

- Direct teaching
  It is likely that a student with dyslexia may require more direct teaching and practice with phonics than many other literacy learners. Some of the teaching/learning strategies suggested in this handbook rely partly on the ability of the students to make their own deductions about language. For some students this is more difficult than others. For example, many students manage to develop quite good spelling strategies just by being encouraged to do a lot of writing and 'give it a go' with the difficult words. Your student however, may need much more systematic attention to the phonics or sounds/letters in the words while still using whole language in context.
  (see Section 2, p.10).

- Visual differences
  Some students report a range of visual disturbances, especially the effects of colour, when faced with print. For some students, the effect of changing the colour of the print and the colour of the paper (for example to dark blue print on yellow paper) can be dramatic. You may be able to help your student experiment with different combinations to see if there is any improvement. To change the background colour of a Word document on your computer: Click **Design** > **Page Color**.

References for this section

Herrington, M. 2010, Dyslexia, in Hughes, N. & Schwab, I. (eds), *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice,* McGraw Hill, Berkshire, UK, pp 313-330

Visually impaired students

Possible strategies

- Ask your student what's the best position for you both to sit in, in terms of light.
- Think about the size of print that you use.
- Use a felt tipped pen rather than a biro as contrast on the page is important.
- Your local library will most likely be a good source of large print books.
- A magnifying glass or other low vision aid may help.
- The Royal Blind Society in your state may have some suggestions.

Hearing impaired students

Many deaf or hearing impaired people have difficulty with language skills and may have a restricted vocabulary. The main problem with developing literacy however will be that they will have problems with the possible sound/letter correspondence in words.

Possible strategies

- Concentrate on helping to develop a visual memory for words.
- Make sure that you sit facing the student to maximize lip reading ability. Keep your hands etc. away from your face and make sure your face is well lit.
- Speak slowly and clearly, pronouncing each word carefully, but without over-pronouncing as overemphasis distorts lip movements, making lip reading more difficult.
- Try to use short sentences as they are easier to understand than long ones.
- Cut down background noise.

Students with an intellectual disability

Intellectual disability covers a range of medical and neurological conditions, such as Down Syndrome, each of which presents different symptoms and challenges. You will need to select from strategies such as those below to match to your student's particular needs.

Possible strategies

- <u>Appropriateness of material</u>
  It is possible that your student has had limited experiences of life. If this is so, take great care that the material offered is within the scope of their experience. To start with, concentrate on the immediate life experiences, interests and needs. Do they need help shopping or cooking or finding their way around the community? What are their interests?

- Avoid abstract concepts
  Students with an intellectual disability may experience difficulty with abstract concepts and complex language structures. With such students it is particularly important that you remember that concepts such as 'sounds' and 'letters' are very abstract notions. They should not be taught in isolation from whole language in real, concrete contexts such as in signs, magazines, advertising fliers etc. For example, if the student is learning to write their name and address, give them plenty of practice writing it on a variety of forms (which is where we usually have to write it in real life). If shopping is an immediate need, then use supermarket ads, and go shopping with them.

- Make use of the concrete and visual
  Because your student will most likely have trouble with abstract concepts, their memory for information which is presented visually and graphically will be better than their rational, logical memory. You will need to stress the importance of strategies such as simple mind maps when trying to memorise material, or the importance of the visual memory for a word when learning to spell.

- Repetition
  Your student will probably have difficulty retaining information for any length of time. You may need to slow down the pace of the lesson and provide plenty of opportunity to review and revise the same material over and over in different ways. A word learnt today may not be remembered tomorrow and it is very important that you don't become frustrated with the slow pace. For this reason it is better, for example, to set one or two spelling words to be learnt each week than a long list which will undoubtedly be forgotten.

- Direct teaching
  Some of the teaching/learning strategies suggested in this handbook rely partly on the ability of the students to make their own deductions about the language. For some students this is more difficult than others. For example, many students manage to develop quite good spelling strategies just by being encouraged to do a lot of writing and 'give it a go' with the difficult words. Your student however, may need much more systematic attention to the phonics or sounds/letters in the words while still using whole language in context
  (see Section 2, p.10)

- Consistency and routine
  Make sure you are consistent with issues such as: which book to write in; where to write personal spelling words; which activity you start or end the lesson with; a routine for learning spelling words; reviewing homework, etc.

- Slow and logical
  Your student may also have trouble following complex instructions. You may need to be very explicit, clear and logical in your instructions and to break tasks down into small achievable parts.

- Positive feedback
  While praise and positive feedback are important for all students, it is particularly important if your student has an intellectual disability. If you praise a response, it is much more likely that the student will remember it. This reinforcement should be given frequently in a variety of forms. If you find you are correcting the student often, then the task is too difficult.

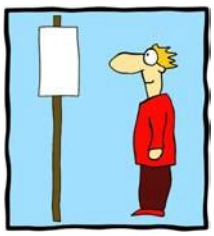
- Check for understanding
  However, don't just ask, *Do you understand?* You will need to find ways for the student to *show* you that they understand.

Students with a neurological disability

People with a neurological disability include those with 'acquired brain injury'; that is, brain injury as a result of accident or trauma. Such students may present with a range of learning issues, depending on the region of the brain that is affected.

Possible strategies

- Avoid abstract concepts
  Your student may have difficulty with complex language structures and abstract concepts. With such students it is particularly important that you remember that concepts such as 'sounds' and 'letters' are very abstract notions. They should not be taught in isolation from whole language in real, concrete contexts such as in signs, magazines, advertising fliers etc. If your student is working on writing their name and address, give them plenty of practice writing it on a variety of forms (which is where we usually have to write it in real life).



- Make use of the concrete and visual
  It is likely that the student's memory for information which is presented visually and graphically may be better than their rational, logical memory. You will need to stress the importance of strategies such as mind maps when trying to memorise material, or the importance of the visual memory for a word when learning to spell.

- Slow and logical
  Students with a neurological disability may also have trouble following complex instructions. You may need to be very explicit, clear and logical in your instructions and to break tasks down into small achievable parts. You may need to slow down the pace of the lesson and provide plenty of opportunity to review and revise in different ways. You may also need to provide some short breaks between learning activities.

- Effects of medication
  These students may also need to take medication which could have a number of side effects including drowsiness. Discuss this with your student as you may need to arrange the time for your tutoring sessions to take advantage of the time of day when they are usually most mentally alert.

Students with a psychiatric disability

As with other types of disability, there is a very wide range of effects of psychiatric disabilities. There are however, a number of issues which are most likely to affect such students.

Possible strategies

- Effects of medication
  Medication could have a number of side effects including drowsiness or inattention. Discuss this with your student as you may be able to arrange your lesson times to coincide with their most alert periods.

- Slow and logical
  Either as a result of the medication or the disability itself, the student may experience difficulty in thinking in clear logical ways or their responses may be slow. You will need to ensure that you give instructions and information clearly and in a logical way and that you break tasks down to small achievable parts and slow the pace of the lesson.

- Review and revise
  The student may also have problems with short term memory or with recall of information. You will need to provide plenty of opportunity to review and revise in different ways.

- Make use of the concrete and visual
  If short term memory is impaired, it is likely that the student's memory for information which is presented visually and graphically may be better than their rational, logical memory. You will need to stress the importance of strategies such as mind maps when trying to memorise material, or the importance of the visual memory of a word when learning to spell.

What's in this section?

- Factors affecting literacy learning
- The reading process and the second language learner
- The writing process and the second language learner
- Cultural issues
- What about grammar?
- What are the boundaries of the tutor's role?

Who is this section for?

If your student can speak English well enough to carry on a simple conversation and can carry out most everyday transactions such as shopping without an interpreter, then the strategies in this handbook are appropriate for helping them learn to read and write.

You should note however, that this handbook has been written to help you tutor a student in adult *literacy*. It is not designed to offer strategies for English language teaching. In the process of learning to read and write, your student's English language will probably be improved, but that is not the primary aim of these suggested activities.

Although the process of learning to read and write is similar in many respects for everyone, a second language learner will bring a whole range of factors to the literacy learning situation which do not necessarily apply to the native speaker. This section deals very briefly with some of those aspects.

First Nations learners

The points made in this section are appropriate also for First Nations learners for whom English is not their first language, and for adults who use Aboriginal English (sometimes called non-standard English). Aboriginal English is a dialect of English just as Welsh, or Northern English are dialects of English, and needs to be respected as such. However, your student may want to be able to read and write in standard English for employment reasons, for example. In this case, they will encounter some of the same hurdles as those who come from other Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds so that many of the points raised in this section will be relevant.

Consideration of **cultural issues** will be particularly important with students who identify as First Nations. Make sure that the reading and writing tasks and activities that you introduce them to are relevant to their lives and are likely to enhance their sense of themselves. It is also highly likely that your student has encountered casual

racism, and often overt, intended racism throughout their lives. Having problems with literacy and numeracy will have added to the shame and sense of ''not belonging" that many express. The section on PTSD (Section 1, page 12) has some explanation and suggestions for helping to manage this.

Factors affecting literacy learning

Literacy in student's own language

If your student has not been to school or has had very little schooling and is not literate in their own language, progress will necessarily be slow. They need to learn a lot of basic concepts about how language works, concepts which we take for granted but which need to be made explicit for some learners. For example, the concept of a 'word', a 'sound' and a 'letter' and the idea that a sound is represented by a letter or a group of letters are difficult concepts to grasp for many students.

- Make these concepts explicit. Talk about them often.
- Be patient!

Schooling background

On the other hand, your student may have had a successful educational background and be a confident learner. They may even speak and be literate in a number of other languages. If this is the case, they will have advantages over many native speakers in that they will understand how language works and be more likely to be a self-directed learner.

The script of the first language

If your student is literate in their first language, does that language use the Roman script (like English)? If not, then one of the early tasks is to teach them to recognise and form the letters ofthe Roman alphabet.

- See *Handwriting,* Section 5, p. 28.
- Give exercises on visual discrimination between the features of similar letters such as p and b and d.

The reading process and the second language learner

The process of learning to read is basically the same for second language learners as it is for native speakers. However, you need to recognise that some aspects of the process are going to be more difficult for them.

In the section *How do we read?* we point out that efficient readers use four sets of clues in reading:

1. The context of the text

We are able to make a lot of predictions about the material we are about to read from its context. (*Is it in the sports section of the newspaper or the TV guide? Is it a supermarket ad or a school newsletter?)* It is possible that your student has come from a culture which is not a very literate one - where people are not surrounded by newspapers and advertisements. If so, they may not be used to the types of print which surround us in our culture, so that they are unable to make use of these clues in reading.

- Draw your student's attention to the format of the material you are reading and show several examples.

2. The meaning of the text

Whereas native speakers are usually able to predict the meaning of one or two unknown words in a sentence, the more restricted vocabulary of a second language learner will mean a text may have many unknown words. This places additional strain on their ability to make use of this set of clues.

In addition, the cultural significance of whole concepts may be mysterious to them so that they may not understand how particular parts of a text fit together. For example, unless you are aware of the significance of *Once upon a time ...,* you may not be aware that you are about to read a fairy story.

- Precede any reading activity with plenty of discussion and clarify any difficult vocabulary.
- You could spend time building up sets of vocabulary using pictures etc. before attempting texts on particular subject areas.
- Take time to explain (using a number of examples or samples) some of the cultural aspects of the texts you are reading. For example, expressions of someone's opinion are found in some parts of the newspaper and magazines. On the other hand statements of fact are found in other parts of the newspaper and government brochures etc.

3. The grammar of the sentence

This will be perhaps the most inaccessible set of clues. If your student doesn't know whether the sentence they have read 'sounds right' or not, then they can't monitor their reading.

- Read to your student often to help them absorb the rhythm of the language.
- Read a passage to your student before you ask them to read it.

4. The sounds made by the letters

Since second language learners can't rely very much on the above three sets of clues, they usually tend to rely very heavily on trying to work out the sounds made by the letters. They will have trouble predicting what the word might be and will rely on decoding, word by word with the result that meaning will be lost. Trying to sound it out may pose additional problems anyway for the student who has problems hearing and recognising sounds in English.

- Encourage the use of all four sets of clues by using the language experience approach. This is ideal for second language learners.

The writing process and the second language learner

When native English speakers are learning to write they face a range of demands simultaneously claiming their attention - the ideas they are trying to capture, spelling, punctuation, clear handwriting, appropriate layout on the page and more. For the second language learner, there are additional things to worry about.

If they are new to the Roman script, attention must be paid to forming the letters. If they are not literate in their first language, the fine muscle control necessary to hold a pen correctly needs to be learnt. The matter of acceptable grammar becomes important. Halting English, aided by facial expressions and body language may be adequate for oral situations, but greater language skills are called upon when it comes to writing. A limited vocabulary will add to the frustration.

The problem of spelling poses additional problems. While a native speaker can make up the spelling for many words by sounding them out, and can usually get quite close, the second language learner may not even get close. The problem is that they may have difficulty distinguishing certain sounds. For example they may not hear the difference between /b/ and /v/ and have no way of judging from the sound of the word, which letter is required. When the student wants to write ship they may be saying sheep to themselves. Speakers of some languages simply find it very difficult to pronounce some particular sounds in English. In spite of your best efforts your student may never be able to say some words. 'Sound it out' as a spelling strategy will have more limitations than for the native speaker.

- Give your student plenty of writing models to use. Write to them and with them.
- Stress the visual memory for the spelling of a word.
- Give some practice in sound discrimination of problem sounds. For example, say a number of words beginning with the same sound, interspersed with some others and ask them to identify the odd ones out.
- Encourage your student to set up a personal dictionary.

Cultural issues

There are a range of cultural issues which may also impinge on your relationship with your student. For example, many students will nod and smile when you ask them if they understand something when in fact they do not understand. This response may be due to a variety of cultural reasons including being respectful to the teacher, not wanting to be in disgrace for not knowing the answer, not having adequate language to state this respectfully to the teacher or to explain they understand part of it but not all, etc. You will have to find other ways of gauging their understanding.

Many students whose educational experiences have been in very teacher dominated settings will look to you for direction in everything. They will be puzzled by suggestions that they tell you what sort of things they want to read or to write about, or that they should first try to find their own mistakes in a piece of writing. You will need to explain why you are trying to encourage them to take some control and that you are not just being a lazy tutor.

Appropriate topics for discussion and writing also vary from culture to culture. Your student may have been through traumatic and life changing experiences in their native country. In our culture we would expect that writing about this would be a therapeutic thing to do, as well as providing a rich source of writing/spelling practice, but in many cultures such topics are off limits. Likewise, writing about family and home seems an obvious topic, but if the family has been separated because of migration, it may cause distress to share the story with a stranger.

These are some very brief examples which may or may not apply to your student. The important point is that you need to be sensitive to their response to such issues.

What about grammar?

Be realistic about what you can help your student with, and in general don't try to correct every mistake. If your primary task is to help them learn to read and write, then that is probably enough for them to think about, especially if they are a beginner reader/writer.

The best help you can be is to model standard English grammar. For example, if your student says, *Yesterday I move to new flat.* You could reply *Oh, you move**d** to **a** new flat did you?* However, if your student is not a beginner and has developed some confidence with reading and writing, they may want you to help them with some aspects of the grammar. Be careful to target particular grammatical structures and give plenty of practice one at a time rather than trying to correct everything they say or write.

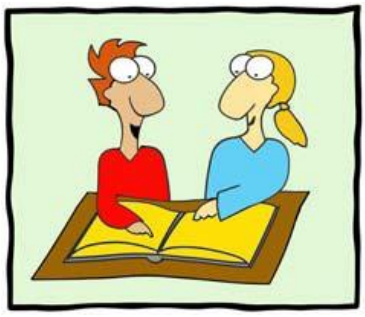
Verbs are usually the most troublesome. For example, if they have trouble

remembering to use the past tense, you could write a cloze exercise with only regular past tense verbs deleted (that is, verbs ending in *–ed*). Or you could give a passage written in the present tense and ask them to re-write it in the past tense. The only exception to this 'gently, gently' approach is if you are helping your student with an authentic piece of writing for someone else to read, for example a formal business letter or a model of an email for their child's school or for work. In these circumstances you need to help produce a whole text with standard English grammar.

What are the boundaries of the tutor's role?

You need to be clear in your mind just what the boundaries of your role are, particularly if your student is a new arrival. If they are newly arrived, they may have all sorts of settlement issues, both emotional and problem solving, which they may look to you to help with.

Be clear from the start how much of your time and emotional energy you are prepared to give to this. It is probably more efficient anyway, to refer them to an organisation such as the local migrant resource centre or other government department. Your role as literacy tutor is not to solve the problems for your student, but to help them develop the skills they need to find and use the resources in the community. For example, if they are having problems getting a Medicare card, you could devote a series of lessons to using the internet to find the phone number to call, or writing a model email requesting information.



Who is this section for?

Digital literacy covers the ability to use digital devices such as an ATM machine, a mobile phone or a computer and the skills and knowledge involved are interrelated with the literacy and numeracy skills covered elsewhere in this handbook. Digital skills incorporate the ability to search and navigate, create and communicate as well as the skills to think critically and analyse information. These skills are essential for individuals to participate effectively in today's society. The digital world may well be something that your student feels excluded from by their lack of literacy skills. This section is therefore of importance for anyone who is helping another adult with their literacy and numeracy skills.

Literacy and technology

For people who struggle with literacy, dealing with everyday technology presents a double challenge. Since your role as a literacy facilitator is to help your student with the real life literacy tasks which confront them, this may include helping with the literacy involved in ordering a pizza on a mobile phone, sending SMS text messages or using an automatic teller machine. However, many of our students are already very adept at using the technology in their mobile phones. This can then be a great motivating factor and can take advantage of the positive self-image that these self-taught skills can bring.

If you are not confident with your own digital skills, it may be helpful for you both to work your way through the free online course called *Be Connected.* This is clearly written and easily accessible for beginners. https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/topic-library

Through the *Be Connected* online resources, your student (and you) will be able to learn the basics of using digital devices and engaging with the internet.

Mobile Phone

If your student has a mobile phone, and especially a smartphone, this can offer a rich source of literacy activity in an authentic context. Your student may have already developed some skills and knowledge in an informal way and these can be built on.

The modern smartphone can do nearly as many things as a full-sized computer. Programs, or **apps**, can be obtained to help it do more. Some of the literacy related things you might do with a smartphone include:

- Play games.
- Browse the internet.
- Text and email.
- Navigate with maps.
- Social networking.
- Make lists and calendar appointments.

The internet

For someone who is developing their literacy skills, it is important that they do a lot of reading. The internet can provide a wealth of reading material that interests your student. Help them search for information about something they may be interested in, then use it the way you would if it were a magazine or newspaper article.

The internet is the source of information that growing numbers of adults (and children) rely on, and your student may want to be one of them. As well as developing the technology-related skills such as managing the cursor and scrolling up and down, the literacy skills that are referred to in the other sections of this handbook will be important, and online activities will provide authentic practice in using these skills. These include the ability to scan and skim for information on a 'busy' webpage, and to critically evaluate information found there.

Encouraging critical, analytical literacy skills is particularly important in relation to information on the internet. You may want to discuss the fact that not all that is published on the web is necessarily reliable. Ask about where it came from, who wrote it, why you think they wrote it that way, who they think the author was writing it for, and what is the significance of a .com and a .gov web address.

Writing

If your student wants to use the computer to help develop their writing skills, then this section will offer you some guidelines to help them get started. To develop a piece of writing on the computer, edit it and see it looking very professional is an enormous confidence booster for many students. Learning to send emails is another important skill which will give your student useful writing practice, even if it is just exchanging emails with you. As a tutor, all you need to get started are some basic word processing skills. In fact, if it is a voyage of discovery for both of you, your student may feel less intimidated knowing that you are both learning together.

Remember, using technology is just one approach to helping students improve literacy skills. They still need to be doing a lot of pen and paper literacy since we all still need to fill out forms and write impromptu notes etc without the aid of the computer. Keep checking with your student that what you are doing is meaningful and relevant to them.

Writing on the computer

This section has been adapted from *First Click for Adult Literacy Students*, WA Department of Education & Training, 2000.

Some advantages:

- Tapping a key on the keyboard is easier than struggling to write legibly with a pen if you are not used to it.
- Dealing with errors and re-drafting is also much easier. Your student will get a feeling of success with much less pain and this is likely to be a strong motivating factor.
- Writing with a word processing program can also help the student's reading. The word processor teaches us a lot about the conventions of print. For example, as students consider the need for different sized fonts or bold print for headings or important information, or the use of bullet points to organise information in their writing, they are learning lessons which will help them when they come to reading books and newspapers etc. They are learning how writers organise their print. You could also reinforce this learning by looking at how different fonts and layouts are used in newspapers and magazines.

Getting started

You don't need to wait until your student has developed some literacy skills before starting on the computer. Even beginning students can get started with the computer. For example, together you could write up a language experience story. You might type in most of the story as you compose it together, and your student types in a few words which you have written out to be copied.

Students who are beyond the very beginning stage of needing to copy can be encouraged to compose directly on the screen, rather than copy from a hand written draft. Composing on the screen encourages re-drafting and perfecting because it is so much easier than rewriting several drafts.

Don't overload your student with too much information at one time. Decide what you want to teach in each session and don't bother the student with extra information. For example, for beginner reader/writers you might just concentrate on finding and opening the Word icon, and getting them used to the keyboard for a few sessions. Introduce new computer functions one at a time and give plenty of time for practice before you move on to the next one.

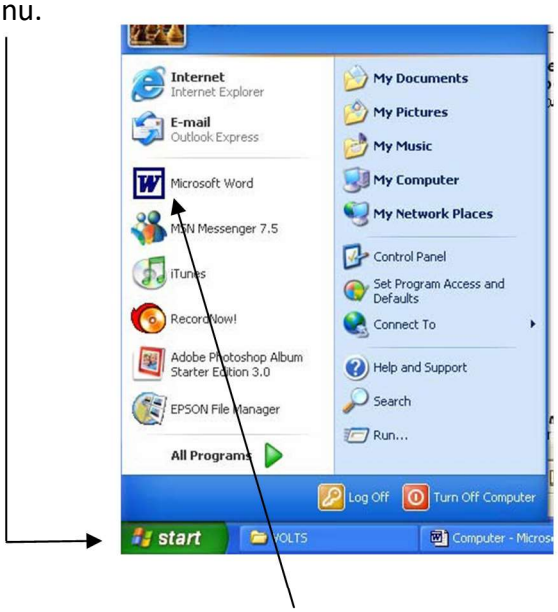
Remember how difficult it was to manipulate the mouse when you began to use a computer? Show your student how to point, click, hold, drag and double click. Your student can get plenty of practice doing this using a game such as 'Solitaire'.
Briefly explain the function of the various parts of the computer and use the correct computer terminology (monitor, desktop, click, drag, delete ...). Using the appropriate terminology gives the student the language to communicate with others about computers.

Students who have access to a computer to practise on during the week will probably need some written instructions or reminders to take with them. The instructions which accompany most computer programs are usually very wordy so you may find your student responds better to brief instructions which you write together. At the end of your session, as a review activity, you could go over the steps or functions which you covered in the session, and write them out together.

Microsoft Office has a function for printing the whole screen which you have open, showing the toolbars and icons. Press the 'Print Screen' key on the keyboard, open a word document and press Ctrl V. You can then type extra instructions around the image that is saved there and produce instructions similar to the following one:

Opening a New Document

1. Click the 'start' button on the bottom taskbar to display this pop-up menu.



2. Slide the mouse pointer on to Microsoft Word.

3. Click on Microsoft Word.

4. Start typing on the white screen that appears.

What about spelling?

Many tutors think that using the spell checker is cheating. They worry that because the computer is doing the thinking the student will not learn the correct spelling. The spell checker doesn't do the whole job; it is just another tool. Explain what the red wriggly line means and encourage the student to try to work out the correct spelling before right clicking to see what the alternatives are. Working out which of the alternatives is the right one is a useful spelling activity. You should then treat the spelling error just as you would with other writing activities. Make a note of it and deal with it later.

The grammar and punctuation checker can be a bit more confusing and you might want to simply turn it off or tell the student to ignore it and rely on their own proofreading skills.

Email

Using email can provide excellent writing practice for your student, so help your student register for an email address, if they don't already have one. If you email each other during the week, you are giving the student another authentic reason to write and by replying, you are providing a useful writing model.

Computer based literacy programs

There are a number of websites which have been developed to teach reading and writing and numeracy. If you or your student become aware of any that you think may be useful, there are a number of criteria you could use to evaluate them:

- **Is it adult-oriented?**

There is a lot of educational software on the market written for children that may be unsuitable for adults. Check the illustrations. Are they cutesy, childish images? Are the examples relevant only to children? *(*Eg: *If you have six marbles to share among three friends …*)

- **What level of reading is required to use the program?**

The level of reading required to use the program should be consistent with the level of the learning activities. The written instructions provided in some programs are too wordy and not appropriate for beginning students or those who are not confident in their literacy or computer skills.

- **Is it easy to use?**

Is it easy to find your way around the program? Is it easy to move back and forth? Is it clear what you have to do when you complete an activity?

- **Does it provide good feedback?**

Does the feedback provide good, positive reinforcement that is adult-oriented and constructive?

- **Does the student have some control over the activities?**

Does the student have some control over the rate and sequence of information? Can they flip through to find exercises they like and exit the ones they don't like? If there is a timing function, can they override it? Can they select the level of exercises or text they wish to work on? Lock-step programs can be very frustrating for adults.

- **Does it reflect the student's interest?**

Make sure that the program relates to your student's goals and/or interests. For example, there are driver education websites and others teaching skills related to a range of specific occupational fields which can be very helpful.

In this handbook, the following words are used to mean:

Cues	The clues we get from the meaning, grammar, letters / sounds and/or context when we are reading.
Dyslexia	Literally means a disorder of the ability to read. More specifically used to suggest a Specific Learning Disability or *difference* in the way the person processes print.
Cloze	(Filling in the Blanks) A strategy used to encourage students to rely less on the letter/sound clues and more on the language and meaning clues.
Cluster Analysis	A technique for teaching the correspondence between clusters of letters (rather than one letter at a time) and sounds.
Consonant	Any letter in the alphabet which is not a vowel.
Estimation	A process that gives a rough idea of the answer to a problem, or checks the reasonableness of an answer.
Genre	Genre refers to different forms of writing, such as a story, a report or a description of a procedure. Different genres have different features of language and structure.
Language Experience Approach	A teaching /learning strategy in which the student's experiences and language are used to produce reading material or learn-to read material.
Mind Map	A diagram of a reader's understanding of a passage or concept.
Morpheme	The smallest unit of identifiable meaning in written English. Morphemes include prefixes, suffixes, and bases or roots. Each part (or morpheme) carries its own meaning.
Non-English Speaking Background	People whose first language is not English. That is, they learnt to speak English either later in childhood or as an adult. Sometimes referred to as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD).

Numeracy	Numeracy involves understanding how to approach numerical information in everyday problems. It is mathematics embedded in a context and with a purpose,
Prediction	A reading strategy in which the reader uses clues in reading to anticipate a word, sound, phrase or development of ideas.
Phonics	A method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system.
Prose	The form of written language which uses whole sentences as distinct from verse or word lists, signs etc.
Read-Along	The student reads along with the tutor, either 'live' or with a recording of the text.
Repeated Reading	The student reads and re-reads a passage many times until he/she can read it fluently.
Review	Think back over something; draw it back to memory and try to make sense of it or organise it in your mind.
Scan	Read quickly and superficially to find particular items of information.
Skim	Read quickly to get the main ideas.
Syllable	A syllable is a part of a word that contains only one vowel sound and that is processed as a unit.
Text	Any piece of writing; fiction or non-fiction, even just a word or two, in context.
Vocational Student	A student who is enrolled in any post-school, employment related course.
Vowel	The letters *a, e, i, o, u* and sometimes y.
Word Attack	The strategies a reader uses in attempting to read an unknown word.
Vocabulary	Words and their meanings.

LITERACY FACE TO FACE

A HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEER ADULT LITERACY TUTORS

SECOND EDITION

Literacy Face to Face is a handbook to assist volunteer adult literacy tutors and others who want to help someone improve their literacy. It may also be useful to support the delivery of adult literacy tutor training programs and students enrolled in vocational programs.

The resource has been developed by Pamela Osmond and draws on her wide experience in the field of adult literacy, including adult literacy tutor training and adult literacy teacher education.

Australian Government
Department of Education, Skills and Employment