

# LITERACY FACE TO FACE

A RESOURCE FOR VOLUNTEER ADULT LITERACY TUTORS



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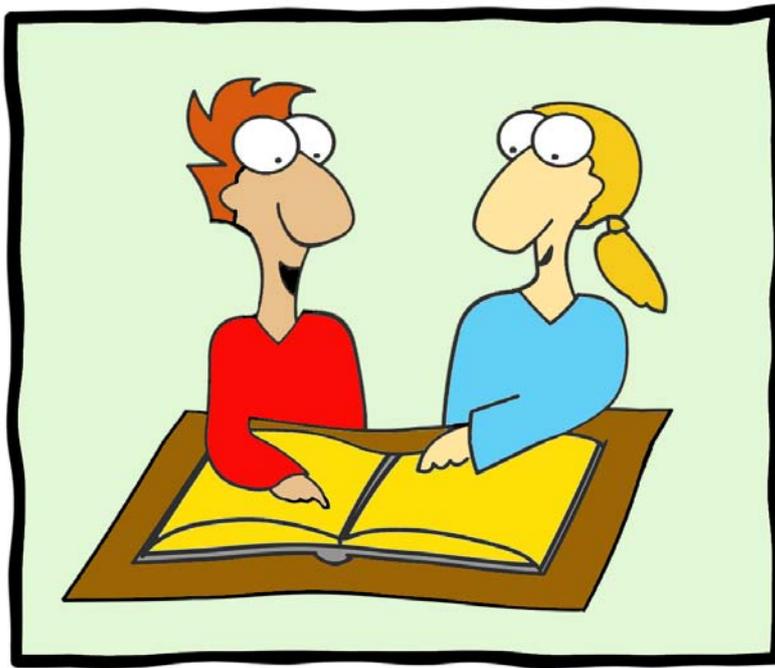
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## ***LITERACY FACE TO FACE***



***Literacy Face to Face*** is a resource 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.

This resource has been developed by Pamela Osmond, author of *So you want to teach an adult to read (1985)*, and draws on her wide experience in the field of adult literacy and volunteer adult literacy tutor training.

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## Who is this written for?

This resource 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 simple 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 resource will suggest ways of helping your student to develop reading and writing skills which are appropriate to the context of their lives, whatever they may be.

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

## How to use this resource

You probably don't need to read all of this resource. 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 resource 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. In this resource, 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 (National Reporting System Level 1 and less).

### **The intermediate student**

In this resource, an intermediate reader can recognise 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 (National Reporting System Levels 2 and 3).

### **The vocational student**

This is a student who is enrolled in 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 wants to improve their spelling.

The remainder of the resource 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 resource 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 probably 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	Γ - s
‡ - n	∩ - r
ς - t	ÿ - e
Ж - d	Ю - h



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

ς Ю ξ‡ Ж ÿ ∩

Did you have trouble?  
Does this make it easier?

As the storm approached we could hear a clap of ς Ю ξ‡ Ж ÿ ∩ 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 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**

We also need to know something of the possible sounds made by the letters 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 the word  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.

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 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? **Th**rough 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 **th**ough 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 this 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 **J**ohn said, efficient readers will often read said **J**ohn, 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 guessing 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 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 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 poor reader?

Is it just that the poor reader 'doesn't know their sounds'? No, it is much more complicated than that. For example, imagine that one reader reads the following sentence:

The tyres made a loud screeching <sup>*nose*</sup> 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:

The tyres made a loud screeching <sup>*sound*</sup> 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. These clues were missed 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 would make sense there?*
- Of course, there are times when you will simply have to tell them what the word is.
- Encourage them always to monitor their own reading in terms of:  
*Does it sound right and does it make sense?*

# 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.

Some of the important points to remember are:

### Self direction

One of the qualities which differentiate 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 program.

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 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 resource 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 student 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 this reservoir of experience is an invaluable resource to draw on in the learning situation. For example, if we are reading about a topic we are familiar with, the process of reading is easier.

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.

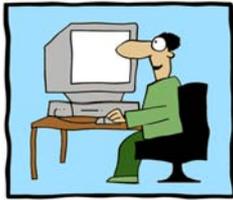
The final point is related to our self concept. Malcolm Knowles (1973), one of the best known writers in the field of adult learning, puts it this way:

*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.*

- Talk with your student about their life 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 learning situation in a state of stress or anxiety 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 your student experiences 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.

## Physical aspects

There are a number of physical aspects to 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 most surely 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.

- Encourage your student to do some homework 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 ...*
- Also, verbal ability usually increases with age.

## Assessing student's needs and progress

### Who is this section for?

Any adult literacy tutoring program must start with an informal needs assessment, so this section is for anyone who is helping another person with their reading and writing skills.

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 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 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 be done in your first session, but may 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 needs which your student is able to articulate on the first occasion may change. Their skills will almost definitely 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
<b>Get a promotion</b>	1. Write an end of shift report properly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spell key words</li> <li>• Use appropriate format</li> </ul>
	2. Write an accident report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spell key words</li> <li>• Use appropriate format</li> <li>• Develop proofreading and editing skills</li> </ul>
	3. Read safety information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise key words</li> <li>• Develop reading skills of prediction using context clues</li> </ul>
	4. Read other notices in workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise key words</li> <li>• Develop reading skills of prediction using context clues</li> </ul>
	5. Write meeting minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spell key words</li> <li>• Use appropriate format</li> <li>• Develop proofreading and editing skills</li> </ul>

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 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 them self, 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. It 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; 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 try to 'sound out' the difficult words without trying to predict what word might fit?	<p><b>The beginner reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language experience</li> <li>• Cloze</li> </ul> <p><b>The intermediate reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloze</li> <li>• Scan, question, read</li> <li>• Directed reading/thinking</li> </ul>
Does your student read nonsense and not monitor their reading in terms of <i>Does it make sense?</i>	<p><b>The beginner reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language experience</li> <li>• Cloze</li> </ul> <p><b>The intermediate reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloze</li> <li>• Scan, question, read</li> <li>• Directed reading/thinking</li> </ul>
Does your student make wild guesses and ignore the letter/sound clues?	<p><b>The intermediate reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cluster analysis</li> </ul>
Does your student read slowly, hesitantly and word-by-word?	<p><b>The beginner reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language experience</li> </ul> <p><b>The intermediate reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read-along</li> <li>• Repeated reading</li> <li>• 100 words per minute</li> </ul>
Does your student read something and not understand or remember what they have read?	<p><b>The intermediate reader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan, question, read</li> <li>• Directed reading/thinking</li> <li>• Mind mapping</li> </ul>

## 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 are 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 they feel 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 (Jones & Charnley 1978; Brennan, Clark & Dymock 1989).

## The 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 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.

## Short and long term goals (example)

	What steps do I need to take to reach my goals?		Date when started	Date when OK
1. Get my forklift driver's license.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a copy of the manual.</li> <li>• Get Alison to read it onto tape for me.</li> <li>• Learn the information.</li> <li>• Learn how to answer the test questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to recognise the key words.</li> <li>• Learn how to understand and remember information.</li> </ul>		
2. Get a job as a fork lift driver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a CV.</li> <li>• Read job ads.</li> <li>• Write application letter or application form.</li> <li>• Practise answering interview questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to understand the question format.</li> <li>• Recognise the key words in possible questions.</li> <li>• Study models of other CVs to work out possible format.</li> <li>• Study models of application letters to work out possible format.</li> <li>• Learn basic computer word processing skills so I can type CV and letters (with help).</li> <li>• Learn spelling of key words.</li> <li>• Learn to recognise and understand key words in ads.</li> <li>• Learn to scan job ad pages for fork lift driver jobs.</li> </ul>		

## Short and long term goals

	What steps do I need to take to reach my 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
	<b>Name and address</b>		
	<b>Family names</b>		
	<b>Shopping</b> Shop signs and directions		
	Labels		
	<b>Forms</b> Medicare		
	Centrelink		
	Others?		
	<b>Letters</b> Personal		
	Business		
	<b>Notes</b> From family/friends		
	From school		
	<b>Newsletters</b> From school		
	From club or organisation		
	<b>Driving</b> Driver's license manual		
	Road signs		
	Street directory		
	<b>Instructions</b> Food packages		
	Cleaning products		
	Gardening products		
	Do-it-yourself kits		
	<b>Recipes</b>		
	<b>Telephone Book</b>		
	<b>TV Guide</b>		
	<b>Automatic Teller Machine (ATM)</b>		
	<b>Mobile Phone</b> Text messages		
	<b>Work</b> Instructions		
	Safety information		
	Messages		
	Standard operating procedures		
	<b>Meeting minutes etc</b>		
	<b>For a course</b>		
	<b>Newspapers</b>		
	<b>Magazines</b>		
	<b>Novels</b>		
	<b>Non-fiction</b>		
	<b>Computer</b> Email		
	Internet		
	<b>Other?</b>		







## What's in this section?

- The language experience approach
- Social sight words and environmental print
- Letter/sound relationships
- Cluster analysis
- Cloze
- Just reading
- Case studies and lesson plans
- References for this section

## Who is this section for?

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. In this resource, 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 (National Reporting System Level 1 and less).

## 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

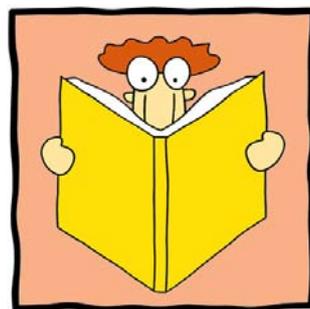
Your aim is to help your student:

- 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.

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 docketts at work, writing on greeting cards, letters to school or family 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 composing 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.

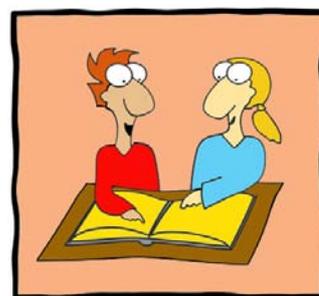
#### Write

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*.

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.



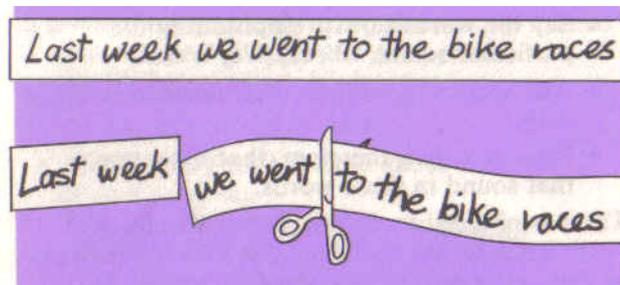
## Read

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.

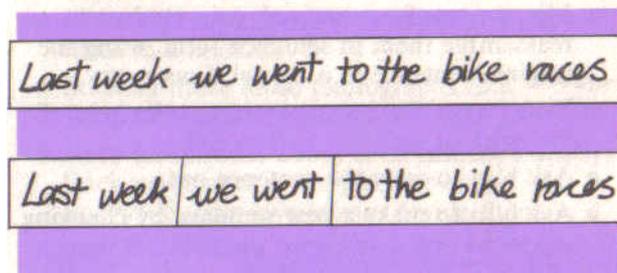
## Help your student learn to recognise individual words

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.



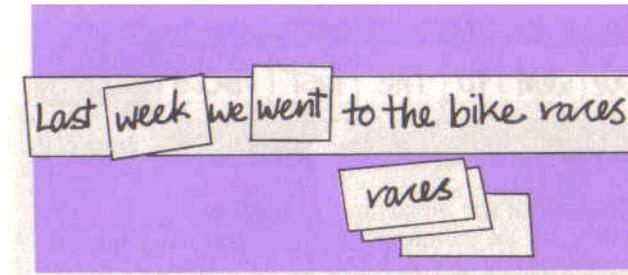
Now ask the student to reassemble the phrases into sentence form, using the original as a model if necessary.



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 the student's word envelope. 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 *Letter/sound relationships*) or to create cloze exercises (see section on *Cloze*).

## 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 its 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 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.

## 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
- Perhaps stimulus material such as photographs or magazines

## 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 predict 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
- hardware store advertising brochures
- brochures about occupational health and safety
- drivers licence learners' booklet
- other brochures from the Department of Motor Transport.

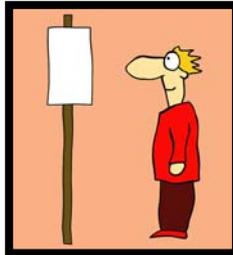
Start with a situation in which there are plenty of clues to guess what the word is, eg advertisements or labels in which there are pictures. For non-English speaking background students in particular you need to provide plenty of context so signs such as *gents*, *ladies*, *exit* etc need to be shown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

- 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 ad 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 envelope of sight words.



## What materials do you need?

- Real life materials (brochures, advertisements etc)
- Highlighter
- Light cardboard for word cards (manila folder)
- Scissors
- Pens (fine or medium tip felt tip pens)
- Envelope for word cards

## Letter/sound relationships

Once your student has a small bank of sight words you can start to help them make discoveries about letters and sounds. They may know the names of the letters but this won't help them to read.

Your aim is to help your student:

- learn some of the letter/sound relationships.

Take two or three (or more) words in the word bank that share a common first consonant and pronunciation. Their name and address 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**ee. It makes the sound **buh** in these words.*



Note that we are working from an understanding of:

**meaning → word → letter/sound**

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 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 task 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 'g' as a separate sound in the '-ing' ending. 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.

For a more thorough approach to teaching letter/sound relationships after your student has developed some confidence with this informal approach, see the section on *Cluster analysis*.

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. In this case you will also need an alphabet chart, with upper and lower case letters, and drill the alphabet a few letters at a time (See Handwriting in Section 5).

## **What materials do you need?**

- Word cards from the word bank
- Texts which are already familiar to the student
- Scrap paper

## Cluster analysis

Your aim is to help your student:

- 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 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*. For a beginner all the words chosen should be words that the student knows as sight words. When they become a little more confident you can add some other unknown words but 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:

*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?    strong*

*What sound does this make?    strong*

- Now repeat the procedure with the other words you have chosen. In this example, **song** and **longest**.

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	<u>kind</u>	<u>fowl</u>	<u>tow</u>	tion
all	as(s)	eam	ip	oss	od	
aw	ale	es(s)	il(l)	ot	ove	
air	ave	<u>deaf</u>	it	ock	og	
ar	<u>care</u>	en	ide	ost	ook	
ap	an	ew	ight	on	<u>folly</u>	
ame	ay	ear	ite	om	un	
ape	ad	eal	it	<u>rol(l)</u>	uf(f)	
ace	am	em	id	op	ush	
ang	ed	<u>tea</u>	is(s)	or	us	
ank	ent	ee	im	oke	ud	
ate	ev	eat	ick	one	um	
ake	er		if(f)	op	ug	

## Cloze (fill in the blanks)

Your aim is to help your student:

- guess or predict what many of the words 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 in 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.
- Most 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.....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..... so we left Jack there  
 to..... the next ..... 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. 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.

Eg 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, eg a language experience story or a passage learnt for read-along.



If you delete 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 7, *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 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? A word of warning - if they have small children 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 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.

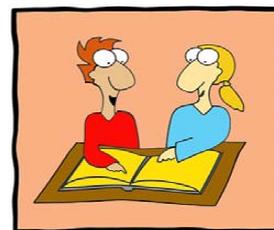
### Reading to your student

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 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?*) This is 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.
- Reread 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.

## Read-along

This is the repeated reading strategy done with a tape recorder.

- Read about half a page or less of an article or book onto tape. 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 tape while tracing along under the text with a finger.
- The student rewinds the tape 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 – 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.*

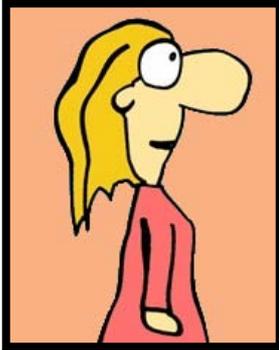
## **What materials do you need?**

- Newspaper or magazine article or book which interests the student
- Paper
- Pens
- Highlighter
- Tape recorder
- Cassette tape

## 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

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## 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.

#### Handwriting

Since she cannot recognise or write all the letters of the alphabet you give her an alphabet sheet and get her to practise a few of them.

#### Letter/sound relationships

Her name is F<sub>at</sub>ma and she lives in F<sub>air</sub>field so you draw her attention to the f sound. The words L<sub>e</sub>banon and l<sub>i</sub>ve 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.

#### 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 l<sub>i</sub>ve and ask her what the word is.

You ask her to look over the story and put a pencil dot under all the f<sub>s</sub> and l<sub>s</sub>.

#### 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 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 so she 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

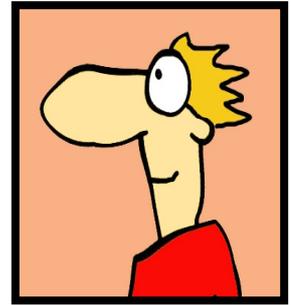
Practise all her spelling words again and read the two sentences from the language experience story then try some of the word cards. Remind her to do her homework.

## 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 unable 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 wife'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 for him and on the appropriate page in a personal dictionary note book.

#### 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 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 wife'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 practise 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 wife'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 **M**argaret, he lives in **A**rthur **S**t and the words **c**ar and **p**arked 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 (**c**leaner) 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. 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.

## Some useful references for this section

- AMES publishes a range of very good materials. Their catalogue is available on-line at [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au) or by writing to PO Box 1222, Darlinghurst NSW 1300  
Ph (02) 9289 9255.

The following is one suggestion from their catalogue:

Christie J, *The Literacy Workbook for Beginners*, NSW AMES, 2005.



## What's in this section?

- Just reading
- Comprehension
- Reading fluency
- Cloze
- Cluster analysis
- Case studies and lesson plans
- References for this section

## Who is this section for?

In this resource, 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 (National Reporting System Levels 2 and 3).

## Background to these teaching/learning activities

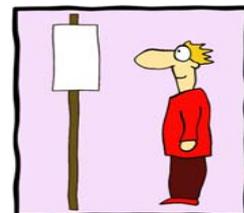
### Reading

Before you go on, read or review the section *How do we read?*

In brief, reading is easiest when we are able to use 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.

## **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.

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.

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 warning - if they have small children 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*.

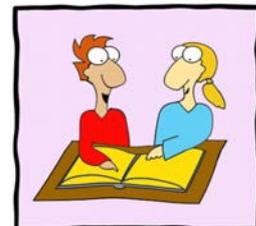
## Shared reading

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.

*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...?* 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:

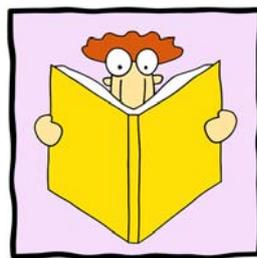
- Don't provide the word straight away. Give them time to think about it.
- Then give them some clues:  
*What letter does it begin with? Can you think of a word that begins with 's' that would fit there?*  
Or you might tell them to read on a few words further and see if they can work it out.
- If that 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.

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 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 *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, subheadings, 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 fully 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)?* These questions should also be asked of internet texts.

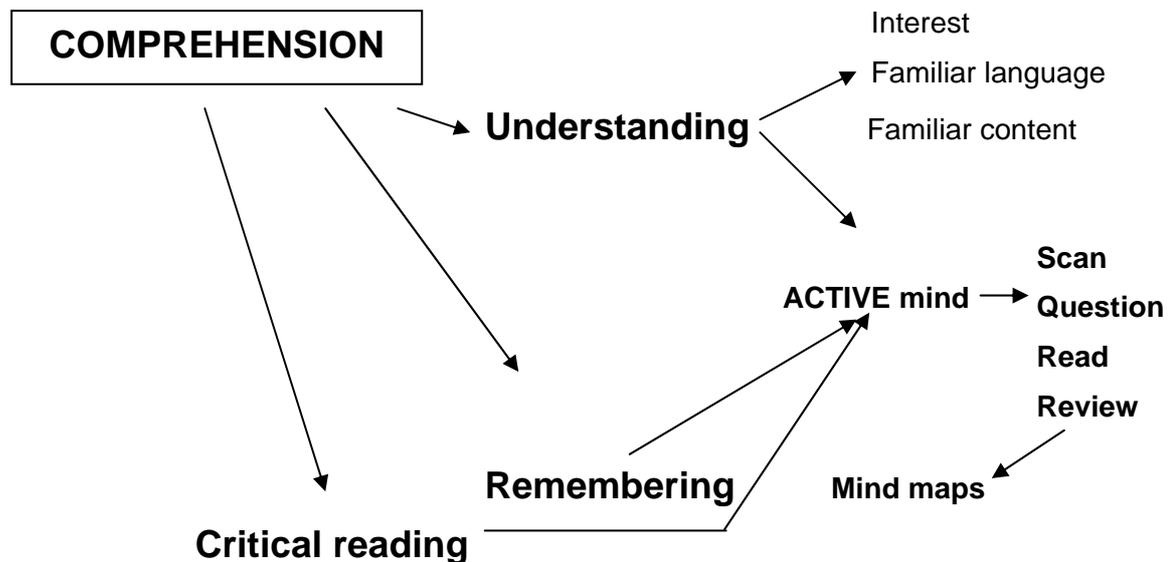
## Remembering what you have read

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

#### 1. 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.

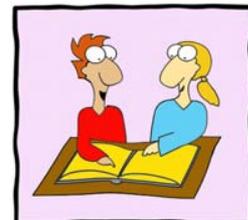
As you are reading, trace your finger along under the line – not pointing at each word, but moving your finger fluently along.

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 to 15 minutes for them to get used to the method but it is well worth persevering.



## 2. Read-along

This is similar to the procedure above except that you make a cassette tape recording of your reading.

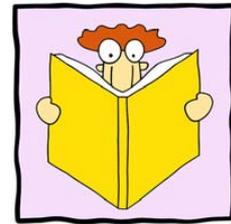
Tape your reading of the story. Again, your reading should be a little slow, but not so slow that it loses normal intonation and fluency.

Take care that your reading is accurate and that you have no mistakes recorded on the tape. 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 should be the whole article and if it is a book then not less than a few pages.

## 3. 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 tape until they feel they can read it fluently.



Again, some students resist this method because they feel it is 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.

## 4. 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.

## 5. 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 or ideally, a stop 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. 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
- Perhaps an audio tape and tape recorder
- Digital watch or clock

## 100 word per minute record sheet

| Name of Passage | Date and time taken |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |
|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |
|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |
|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |
|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |
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|                 | Date:<br>min : secs |

## Cloze (fill in the blanks)

Your aim is to help your student:

- guess or predict what many of the words 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 in 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.
- Most 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.....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..... so we left Jack there  
 to..... the next ..... 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. Or you can arrange their 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.

Eg 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 grammar 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

## Cluster analysis

Your aim is to help your student:

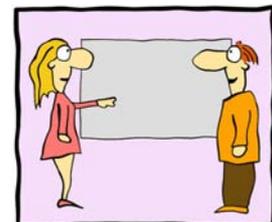
- develop a strategy to work out unknown words
- focus on chunks or letter clusters in words
- use chunks of words or letter clusters which are known to work out unknown words.

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 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*. For a beginner all the words chosen should be words that the student knows as sight words. When they become a little more confident you can add some other unknown words but 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:  
*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?*      strong

*What sound does this make?*      strong

- Now repeat the procedure with the other words you have chosen. In this example, *song* and *longest*.

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

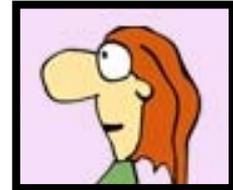
at	ac	est	ing	ire	ore	ut
ab	af(f)	et	in	ink	old	
ul(l)						
able	ast	el(l)	ig	ish	ob	
up						
al	ane	eck	<u>kind</u>	<u>fowl</u>	<u>tow</u>	
tion						
all	as(s)	eam	ip	oss	od	
aw	ale	es(s)	il(l)	ot	ove	
air	ave	<u>deaf</u>	it	ock	og	
ar	<u>care</u>	en	ide	ost	ook	
ap	an	ew	ight	on	<u>folly</u>	
ame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

## 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, who is a labourer, 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.

She enjoys cooking although she cannot really follow a recipe. She has few interests outside the family and domestic sphere. 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. The teacher has begun to insist that he bring a note before she will let him leave.

#### 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

Write notes for school

Help the children with their homework

Read school newsletters etc.

Read magazines

Read recipes

Prepare for job seeking tasks such as filling in application forms

## **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, you read it to her while she follows along. You then re-read it by taking turns reading alternate paragraphs. You then 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.

#### **Writing**

Together you write a letter of absence for school. She tells you what needs to be said and together you compose it. You scribe the letter then she copies it and keeps it as a model. She works on the spelling of any words she would not have been sure of, adding them to the spelling practice sheet.

#### **Just reading**

You find another article she is interested in and read it to her, stopping occasionally for her to read a paragraph.

#### **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. You ask her to bring along a school newsletter or other communication from school.

## 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 rewritten part of the article as a written cloze exercise and she completes this.

### Writing

You ask her to write a different letter of absence for school. You discuss then list the words she might need to use (eg words for common illnesses). This time she writes the letter herself using last week's letter as a model. She rewrites the list of words she might need and keeps them for future reference. She learns the spelling of two of them and adds them to the spelling practice sheet.

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 read part of her school newsletter 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 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

### 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.

#### Writing

You ask him to add a little more to the piece he wrote about himself and proof read it himself. There were 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 assemble the facts.

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

Together you compose the letter and he writes it and proofreads 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.

## Some useful references for this section

- AMES publishes a range of very good materials.  
PO Box 1222 [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)  
Darlinghurst NSW 1300  
Ph (02) 9289 9255.

The following is one suggestion from their catalogue:

Christie J. *The Literacy Workbook for Beginners*, NSW AMES, 2005.

### **Websites**

- [www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise)  
An excellent interactive site, written for adults with exercises in grammar, spelling, reading, writing, listening and vocabulary (and numbers).





## 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.

## 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. You should always use reading material and teaching/learning activities which are directly related to the course.

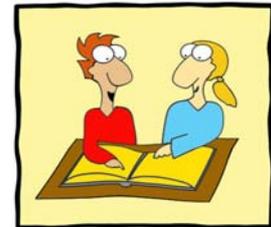
If it is possible to talk with one of the course teachers, you may be able to borrow some other texts or notes related to the course. Working in coordination with the course teacher is the ideal situation. You can then find out what are the most immediate needs and most pressing problems.

## 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 an independent learner.



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 maths is a problem, refer to the section on *Everyday numeracy*, or one of the references or websites at the end of this section.

## 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 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 in to things we already know about.

#### 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. See *How do we read?* in Section 1. This will slow down the reading and it will become laboured and hesitant.

#### 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. See *How do we read?* in Section I. This will also result in laboured, hesitant reading.

#### 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 as *introduction, causes, effects, solutions .... etc.*

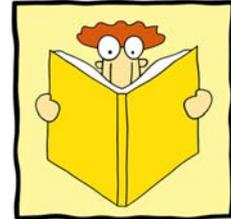
## 5. An inactive, unquestioning mind

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.

## Some solutions

### 1. A simpler version

If the problem text is overloaded with new concepts, 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 better framework on which to attach the new information when they go back to the problem text.



### 2. Skim

Skim first, or read the difficult text superficially to start with, just to get the broad picture. Don't get bogged down in the details. When finished, the student jots down what they can remember of the main ideas, or highlights them in the text. Then when they return to re-read it they have a big picture framework to build on.

### 3. 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.

If the student is not familiar with the particular style of language (for example, legal or scientific language) it will help if you read it aloud to them first. Perhaps read it onto a tape to replay until they get used to the rhythms of the language.

### 4. Read actively

Make sure the student is beginning to read with an active mind rather than just reading words. Try this routine:

- **Scan**  
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.
- **Question**  
What questions pop into your mind? *What is this all about? ... Is it a historical survey of the topic? ... Does that chart tell me about the increase in recent years? ... What on earth does 'multiple type families' mean? ... is this about the video we saw in class? ... I wonder if it relates to Piaget's theory? ...* The questions may not turn out to be really pertinent. That doesn't matter. The important thing is that you are reading with an active, questioning mind which is what all good readers do subconsciously when they are reading. Try turning sub headings into questions.

- **Read**  
Now read. You are now reading for a purpose.
- **Review**  
At the end of each section, look away from the book for a few seconds and review the information, taking time to check back on anything you are not sure of.

## 5. Reciprocal questioning or ReQuest

This is another technique to encourage the reader to read with a questioning mind. In this technique the tutor and student take turns at asking the questions.

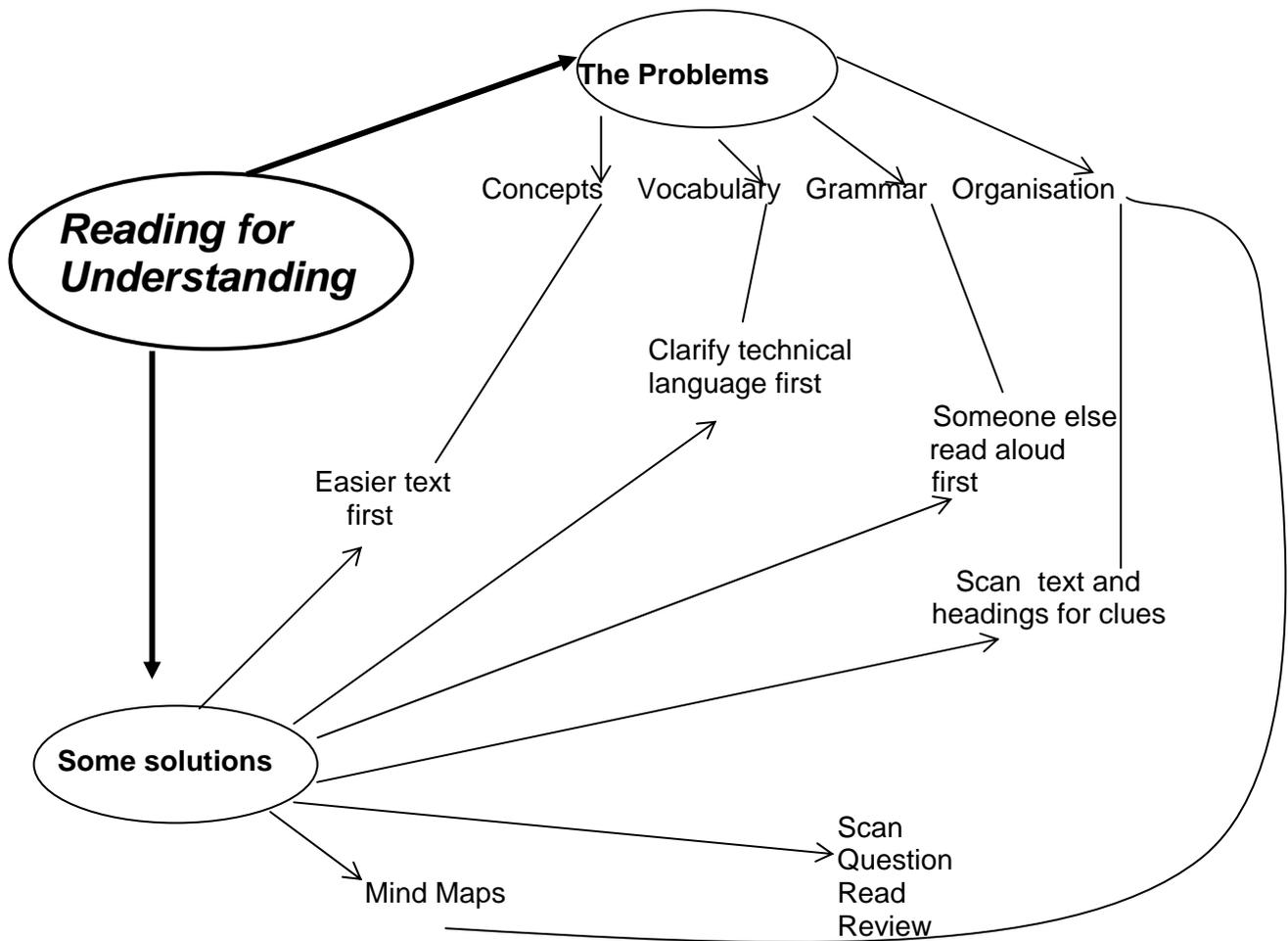
After reading a couple of sentences, the student asks whatever questions occur to them about the material or the vocabulary. They are told to ask the kind of questions a teacher might ask. *What does that mean? ... What does that refer to? ... What's this chapter going to be about?* Answers are not expected at this stage.

The student reads another few sentences and then the tutor takes a turn at asking the questions ... and so on for a few paragraphs.

## 6. Mind mapping

It is difficult to remember things that aren't properly organised in our minds. We understand and remember things best when we have to do something with the information - when we have to make sense of it. Mind mapping will help the reader to do this. 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.

For example, a mind map of this section might look like this:



## 7. 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 they have grasped the central ideas, ask your student to underline or highlight about twenty words in the passage which are crucial to the meaning.

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.

**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
- Possibly a simpler book on the same or similar topic
- Dictionary
- Possibly a tape recorder and audio tape
- Paper and pens
- Blank word cards

## Reading fluency

The activities in this section are designed for students who can recognise or 'sound out' most of the words but who have developed a habit of slow, hesitant, word-by-word reading and as a result, have 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 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 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.

Your aim is to help your student:

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

### Some solutions

#### 1. Reading with your student

Select something that is a little more difficult than your student's independent reading level but something that he or she is interested in or needs to read

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 to 15 minutes for them to get used to the method but it is well worth persevering.

## **2. Read-along**

This is similar to the procedure above except that you make a cassette tape recording of your reading.

Tape your reading of the passage. 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 on the tape. 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.

## **3. 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 tape until they feel they can read it fluently.

Again, some students resist this method because they feel it is cheating, but if they are using some clues from the print to help them remember the material, then the process is very much like real reading.

## **4. 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.

## **5. 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 or ideally, a stop 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. The next page has a blank record sheet for you to use.

## **What materials do you need?**

- Text book, lesson notes etc
- Perhaps an audio tape and tape recorder
- Digital watch or clock

## 100 word per minute record sheet

| Name of passage | Date and time taken |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                 | Date: min : secs    |
|                 | Date: min : secs    |
|                 | Date: min : secs    |
|                 | Date: min : secs    |
|                 | Date: min : secs    |
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|                 | Date: min : secs    |
|                 | Date: min : secs    |

## Writing exam and assignment questions

This section has suggestions for students who may be able to manage everyday personal writing (a personal letter or a note) but have trouble with the particular type of writing required to answer 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:

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



Do not 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

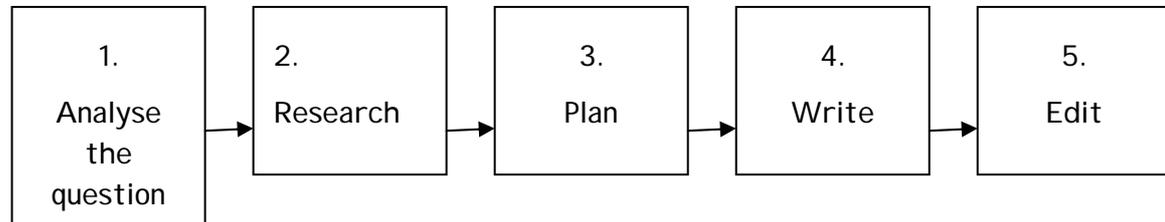
could find other examples of process descriptions in the text book, which could be used as a model. Together you could look for the language features which are listed against the procedure genre in the table below.

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

Genre or text type	Features
<b>Recount</b> (Telling what happened)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ orientation (who, when, where)</li> <li>○ then detail the events, usually time sequenced.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use past tense</li> <li>• Action verbs (went, did, thought ...)</li> <li>• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next ...)</li> <li>• May include personal reactions.</li> </ul>
<b>Procedure</b> (How to do something - eg recipes, instructions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the goal (sometimes just a heading)</li> <li>○ materials (listed)</li> <li>○ method (sequentially in steps).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Verbs are action words and commands usually placed at or near the beginning of the sentence (take, beat, dampen, screw ...)</li> <li>• Usually set out in point form or a series of numbered steps.</li> </ul>
<b>Argument</b> (or point of view) Presents only one side of the case, ie for or against.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid the use of over emotive words</li> <li>• Verbs are mainly simple present tense</li> <li>• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...)</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ statement of the point of view first</li> <li>○ then development of the argument point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts</li> <li>○ restatement of the position at the end.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Discussion</b> (Similar to an argument but presenting two or more points of view)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid the use of over emotive words</li> <li>• Verbs are mainly simple present tense</li> <li>• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...)</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ introduction - states the issue and the points of controversy</li> <li>○ then statement of the argument for, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts</li> <li>○ then argument against, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts</li> <li>○ then conclusion - a recommendation based on the weight of evidence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Explanation</b> (How or why something happens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbs are simple present (or sometimes past) tense</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a general statement</li> <li>○ a sequenced explanation of how or why, usually a series of logical steps in the process, in the order in which they happen</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Linking words to do with time (first, following, finally ...)</li> <li>• Linking words to do with cause and effect relationships (if/then, as a result, since ...)</li> </ul>

## 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 *Analyse the question*, this Section, page 12.

### 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. 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 should 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. This is 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 what they are introducing or what conclusions they are making until the body of the essay has been properly

developed. At this stage it is a waste of time to worry about them. Encourage your student to write 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.

If however, the task is to 'trace the development of ...' the body of the essay will be organised in chronological sequence of events.

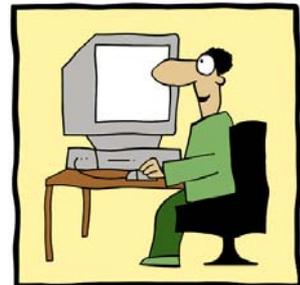
See *Look at model pieces of writing*, this Section, page 13.

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, whether they are included in the final draft or not.

#### 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 trade 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. Don't bother with spelling lists etc. It is not the best way to learn and you won't have time.

## How do we spell?

When we are spelling or learning to spell, we are using three senses:

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 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.

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...?* tell 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, and eventually the 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 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 themselves.
- Ten minutes later, try again.
- At the end of the session, try 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 about spelling, 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 still requires constant monitoring and reminding. Otherwise their job as a learner and yours as a helper will become impossible.

### Now study

Make sure that your student knows how to read in different ways for different purposes so that they don't waste time reading 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 they 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.

### Cloze exercises

A cloze exercise is a passage with a number of words deleted which the student has to guess using the clues given by the rest of the sentence or passage. 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.

### 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

Help your student to make a mind map of material they are trying to memorise. 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. See this Section page 6 for example.

## **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, mix them up and have them 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 for homework that night, 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 they 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 them self 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 on to 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 Reciprocal questioning**

Look at some of the activities in the earlier section *Reading for understanding*, in particular the *Scan ... question ... read ... review* and the *Reciprocal questioning* sections. (p 4, 5)

## **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 notes 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 (*Reciprocal questioning*). 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 and she finishes it during the week.

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

## Lesson 2

Before you look at the draft of Margaret's assignment, 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.)

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? ... How could you have said that differently? ... Do we need a new sentence there?...*

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 *Reciprocal questioning* techniques and reviewing by making notes or mind maps.

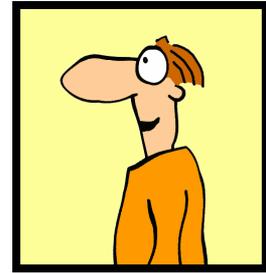
Since her reading is slow and hesitant you ask her to read the same section over and over till she can read it faster and tell her to do this several times during the week (repeated reading).

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

## Case study 1: 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.

You ask him to 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.

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 look over his spelling words

## Some useful references for this section

- *Deadly Bay: Open for Work*, TAFE NSW Access Division, 2001.  
(An interactive CD ROM of literacy/numeracy resource materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the context of 6 training areas: business, horticulture, recreation, seafood, hospitality and tourism)
- Goddard R. & Regan M. *The Value of Time. Numeracy for Workers in Manufacturing*, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1995.
- *Henry Sprays it Safe*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005. (A CD-ROM resource to assist market gardeners to develop language, literacy and numeracy skills for the safe use of chemical sprays.)
- Marr B. Anderson C. and Tout D. *Numeracy on the Line - Language based numeracy activities for adults*, National Automotive Industry Training Board, 1994. (Designed for employees in vehicle manufacturing but with application to any modern workplace.)
- *Overdrive*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005. (A CD ROM resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are working [or are interested in working] in the automotive and repair industry.)
- *Strategies for Success: Developing English Language Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Courses*, Foundation Studies Training Division, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, 1996.  
(Now out of print but available in most TAFE NSW Adult Basic Education sections)

## Websites

- Most universities have useful websites offering study skills advice.





## 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 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.

We are not primarily concerned with handwriting style in this section. By 'writing' we mean getting ideas on paper.

## 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 for pleasure.

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 docketts at work, writing SMS message to mates, writing on greeting cards, letters 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 they are 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.

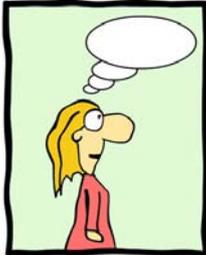
The best way for your student to improve their writing (and reading) is to write often. Their progress will be very slow if they only write once a week when they are with you. They need to write every day.

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 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. *What kind of writing does your student want or need to do?* in Section 5 (page 6) 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 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 often 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

One of the problems with writing is that you can't have your mind on composing and spelling and correct punctuation and neat handwriting all at the same time. When we dash off a postcard to a friend, we have our minds on the composing process because the spelling and punctuation and handwriting have become almost automatic for us.



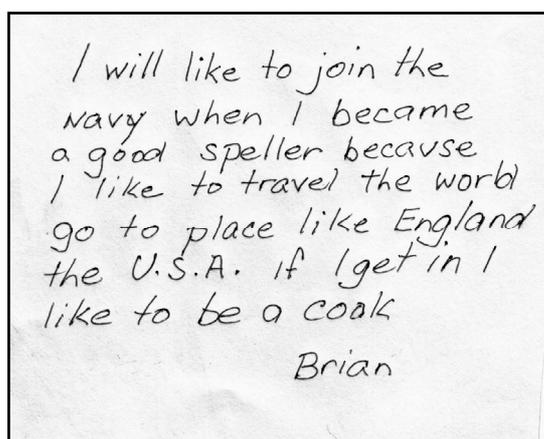
We need to help our students focus on one thing at a time. To start with, you should encourage your student to concentrate on the composing part of the process. In this first step they shouldn't worry about the spelling. Tell them to try to make it up. The first aim is to get them to do a lot of writing 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 tedious and 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 7 *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 because 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 the poor reader, who tries to sound out nearly every word, doesn't understand what they are reading because they are concentrating on letters and sounds, so also the writer who has 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 proof read 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

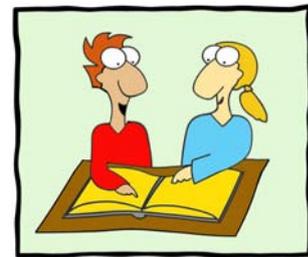
Having done a quick first draft, your student needs to be taught to proofread and correct it. This is a two step procedure: the spelling and punctuation and then the ideas. It is probably best to start by fixing the spelling. Tell your student to put a line under any words they were not sure of or which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

## 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:

- notes to the family
  - messages on greeting cards
  - formal business letters
  - letters to family or friends
  - emails
  - text messages
  - diary or journal writing
  - poetry, short stories
- Work related writing such as:
- invoices
  - end of shift reports
  - accident or incident reports
  - quotations
  - log records
  - instructions
  - memos

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 a postcard to a friend or if we are writing out a recipe. 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 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
<p><b>Recount</b> (telling what happened) This may be the most common type of writing your student does.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A personal letter</li> <li>• Journal entry</li> <li>• End of shift report</li> <li>• Accident report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ orientation (who, when, where)</li> <li>◦ then detail the events, usually time sequenced</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use past tense</li> <li>• Action verbs (went, did, thought ...)</li> <li>• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next ...)</li> <li>• May include personal reactions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Narrative</b> (like a recount but with a twist)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ orientation (who, when, where)</li> <li>◦ then detail the events, which contain one or more twists or complications</li> <li>◦ then conclusion or resolution</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use past tense</li> <li>• Action verbs (went, did, thought ...)</li> <li>• Linking words to do with time (after, then, next ...)</li> <li>• Lots of describing words</li> </ul>
<p><b>Description</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter</li> <li>• Journal entry</li> <li>• Study assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of describing words</li> <li>• Use of comparisons</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procedure</b> (how to do something)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipes</li> <li>• Do-it-yourself instructions</li> <li>• Equipment instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ the goal (sometimes just a heading)</li> <li>◦ materials (listed)</li> <li>◦ method (sequentially in steps).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Verbs are action words and commands usually placed at or near the beginning of the sentence (take, beat, dampen, screw ...)</li> <li>• Usually set out in point form or a series of numbered steps.</li> </ul>

### Some common text types (genres)

<p><b>Argument</b> (or point of view) Presents only one side of the case, ie for or against.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter to the editor</li> <li>• Study assignment</li> <li>• Exam question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid the use of over emotive words</li> <li>• Frequent use of passive voice (The man was hit by the car.)</li> <li>• Verbs are mainly simple present tense</li> <li>• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...)</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ statement of the point of view first</li> <li>○ then development of the argument point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts</li> <li>○ restatement of the position at the end.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Discussion</b> (similar to an argument but presenting two or more points of view)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study assignment</li> <li>• Exam question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid the use of over emotive words</li> <li>• Verbs are mainly simple present tense</li> <li>• Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...)</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ introduction - states the issue and the points of controversy</li> <li>○ then statement of the argument for, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts</li> <li>○ then argument against, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts.</li> <li>○ then conclusion - a recommendation based on the weight of evidence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Explanation</b> (how or why something happens)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study assignment</li> <li>• Exam question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbs are simple present (or sometimes past) tense</li> <li>• Structure usually consists of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a general statement</li> <li>○ a sequenced explanation of how or why, usually a series of logical steps in the process, in the order in which they happen</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Linking words to do with time (first, following, finally ...)</li> <li>• Linking words to do with cause and effect relationships (if/then, as a result, since ...)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social action</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter of complaint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure usually consists of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ statement of events/facts</li> <li>○ statement of results of the problem</li> <li>○ request for it to be fixed. What next?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Avoid the use of over emotive words.</li> </ul>

## 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

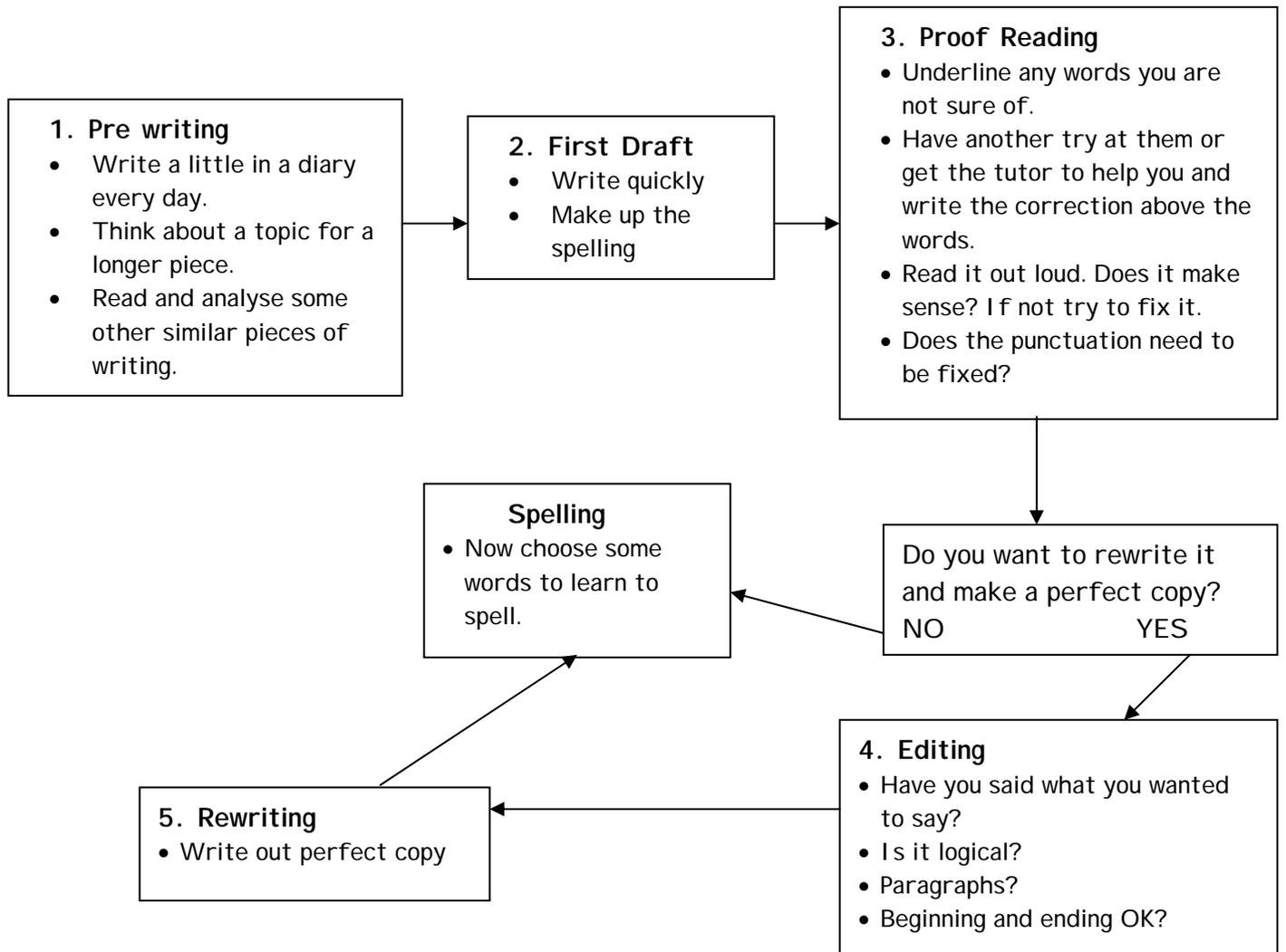
Your student needs to write a letter to the real estate agent to complain about a leaking roof.

1. You look at some similar letters that fall into the social action genre, such as this one:

	5 Bass Rd Punchbowl NSW 1234 15.4.05	← Your address
		← Date
Address of receiver →	Bloggs Real Estate 66 Smith St Punchbowl	
Greeting →	Dear Sir/Madam	
Subject of the letter →	Re: Bellevue Apartments 3 Bass Rd	
	I wish to inform you that in the storm last Friday, a large branch of a tree in the garden of the above property, which you manage, fell into my front garden and knocked down the fence.	
	I rang your office on Monday to ask for it to be fixed but nothing has been done.	← Statement of facts
	The fence looks unsightly and I am worried that it will fall right down.	← Statement of results
	Will you please send someone to cut off the branch and fix the fence as soon as possible.	← Request for action
Signature →	Yours faithfully	
Printed name →	Maria Poulos	

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.

## The writing process



## 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.

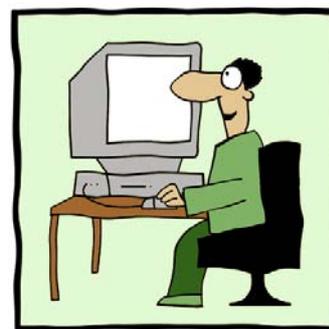
### A diary

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 (See section 9 *Getting started on the computer*) 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 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.

- Write a mini-article about an area of expertise - breeding dogs or fixing cars or growing tomatoes.
- Find a pen-friend to write to, perhaps someone like yourself who is working on improving their writing skills.

## **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)

# 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.

## 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 on which we are now going to focus.

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	mission	sugar	fuschia
ocean	shoe	nation	

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

nature	nation	national	nativity
--------	--------	----------	----------

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 *ʃh* sound is spelt *ʃh* 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 *hwȳ*. 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 80% 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*) or *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.

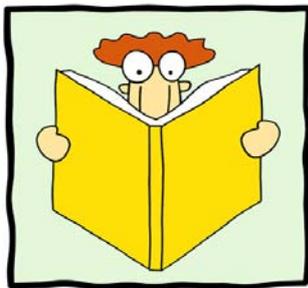
It will help your student if you model this *How do I spell ...?* behaviour for them frequently. Admit that you are not sure about a word and use the dictionary often.

## Learning to spell

When we are spelling or learning to spell, we are using three senses:

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 something like *wor<sup>h</sup>kt*. 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.

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



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



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



**FEEL** the flow of it as you write it



**THINK** about the difficult bit  
Why did you get it wrong?  
How can you remember it?

## 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 student first proof reads 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 lower case letters.
- 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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 real 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.



## 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.
- 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:

par/i/a/ment

Wed/nes/day

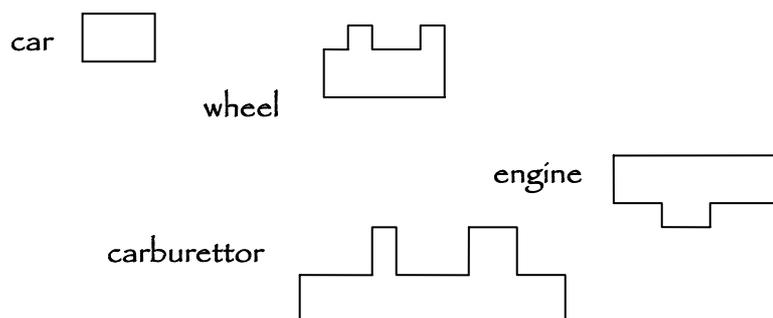
lib/ra/ry

- **Colour** aids the visual memory. Try writing the word with the problem bit in red.

embarr**ass**ment

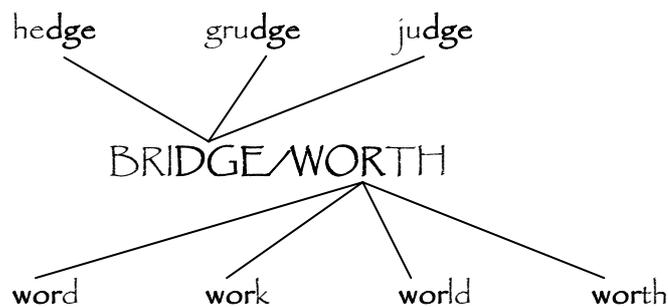
Feb**ru**ary

- 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**. You might start by getting the student to draw the outline shapes, taking into account the letters that go below the line and those that go above. 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.
- 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?

necessary

neccessary

necesary

necessary

You could remember that it is necessary to have one *C*ollar and two *S*ocks. That is, one *C* and two *S*'s.



Which is correct?            e**mb**arrassment  
   e**mb**arrassment  
   e**mb**arrasment  
   e**mb**arrassment

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

Which is the correct spelling?      p**ie**ce  
  p**ei**ce  
  p**ea**ce

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**.

F**e**b\_uary

F**e**brua\_y

F\_bruary

F**e**br\_ary

F**e**\_ruary

F**e**bru\_ry

- 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?

medecine or medicine

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*.

Sometimes parts of words carry their own meaning. 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 dishes*. 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 *twín*, *twíce*, *twenty*, *twélve*, 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 similar 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 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

trans-

un-

pre-

re-

anti-

### Endings

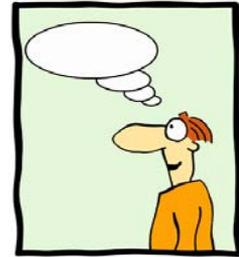
-ion

-ation

-able

-er

-ly



- 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.

- You can create a **crossword puzzle** to practise spelling words. A free internet site can be found at [www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com/create.html](http://www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com/create.html). You can create your own crossword and print it.
- 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*. Your student may, however 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*) There are a number of books with lists of spelling rules and spelling patterns which you can use as a reference. See the reference list at the end of this section. Select patterns for attention as they arise in your student's writing rather than working systematically through a book.

## Using a dictionary

Your student needs 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 drill 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. (See the reference list.)

## 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

## 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. mate, here, ripe, rope, tube

**Short vowel sound** – mat, met, rip, top, tub

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 anagram.)

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. í before e (piece, quiet) except after c (receive, ceiling) or when it sounds like long a (reign, weight)
6. The sound í 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

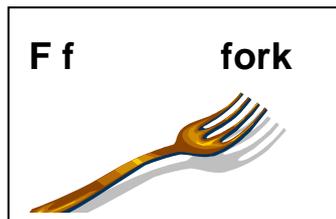
You should print when you are writing for your student. If you are not sure of the right way to form some of the letters, check the alphabet chart on the following page.

## The beginning reader/writer

The beginning reader/writer should be taught to print rather than to attempt running writing.

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 prop. You can build up a word book or personal dictionary this way 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. For example, 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. Most bookshops sell cheap handwriting books written for children. There are a number of different styles and the style used in schools in each state is different. For example, the style used in NSW is called Foundation Style.

<b>A a</b>	<b>B b</b>	<b>C c</b>	<b>D d</b>
<b>E e</b>	<b>F f</b>	<b>G g</b>	<b>H h</b>
<b>I i</b>	<b>J j</b>	<b>K k</b>	<b>L l</b>
<b>M m</b>	<b>N n</b>	<b>O o</b>	<b>P p</b>
<b>Q q</b>	<b>R r</b>	<b>S s</b>	<b>T t</b>
<b>U u</b>	<b>V v</b>	<b>W w</b>	<b>Y y</b>
<b>Z z</b>			

## Useful references for this section

- Barnard B. Kerr J. & Wilson L. *Writing Skills*, AMES NSW, 1997.
- Bossard P. Holloway J. & Mackey J. *To Write ... Too Right!* Canberra Institute of Technology, 1997.  
Ideas for writing and some brief useful information about punctuation, grammar and spelling. Takes a genre approach to writing. A good self-help book for the post-beginner student.
- Collins G. & Shore C. *Adult Spelling*, Books 1, 2 & 3, Jillicoe, 1997.  
Lots of exercises. Book 1 at a useful level for beginner reader/writer.
- Hague M. & Harris C. *Spelling Works*, Heinemann, 1996.  
Self help ideas. Assumes the student has some sound/letter knowledge.
- Mullen D. *Numbers and Letters Workbook (It's Over to You series)*, NCELTR, 2005.  
Provides extensive practice in writing and speaking the alphabet and numbers.
- Sadler B. *Spelling Matters*, The Jacaranda Press, 1981.  
Now out of print but possibly available at libraries. An excellent source of stories about the history of the language and some exercises on spelling rules etc.
- Tucker E. *Spelling Essentials - A Handbook of English Spelling Rules and Definitions*, RIC Publications, 2003.  
A useful reference for tutors.
- *The Macquarie Spellers Friend*, The Macquarie Library, 2001.  
A useful spelling dictionary.

## Websites

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



The information in this section is adapted from: 'Practical ideas for teachers of students with disabilities', NSW TAFE Commission, 1998.

## What's in this section?

- Visually impaired students
- Hearing impaired students
- Students with an intellectual disability
- Students with a learning 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 extremely capable people have just never got the hang of reading and writing for a variety of reasons.

However, 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 sheltered accommodation then it is possible that they have a disability which will effect their literacy development.



Even if your student does have a disability, most of the strategies suggested elsewhere in this resource will be appropriate. However, there may be a number of other issues which you should be aware of. 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.

## Visually impaired students

- Ask your student what's the best position 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.

- 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

### Appropriateness of material

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 and needs. Do they need help shopping or cooking? Start with those areas.

### 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. That is, 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.

## Make use of the concrete and visual

Because your student will 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 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 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 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 a week than a long list which will undoubtedly be forgotten.

## Direct teaching

Some of the teaching/learning strategies suggested in this resource 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 sounds/letters in the words (still using whole language in context.)

## 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.

Because concentration will be difficult, you will need to provide short periods of learning, with breaks and an opportunity for a stretch. Where possible, establish a routine for this also. *First we revise what we did last week and do some reading ... then a short break ... then some writing ... and a short break ... and some spelling ... etc.*

## Distraction-free environment

A student with an intellectual disability will usually be more easily distracted for a number of reasons. They will also probably 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.

## 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. You should praise much more often than you correct. If you find you are correcting the student often, then the task is too difficult.

## **Students with a learning disability**

The term 'learning disability' is used to describe people who have problems processing information or who learn differently from the norm. People who have been diagnosed with dyslexia fall into this category. However, do not assume that your student necessarily has some sort of learning disability even though they may have been 'diagnosed' with dyslexia. The problem has very often arisen from educational issues in childhood such as moving schools often, illness, undiagnosed hearing problems etc.

However it is important that students who have a learning disability realise that they can learn to read and write just as well as anyone else – it may just take a little longer. As the tutor, it is also important that you help your student identify their learning strengths and weaknesses. These are sometimes called learning styles. Are they auditory or visual learners? You can then use the strengths to work on the weaknesses.

### **Make use of the concrete and visual**

It is likely however, 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.

You may also have to deal with a self concept which tells your student that they can't do this reading and writing stuff because they have dyslexia. Lots of praise and encouragement and early success are needed.

## **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.

### **Avoid abstract concepts**

Such students may present with a range of learning issues, depending on the region of the brain that is affected. For example, they 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. That is, 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. You may also need to provide some short breaks between learning activities.

## **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.

## **Medication**

The first one is medication which 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 best 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.

## **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?
- Useful references for this section

## 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 resource are appropriate for helping them learn to read and write (National Reporting System Level 1 for Speaking and Listening).

You should note however, that this resource has been written to help you tutor a student in adult literacy. It is not designed to offer strategies for English language teaching.

If English is not your student's first language, they will experience some degree of additional complication in learning to read and write, which native English speakers may not. This section deals very briefly with some of those aspects.

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.

If you need to help someone to develop or improve their speaking and listening skills, see the end of this section for further references and referral information.

A second language learner will bring a whole range of factors to the literacy learning situations which do not necessarily apply to the native speaker.

## 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 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, is the script Roman (like English)? If not, then one of the early tasks is to teach them to recognise and form the letters of the 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 an 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 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.

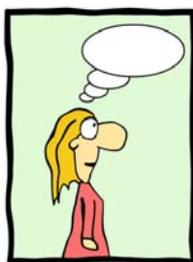
If they are new to the Roman script, attention must be paid to forming the letters. If they are not literate in their first language, the fine muscle control necessary to hold a pen correctly needs to be learnt.

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 *shíp* 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 (and provide 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 acceptable English grammar. For example, if your student says, *Yesterday I move to new flat*. You could reply *Oh, you moved 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.

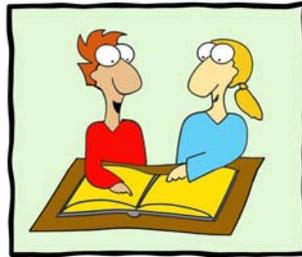
The only exception to this 'gently, gently' approach is if you are helping your student with an authentic piece of writing for someone else to read, for example a formal business letter or a model of a letter for school. In these circumstances you help produce a whole text with acceptable English grammar.

## 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 looking up the telephone book to find the phone number to call, practising the vocabulary and phrases necessary to make the phone call, or writing a model letter requesting information.



## ***Some Useful References***

NSW AMES publishes a range of very good materials. Their catalogue is available online at [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au) or by writing to:

PO Box 1222

Darlinghurst

NSW 1300

Ph: (02) 9289 9255

The following are some suggestions from their catalogue:

- Christie J. *The Literacy Workbook for Beginners*, AMES NSW, 2005.
- Duffy J. & Graham J. *Shopping Words*, AMES NSW, 2006.
- Barnard B. Kerr J. & Wilson L. *Writing Skills*, NSW AMES, 1997.

The following is particularly useful for the beginning reader/writer:

- Mullen D. *Numbers and Letters Workbook, (It's Over to You series)*, NCELTR, 2005. (Not available as part of the *It's Over to You* materials on the Department of Immigration website)
- *Australia Has No Winter* (Video ) Video Education Australasia, 1999.  
<http://www.vea.com.au/index/index.html>
- O'Sullivan K. *Understanding Ways*, Hale & Ironmonger, 1994.

## **Further information for language tutoring**

If you would like more information about being a language tutor for someone from a non-English speaking background, you might like to contact one of the organizations below for details of their tutor training programs:

[www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au) (all states)

<https://tafeqld.edu.au/courses/18350/volunteer-tutor-training> (Queensland)





## What's in this section?

- Determining your student's numeracy needs
- A few general principles
- Rules for writing numbers
- Addition
- Subtraction
- Multiplication
- Division
- Fractions
- Percentages
- Estimation
- Calculator
- Weights and measurement
- Useful references for this section

## Who is this section for?

Most tutors won't have to worry very much about helping their students with numeracy as most adult literacy students can manage their everyday numeracy tasks well enough. Some however, will ask for some help with calculating change, measuring, etc or they may not understand the concepts involved in everyday mathematical language such as *percentage*, *ratio*, *average* or *fraction*.

This section will give some ideas to help students with everyday numeracy tasks, but it will not offer suggestions 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 very basic, everyday numeracy concepts.

The list of websites and other references at the end of this section will help you if your student wants to tackle more complicated maths.

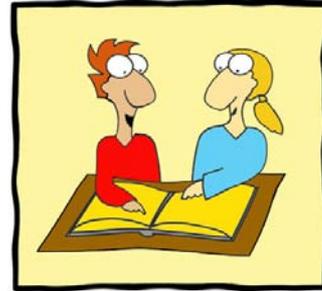
## Determining your student's numeracy needs

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 since. As with literacy, many students' numeracy skills are often better than they think. 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).

Find out what your student's immediate needs are. Don't test; just ask about the areas they are not confident with. For example:

- recognising numbers and counting
- addition and subtraction
- multiplication and simple division
- simple fractions
- the concept of percentages
- calculating change
- measuring and weighing
- time
- the calculator
- estimation



## A few general principles

- 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 test or review something, make sure it has been well learnt and practised first.

For this reason practice ... practice ... practice is important. Something understood today may well be forgotten tomorrow if it is not practised and reviewed often.

- In the main, you will be helping the student to develop an understanding of the way in which numbers 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 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).
- Where possible, 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. *What is the significance of -00.00cr (against Payments received)? ... 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 the next few 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, 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.

## Rules for writing numbers

From 'No nonsense numeracy', CD ROM, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Centre, 2005

### Decimal point

In Australia and in most English speaking countries we use a period (27.36) rather than a comma (27,36) as the decimal marker. The use of a comma is common practice in many non-English speaking metric countries. Start all values less than one with a zero, eg 0.5.

### Thousand marker

Use a space, never a comma, as a thousand marker, eg 532 137. With four digit numbers, the space is optional, eg 1376 or 1 376. As stated above, the comma is used widely in many metric countries as a decimal marker. The comma was approved for use in Australia when the country adopted the metric system but it found little support. By 1979, the decimal point was accepted as the standard decimal marker in Australia. However, there is some justification for using the comma as a thousand marker in money transactions because a space provides an opportunity for fraudulent entry of an extra figure.

3 456 789

\$567,678.95

### Spacing

Leave a space between numbers and symbols, eg 17 kg not 17kg, and between the parts of symbols for compound names, eg kW h. However, leave no space between a numerical prefix and symbol, eg kg, mm, not k g, m m.

36 km

26 kW h



The following activities give some models of strategies which you could use. Use these models to develop activities which are relevant to your student's needs, interests and experience.

## 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 number facts.

### 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:

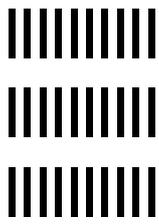
$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ +3 \\ \hline =7 \end{array}$$

- Plenty of practice with 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 an 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
		

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

- When adding a column of numbers:

<p>Numbers carried over must be added in</p>	$  \begin{array}{r}  213 + \\  423 \\  42 \\  \hline  1,69 \\  847  \end{array}  $	<p>← All the numbers must be kept in columns, in a straight line from the right</p>
--	--	---

## Subtraction

- Work in a similar way to the suggestions for addition.
- There are several pen and paper methods of doing subtractions. The method shown below is called 'regrouping' and is the most common method taught in schools today as it is the easiest to understand.

In the example below, we're taking 418 from 523. Start with the units column on the right. The 8 is bigger than the 3 so we need to take one ten from the tens column (the middle one) and add it to the 3 to make 13. That means there's only one ten left in the tens column and the 2 becomes a 1. You can now take 8 from 13 (and then finish the sum).



$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 5 \ 2 \ 3 - \\ \underline{4 \ 1 \ 8} \\ 1 \ 0 \ 5 \end{array}$$

## 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 \$4, 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 student to use, or visualise, some concrete objects as they do them.
- When you get to problems which involve 'carrying' it is helpful to use objects such as drinking straws as in the example above for addition.

For example:

	Tens	Units
14	 	

14 x 4 = 4 lots of 14	 	

We now have 16 straws in the units column, so we can make another bundle of 10 and move it to the tens column. Do this with pen and paper as well.

	Tens	Units
= 56	 	

- 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

<b>X</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2</b>	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24
<b>3</b>	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36
<b>4</b>	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48
<b>5</b>	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
<b>6</b>	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60	66	72
<b>7</b>	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84
<b>8</b>	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80	88	96
<b>9</b>	9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	90	99	108
<b>10</b>	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120
<b>11</b>	11	22	33	44	55	66	77	88	99	110	121	132
<b>12</b>	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 inverse (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.*

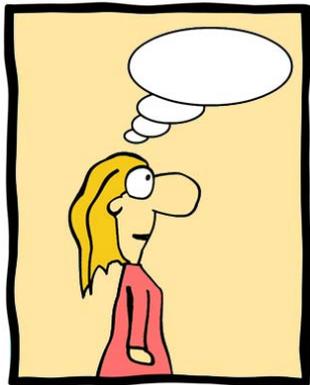
*How many does each person get?*

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 pens shared among 4 children 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 eighths, thirds, fifths etc.
- Show the student how these fractions are written ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  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 eighths 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:

$$\frac{2}{4} = \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\frac{4}{8} = \frac{1}{2}$$

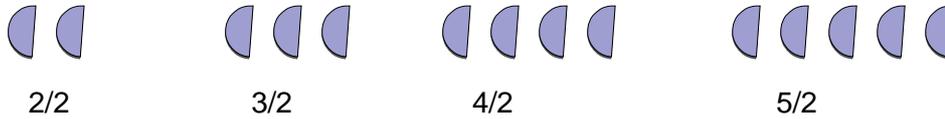
$$\frac{2}{6} = \frac{1}{3}$$

Explain that we usually refer to one half rather than four eighths, etc. If we have equal fractions, we usually refer to the one with the smallest number at the bottom.

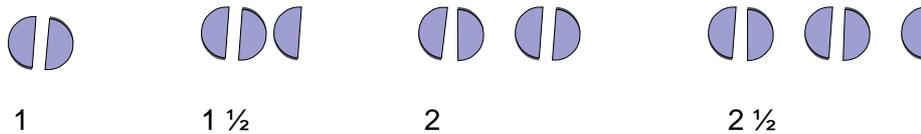
## Improper fractions

(whole numbers and fractions, eg  $1\frac{1}{2}$ )

- Cut several circles in halves and lay them out as:



- Imagine they are halves of a pizza and arrange them like this:



- Draw the student's attention to fractions such as  $\frac{4}{4}$ ,  $\frac{2}{2}$ .

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 unless the student tries to work it out independently. It is important that they can visualise what the fractions are and make sense of them that way.

## Everyday problems

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 they only have 3 eggs, how much of the other ingredients would they use?

## Time

Look at a clock face (not digital):

*How many minutes are in  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour?*

*How many minutes are in  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour?*

*What fraction of an hour is 20 minutes?*

*You leave home at 8 o'clock. It takes you half an hour in the train and a quarter of an hour walk. What time do you get to work?*

## Money

George takes home \$300 per week. He pays \$100 rent. *What fraction of his pay is this?*

He spends  $\frac{1}{6}$  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?*

$\frac{1}{10}$  of his pay is spent on car expenses. *How much is this?*

### **Petrol gauge**

The petrol tank in your car holds 40 litres. *How much petrol will you have in the tank when it is showing half full? When it is showing a quarter full?*

You go out with a full tank and use a quarter of the tank. You go out again and use 10 litres. *What fraction is left?*

# 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.*  
*The 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:  
3% of 500 = ?  
1% of 500 = 5       $3 \times 5 = 15$       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.

### Examples of percentages in everyday activities

Make sure your student can do simple number operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) or can use a calculator to perform these operations.

- You lay-by a pair of shoes that cost \$90. You have to leave 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 \$600 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 cash with us 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).
- The usual process of estimating involves rounding off. Show your student how to round up or down to the nearest 10 or 100. For example, if three items in the supermarket cost:

<b>\$3.15</b>	this is closer to 3.00 than 4.00 so we <b>round down</b> to	3.00
<b>\$7.85</b>	this is closer to 8.00 than 7.00 so we <b>round up</b> to	8.00
<b>\$4.65</b>	this is closer to 5.00 than to 4.00 so we <b>round up</b> to	<u>5.00</u>
		\$16.00

We know our items will cost about \$16.

# 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, but you have to understand the maths involved in what you are doing before you can use a calculator. You have to know what to tell it to do. It just does the hack work.
- Most everyday uses for a calculator are best performed with simple calculators that have the four operations plus %,  $\sqrt{\quad}$  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.
- Finding a percentage of a given total is a useful and simple operation.
- To find 25% of \$36:

Press **AC** then  $\textcircled{3}$   $\textcircled{6}$   $\textcircled{\times}$   $\textcircled{2}$   $\textcircled{5}$  %

Note that you enter the total number first and then the percentage number and you don't press the = key to get the total, you press the % key.

## 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.

- 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

Then measure them.

- 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

## 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?

$$1000 \text{ mg} = 1 \text{ gram} \quad 1000 \text{ g} = 1 \text{ kg} \quad 1000 \text{ kg} = 1 \text{ tonne}$$

(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 3 aspirin or 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
- Now give your student practice in estimating the weight of some objects in the room etc.

## Liquid volume

- Using a measuring jug, ask your student to estimate how many millilitres in a litre.

$$1000 \text{ mL} = 1 \text{ litre}$$

$$1000 \text{ L} = 1 \text{ kilolitre}$$

(Remember, *milli-* means thousandth, *kilo-* means thousand)

- Using this information, ask your student to explain what the words *millilitre* and *kilolitre* mean.
- 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
- Now give your student practice in estimating the volume of some containers or products in the kitchen etc.

## Some useful references for this section

- Goddard R. & Regan M. *The Value of Time: Numeracy for Workers in Manufacturing*, CAE, Melbourne, 1995.<sup>1</sup>
- Goddard R. Marr B. & Martin J. *Strength in Numbers*, ARIS, 1997.<sup>1</sup>
- Lukin A. & Ross L. *The Numeracy Handbook*, NSW AMES 1997.<sup>2</sup>
- Marr B, Anderson C and Tout D, *Numeracy on the Line - Language based numeracy activities for adults*, National Automotive Industry Training Board, 1994.<sup>1</sup> (Designed for employees in vehicle manufacturing but with application to any modern workplace.)
- Marr R. & Helme S. (eds) *Mathematics: A New Beginning*, State Training Board, Victoria, 1987.<sup>1</sup>
- Ross L. *The Numeracy Workbook*, NSW AMES, 1997.<sup>2</sup>
- Shank M and Grove M, *Survival Maths*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Australia, 1988.  
Titles include: Around the Home; Food Shopping; Money; On the Job
- Tout D, *Car Costs II: A numeracy workbook*, CAE Melbourne, 2006.<sup>1</sup>
- *No Nonsense Numeracy*, CD Rom, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Centre, 2005.<sup>3</sup>

Available from:

1. AMES NSW: [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)  
PO Box 1222  
Darlinghurst  
NSW 1300,  
Ph (02) 9289 9255
2. TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Centre  
PO Box 357  
Granville NSW 2142  
Ph: (02) 9846 8101

## Websites

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

[www.aaamath.com](http://www.aaamath.com) Includes some very basic practice activities including activities relevant to NESB learners.

[www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au) Click on *AMES Shop* and *Money! Money!* then scroll down to free downloadable activities.



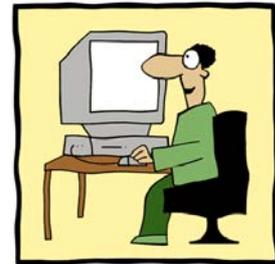


## Who is this section for?

If your student wants to use the computer to help develop their literacy skills, then this section will offer you some guidelines to help them get started. You don't need to be a whiz on the computer yourself. You just need some basic word processing 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 using a mobile phone, sending SMS text messages or using an automatic teller machine.



Using the computer can also be an important skill to develop and can be an invaluable tool in helping to develop literacy. 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.

You don't need to be a computer whiz to help someone else get started. Some basic word processing skills are all that you need. In fact, if it is a voyage of discovery for both of you, students may feel less intimidated if they feel that you are both learning together.

Remember, using the computer 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.

## Word processing

This section has been adapted from *First Click for Adult Literacy Students*, WA Department of Education & Training, 2000.

### Some advantages to writing on the computer:

- 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 handwritten 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 turning the computer on and off 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.

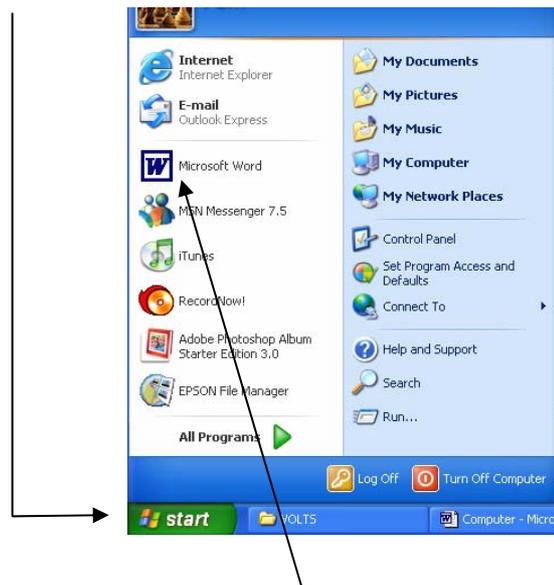
Students who have access to a computer to practise on during the week will probably need some written instructions or reminders to take with them. The instructions which accompany most computer programs are usually very wordy so you may find your student responds better to brief instructions which you 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 then Print. You can then 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.

## 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 wiggly 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.

## 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. 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 ... You may want to discuss the concept of information overload and that not all that is published on the web is necessarily reliable.

Most websites or manuals to help you find your way around the internet are very wordy. However, your student may find the following useful:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/> . Click on 'Webwise' at the bottom of the home page.

Using email can provide excellent writing practice for your student. 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.

Hotmail and Yahoo offer a free email service. Register at [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com) or [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

## Computer based literacy programs

There are a number of websites and CD-ROMs which have been developed to teach reading and writing and numeracy. Some of these are listed in the Useful References section at the end of this resource.

If you or your student become aware of any others that you think may be useful, there are a number of criteria you could use to evaluate them:

### 1. 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 ...*)

**2. 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.

CD ROMs with sound effects, narration etc can support the student with additional clues and reduce the reliance on text-based instructions.

**3. 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?

**4. Does it provide good feedback?**

Does the feedback provide good, positive reinforcement that is adult-oriented and constructive?

**5. 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.

**6. 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 CD ROMs or websites teaching skills related to a range of specific occupational fields.

## Some useful references for this section

- Hajncl L. and Livingstone J. *Getting Started in Word*, Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES), Melbourne, 2001.

This is a thorough and accessible introduction to Word 2000.

Available from: AMES [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)

GPO Box 4381QQ

Melbourne

Victoria 3001

Ph: (03) 9926 4600

- Hazell P. *Untangling the Web*, AMES NSW, 2005.

Contains very accessible information about using the internet.

Available from: AMES [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)

PO Box 1222

Darlinghurst

NSW 1300

Ph: (02) 9289 9255.



In this resource, the following words are used to mean:

<b>Cues</b>	The clues we get from the meaning, grammar, letters/sounds and/or context when we are reading.
<b>Dyslexia</b>	Literally means a disorder of the ability to read. Usually used to suggest a specific learning disability or problems with the processing of print.
<b>Cloze</b>	(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.
<b>Cluster analysis</b>	A technique for teaching the correspondence between clusters of letters (rather than one letter at a time) and sounds.
<b>Consonant</b>	Any letter in the alphabet which is not a vowel.
<b>Estimation</b>	A process that gives a rough idea of the answer to a problem, or checks the reasonableness of an answer.
<b>Genre</b>	Text type, as defined by the purpose and language features of the text. Eg a story or a description or a procedure.
<b>Language experience approach</b>	A teaching/learning strategy in which the student's real experiences and language are used to produce reading material or learn-to read material.
<b>Mind map</b>	A diagram of a reader's understanding of a passage.
<b>Non-English speaking background</b>	People whose first language is not English. That is, they learnt to speak English either later in childhood or as an adult.
<b>Prediction</b>	A reading strategy in which the reader uses clues in reading to anticipate a word, sound, phrase or development of ideas.
<b>Prose</b>	The ordinary form of written language using whole sentences, as distinct from verse or word lists, signs etc.
<b>Read-along</b>	The student reads along with the tutor, either 'live' or with a cassette tape recording.
<b>Repeated reading</b>	The student reads and re-reads a passage many times until they can read it fluently.

<b>Review</b>	Think back over something; draw it back to memory and try to make sense of it or organise it in your mind.
<b>Scan</b>	Read quickly and superficially to find particular items of information.
<b>Skim</b>	Read quickly to get the main ideas.
<b>Syllable</b>	Each push of breath in a spoken word is one syllable. Each syllable has only one vowel sound.
<b>Text</b>	Any piece of writing; fiction or non-fiction, even just a word or two, in context.
<b>Vocational student</b>	A student who is enrolled in any post-school, employment oriented course.
<b>Vowel</b>	The letters a, e, í, o, u and sometimes y.
<b>Word attack</b>	The strategies a reader uses in attempting to read an unknown word.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Words and their meanings.



- Barnard B. Kerr J. and Wilson L, *Writing Skills*, AMES NSW, 1997. <sup>1</sup>
- Bossard P. Holloway J. and Mackey J. *To Write...Too Right!* Canberra Institute of Technology, 1997. <sup>2</sup>
- Christie J. *The Literacy Workbook for Beginners*, AMES, 2005.<sup>1</sup>
- Collins G. and Shore C. *Adult Spelling - Books 1, 2 & 3* Jilloc, 1997.
- Duffy J. Graham J. *Shopping Words*, AMES NSW, 2006.<sup>1</sup>
- *First Click for Adult Literacy Students, Read Write Now*, WA Dept Education and Training, 2000. <sup>6</sup>
- *Gobsmackers* - true stories written for adult beginning readers. Community Adult Literacy Foundation, WA, 2006. <sup>6</sup>
- Goddard R, Marr B. and Martin J. *Strength in Numbers*, EMC of ACFE & ARIS, 1997. <sup>2</sup>
- Goddard R. and Regan M. *The Value of Time. Numeracy for Workers in Manufacturing*, CAE Melbourne, 1995.<sup>2</sup>
- Hague M and Harris C. *Spelling Works*, Heinemann, 1996.
- Hajncl L. and Livingstone J. *Getting Started in Word*, Adult Multicultural Education Services, Melbourne, 2001. <sup>3</sup>
- Hazell P. *Untangling the Web*, AMES NSW , 2005. <sup>1</sup>
- *Little bit by little bit... that's the way we learn*, Batchelor Press, NT  
For beginner learners in remote Aboriginal and TSI communities.  
Available from: Batchelor Press, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education,  
PO Batchelor NT 0845
- Lukin A. and Ross L. *The Numeracy Handbook*, NSW AMES, 1997. <sup>1</sup>
- Marr B. Anderson C. Tout D. *Numeracy on the Line - Language based numeracy activities for adults*, National Automotive Industry Training Board, 1994. (Designed for employees in vehicle manufacturing but with application to any modern workplace.) <sup>2</sup>
- Marr R. & Helme S. (eds) *Mathematics: A New Beginning*, State Training Board, Victoria, 1987. <sup>2</sup>

- Mullen D. *Numbers and Letters Workbook, (It's Over to You series)* NCELTR, 2005.<sup>5</sup>
- *Read Write Now!* WA Dept Education and Training, 2000.<sup>6</sup>  
(Set of tutor training handbooks used in Read Write Now! program)
- Ross L. *The Numeracy Workbook*, NSW AMES, 1997.<sup>1</sup>
- Sadler B. *Spelling Matters*, The Jacaranda Press, 1981.
- Shank M. and Grove M. *Survival Maths* (Around the Home, Food Shopping, Money, On the Job), Hawker Brownlow Education, Australia, 1988.
- *Strategies for Success: Developing English Language Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Courses*, Foundation Studies Training Division, WSI TAFE, 1996.
- *The Macquarie Spellers Friend*, The Macquarie Library, 2001.
- Thomson M. *Understanding English Spelling*, Temco Publ, 2004.
- Tucker E. *Spelling Essentials -A Handbook of English Spelling Rules and Definitions*, RIC Publications, 2003.

## **CD ROMs**

- *Deadly Bay: Open for Work*, TAFE NSW Access Division, 2001.<sup>4</sup>  
(Literacy/Numeracy resource materials for Aboriginal and TSI young people, in context of 6 training areas: business, horticulture, recreation, seafood, hospitality and tourism)
- *Henry Sprays it Safe*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005.<sup>4</sup>  
(A resource to assist market gardeners to develop language, literacy and numeracy skills for the safe use of chemical sprays.)
- *No Nonsense Numeracy*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division 2005.<sup>4</sup>
- *Overdrive*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division , 2005.<sup>4</sup>  
(A resource for Aboriginal and TSI people who are working [or are interested in working] in the automotive and repair industry.)
- Verrall S. *Roadlaw Tutorial - Driver's Learners Permits Made Easy*, CoastTrain Enterprises, Bega. Available from: PO Box 332 Bega NSW 2552  
Ph 02 6492 3444. One for each state.

***Some resources available from:***

1. AMES NSW [www.ames.net.au](http://www.ames.net.au)  
PO Box 1222  
Darlinghurst  
NSW 1300  
Ph (02) 9289 9255.

**Specialist language/literacy bookshops in the following capital cities:**

- NSW (Sydney):  
Bridge Books  
10 Grafton St  
Chippendale  
NSW 2008.  
Telephone: (02) 9211 1660 or e-mail [books@elt.com.au](mailto:books@elt.com.au)  
They do credit card and e-mail orders.
- QLD (Brisbane):  
The Language People  
245 Boundary St  
West End  
Qld 4101.  
Telephone (07) 3844 8700 or e-mail [langpeop@dovenetq.net.au](mailto:langpeop@dovenetq.net.au)
- QLD (Brisbane):  
The American Bookstore  
197 Elizabeth St  
Brisbane  
Qld 4000  
Tel: (07) 3229 4677  
FREECALL number for Qld residents outside Brisbane: 1800 177 395  
Email : [info@americanbookstore.com.au](mailto:info@americanbookstore.com.au)
- VIC (Melbourne):  
Bookery  
248 Drummond St  
Carlton  
Vic 3053.  
Telephone: (03) 9347 7857
- WA (Perth)  
The Language Centre Bookshop  
The Old Post Office,  
115 Brisbane St  
Perth  
WA 6000  
Telephone: (08) 9328 8965

## **Websites**

- [www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise)  
An excellent interactive site, written for adults with exercises in grammar, spelling, reading, writing, listening and vocabulary and numeracy.
- <https://www.qcal.org.au/tutor-tips/>  
Queensland Council for Adult Literacy site offers excellent downloadable suggestions for tutors on a range of LLN topics

Most universities have useful websites offering study skills advice.

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- Derewianka B. *Exploring How Texts Work*, Primary English Teaching Association, Sydney, 1998.
- *First Click for Adult Literacy Students*, WA Dept Education and Training, 2000.
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- Hammond J. Burns A. Joyce H. Brosnan D. and Gerot L. *English for Social Purposes*, NCELTR, Macquarie University, 1992.
- Jones HA. and Charnley A H. *Adult Literacy: A Study of its Impact*, National Institute of Education, Leicester, 1978.
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- No Nonsense Numeracy, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005.
- Osmond P. *So You Want to Teach an Adult to Read?*, E Carroll, 1984.
- *Practical Ideas for Students with Disabilities*, NSW TAFE Commission, 1998.
- *Read Write Now!*, WA Dept Education & Training, 2000.
- *Teaching Young People in VET*, (CD-ROM) TAFE NSW Access Division, 2002.



# LITERACY FACE TO FACE

A RESOURCE FOR VOLUNTEER ADULT LITERACY TUTORS

*Literacy Face to Face* is a resource 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.

This resource has been developed by Pamela Osmond, author of *So you want to teach an adult to read (1985)*, and draws on her wide experience in the field of adult literacy and volunteer adult literacy tutor training.



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