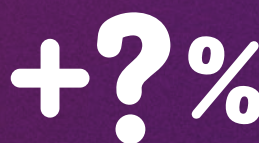
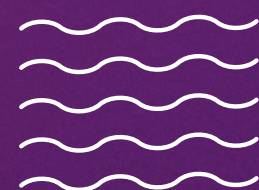


Preparing learning materials

A guide for literacy and numeracy tutors



About this guide

This guide is written for adult literacy and numeracy tutors. It gives guidelines and practical ideas for creating, writing and design of learning materials for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy work. It is an updated version of an earlier guide.

We have also developed an online training course on this topic for tutors. You can find this course at www.learnwithnala.ie

We hope this guide will help you to:

- Understand the purpose and context for developing learning materials
- Explore the types of learning materials and how best to use them
- Be able to design relevant and engaging materials for students
- Design and format learning materials using plain English guidelines

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Introduction

This guide is for tutors to offer guidelines and practical ideas and suggestions to help you create, write and design learning materials for adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills work.

Learning materials can take many forms. They can include:

- worksheets and exercises;
- texts such as books, magazines;
- everyday material such as newspapers, forms, bills, letters;
- audio such as interviews and podcasts;
- online material and digital text like websites, videos and WhatsApp messages;
- environmental texts such as signs, posters and street names.

There are five sections in the guide

- Section 1** looks at the context for developing materials.
- Section 2** looks at how to plan and write learning materials.
- Section 3** focuses on the design and formatting of learning materials.
- Section 4** gives you tips on how to use learning materials.
- Section 5** has some useful sample worksheets and other resources

We wish to thank:

- Derek Rowntree's book 'Preparing Materials for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning' for his ideas on activities and ways of engaging learners with materials.
- New to ESOL Guidance resources published on the Excellence Gateway resources portal from the Education and Training Foundation, UK.
- Terry Maguire for guidelines on numeracy worksheets.
- Fergus Dolan for guidelines on ESOL materials.
- The members of the NALA Materials Board who worked on the first guide: Joyce Burns, Pauline Hensey, Jennie Lynch, Bláthnaid Ní Chinnéide and Helen Ryan.
- Pauline Hensey and Helen Ryan who worked on this second version.

Section 1

The context for developing materials

Before looking in detail at the design and development of materials, we first outline the key elements of NALA's approach to adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy work. It is our belief that worksheets and material development are only part of the teaching and learning process – a process underpinned by the following definitions and understandings.

Defining literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information. It includes more than the technical skills of communications; it also has personal, social and economic dimensions. Literacy increases the opportunity for individuals and communities to reflect on their situation, explore new possibilities and initiate change.¹

Numeracy involves the use of maths information and ideas effectively to participate in daily life and make sense of the world. It involves understanding of basic maths operations as well as recognising numbers, measuring and critically understanding statistical information.²

It is a life skill that involves the competent use of mathematical language, knowledge and skills and the confidence to manage the mathematical demands of real-life situations.³ Numerate adults have the confidence to manage the mathematical demands of real-life situations such as everyday living, work-related settings and in further education.

Digital skills are life skills that involve the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to use a range of digital devices and technology (such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers) and the confidence to use these skills in everyday situations.⁴ Digital skills are used in everyday life – we need them to book a flight, send emails, pay bills, scan items in the supermarket and connect with others. These digital skills require a minimum level of literacy and numeracy. The OECD says:

“Given that text-based and numeric information occupies a considerable portion of the digital world, access to that world depends not only on information and communication technologies (ICT) skills but also on basic proficiency in literacy and numeracy. In other words, the digital divide may also reflect a literacy and numeracy divide.”⁵

Literacy as a social practice

We engage with written text and spoken language in different parts of our lives such as work, home, health and communities. Seeing literacy as a social practice recognises that the value given to different literacies varies; that some literacies are more dominant, visible and powerful than others.

1 NALA (2012). **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work**

2 For more on numeracy policy and practices in Ireland, see NALA (2018) **A review of adult numeracy policy and practice in Ireland**

3 NALA (2012). **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work**

4 NALA (2020). **Literacy for Life**

5 OECD (2016). **Skills Matter: Further results from the survey of adult skills**

The literacies associated with powerful institutions in society (such as the courtroom, school, banks) are given higher status than the literacies used in everyday life. Individuals and communities who possess or 'take on' these powerful literacies are likely to have an advantage over those who do not.⁶ Therefore often literacy is not neutral, it is bound up with power and powerlessness, with equality and inequality.

When we think of literacy as a social practice it influences how we go about developing material.

There is a difference between activities based on 'learning to read' as opposed to those 'reading to learn'. When an adult returns to literacy learning and wants to learn to read, we will use strategies such as the language experience method which uses a person's own words. We will also use everyday texts such as flyer from supermarket or health booklet. As adults we respond better to material from real life situations as opposed to for instructional purposes – for example working out a real world maths problem as opposed to learning maths in school curriculum.

Effective adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy work

Adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy work is effective when:

- There is a collaborative approach where tutors and students work together.
- There is respect and equality between the student and tutor.
- Students are supported to realise their own knowledge and strengths and are encouraged to explore opportunities for further learning.
- The student actively chooses what and how to learn.
- Learning plans are discussed and agreed with individuals and groups.
- Students have a voice in how their work is assessed.
- We keep in mind that learning literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills has many dimensions: technical, personal, social, political, emotional and creative.
- We make sure that the materials and topics are relevant to the students' needs, uses, interests and goals.
- We use a wide range and variety of integrated teaching and learning activities (see page 37).

6 Papen (2005). *Adult Literacy as Social Practice: More than skills*. Routledge

Helping students identify their needs and goals

Focusing on the ways in which students use literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in their everyday lives, for example in the workplace, home, community or school, can help students identify their current strengths and skills, as well as their needs and goals. It also ensures that we remain sensitive to the changing nature of students' lives and are better placed to support students in the new uses of literacy that might emerge with these changes.⁷ For example, these changes might create the need to do things students have never done before such as write a note to a child's school or manage a budget. These changes might also reflect a move towards digital literacy practices such as buying online or creating social media posts.

Here is a checklist for helping students to identify their needs and goals.



Checklist for helping students identify their needs and goals

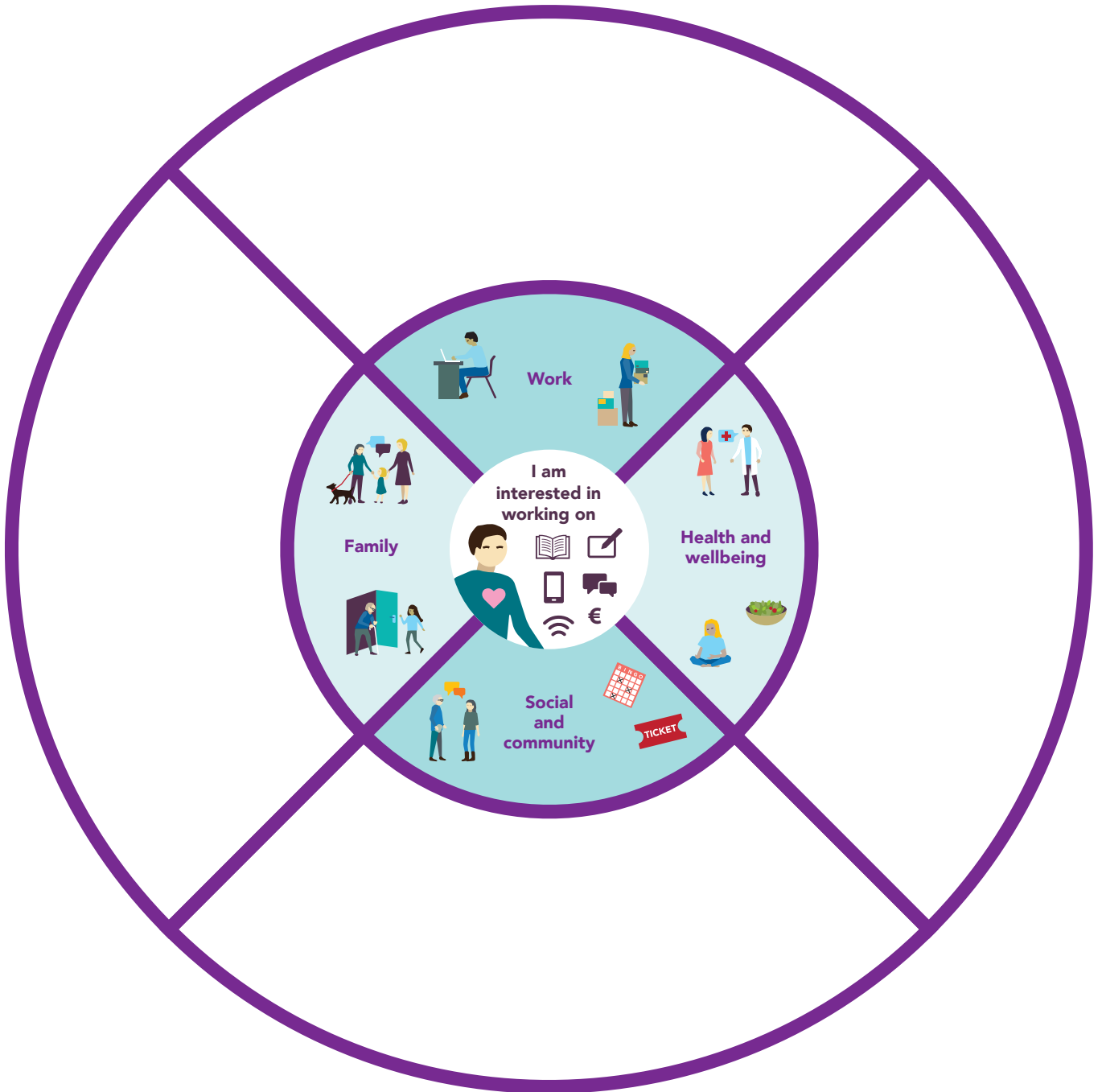
To help students identify their needs and goals, have you considered:

- What are the students' most relevant or immediate literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs?
- What reading and writing students do now, and for what purpose?
- How students use written and spoken language in their everyday lives?
- How students use numeracy in their everyday lives?
- How students engage with and use technology in their everyday lives?
- If they have a smartphone, what functions do they use? Do they go online?

What would the students like to be able to do more effectively?

Area	Yes	For what purpose, audience or situation?
Reading	<input data-bbox="611 584 695 667" type="checkbox"/>	
Writing	<input data-bbox="611 898 695 981" type="checkbox"/>	
Communication skills and confidence	<input data-bbox="611 1211 695 1294" type="checkbox"/>	
Numeracy knowledge and skills	<input data-bbox="611 1525 695 1608" type="checkbox"/>	
Using technology	<input data-bbox="611 1839 695 1921" type="checkbox"/>	

What are the students interested in?



Section 2

Planning and writing learning materials

Before you begin, remember try to use material that connects to students' lives. Learning materials should show **variety**, suit **different levels**, be **relevant** and be **enjoyable**. They are most useful when they reinforce and build on what the student already knows and can do.

What to consider before you start preparing learning materials

1. Who will be using the materials?

- Is it for an individual or a group?
- What are their interests, needs and goals?
- What are their learning styles?
- Have I used variety in the materials?
- Are they relevant and applicable?
- Are they culturally appropriate and inclusive?

2. What is the context: where and how you will use the materials?

For example, are they for use with groups or in a one-to-one setting; for face-to-face or distance learning; with youth groups or in work based learning setting? In an 'online community'?

3. What about levels of literacy and numeracy?

Local assessment tools and or Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) awards, particularly Levels 1, 2 and 3, can give us an idea of literacy and numeracy levels. However these assessment tools should not limit the materials we develop or use with students. Students bring with them a rich resource of knowledge, experience and use of certain texts and literacy practices, which can support our engagement with them.

Texts that are difficult do not have to be kept aside until students have reached a level of independent skill. You or other students can help students who are struggling with difficult texts through scaffolding. **Scaffolding** simply means providing supports so that students can work at a level, which they would find difficult on their own but would manage, with guidance. Text-to-speech technology tools also allow access to texts that otherwise might not have been available to students. Having gaps in basic skills does not mean that the individual is unable to carry out any of the basics of reading, writing, verbal communication and number

work. People's abilities tend to be 'spiky', which means that they can be very good at one thing but have a real difficulty with another.

4. Are the students working towards accreditation?

Where students are working towards accreditation, state on the text or worksheet how it could relate to a particular part of that process. For example, some worksheets might provide evidence for a range of outcomes for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) modules.

5. How can I build on what a student already knows?

For some students it will be important that the materials you choose will allow them to show progress in their skills outside the classroom setting. These should include tasks and activities that encourage students to use reading, writing, numeracy and communication skills in their daily lives. Aim to build bridges between using the material 'to learn the skills' and using it in a real situation.

6. Is there existing relevant material or texts to consider?

There are many existing materials that you may use and draw from. However remember ready-made texts may not serve the needs of the students. The subjects they discuss and in particular the literacy practices they teach are decided in advance and by 'outsiders' and may not be what matters to the student at this moment.

Whenever we adapt worksheets, materials and texts from other sources, we must acknowledge that source and in some cases get permission to use the material.

7. Is there a clear set of learning aims and objectives?

Think about how you will let the student know these.

Types of learning materials and texts

Texts used in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy work can be drawn from a variety of sources relevant to students.

These include:

- **formal letters** – school, doctors, social welfare, tax office, employers;
- **official documents** – tax forms, home and car insurance, mortgage and rent documents;
- **work-related texts** – contracts, work rotas, time sheets, wage slips, operating instructions for equipment, health and safety regulations;
- **texts related to being a citizen** – voting registration forms, election and referendum literature, citizens information publications;
- **texts related to community** – newspapers, minutes and information from community organisations (the 'community' may be based on place, interest, ethnic group, and so on);
- **creative and cultural texts** – poetry, novels, short stories, songs, drama;
- **language experience texts** – texts produced by the students themselves;
- **visual texts** – picture novels, cartoons, webpages, photographs; graphs, diagrams and charts;
- **texts related to reading the environment** – for example, signs, posters, street names.

Many of the sources mentioned above can be found as **digital texts** online.



Remember

- Use material that really connects to students' lives. Students can be invited to bring in texts they are engaging with.
- Students can work individually or collaboratively to create texts.
- Information, messages and images in texts can be criticised, rewritten or redrawn by students. We do not have to take them at face value.
- At times it can be useful to explore the meaning of particular texts for students.

Online texts

As said previously, many text sources can be online. Indeed this is where many students will come across them. Using digital sources can often reflect the literacy practices students use in their daily lives. It can be empowering for students to reproduce these everyday literacy practices in the learning space. For example, if students have to fill out a form, we need to think about whether this is on paper, on a phone, tablet or laptop and design our materials with this in mind.⁸ If students are accessing citizen information, are they accessing it online or in printed form?

Reading online texts

Reading texts online requires a host of **additional skills**. For example, a piece of text viewed on the web may contain hyperlinks, video and audio clips, share buttons and comment sections and pop-up advertisements. These features force the reader to stop and make decisions rather than simply reading from top to bottom. The reader has to decide whether to click on a video or hyperlink for example, whether to share the text with others or how long to stay away from the original text. Digital text is often designed so that no two readers have the same experience.

Sourcing material online also can require additional skills. Students have to learn how to search for content in an online space and how to check for reliability, critically evaluating texts and sources.⁹

Creating content online

WhatsApp message groups (or similar), social media, online job applications and discussion forums are all very much displacing their handwritten equivalent. These digital literacy practices have extra dimensions that we need to consider. Content that is created online is often meant to be shared. This brings with it additional dimensions, for instance safety and privacy which are all worth thinking through with students.¹⁰ We need to help students to see that while we can use digital tools to create and socially connect, there is responsibility that comes with that. It can also be daunting for students to see their writing on a public forum and it is worth talking through this with students.

8 Education and Training Foundation (2019). New To ESOL Guidance: Teaching And Learning Materials For Students New To ESOL And Literacy - <https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf3083>

9 Adapted from article online <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/11/09/what-is-digital-literacy.html>

10 Be Safe Online government campaign has some good links to resources <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/be-safe-online/>

Guidelines for designing learning materials

Make sure it is relevant.

- Ensure the activity is clearly relevant to the learning objective and topic in hand.
- Keep in mind the purpose of the activity. Are you trying to practise something just taught, revise something already learned, assess previous learning, achieve some other educational goal or have fun.

Use clear instructions.

- Avoid vague activities – for example asking students to ‘Jot down a few ideas about...’ (without giving some guidance and structure or purpose).
- Avoid “busy work” – exercises with no clear focus or objective.
- Indicate time needed.
- Suggest how ‘big’ an answer is appropriate.

Ensure variety. For example vary the type of reading activity.

- Consider alternatives to writing, typing or keying.
- Include digital texts.
- Include digital writing activities – for example, writing WhatsApp messages, filling in forms online.

Consider language and design

- Be consistent throughout – for example, use the same words in instructions.
- Use graphics where appropriate.
- Don’t have too much text on a page – leave some white space.

Give useful feedback, for example:

- the correct answers if there are any;
- sample answers;
- other people’s responses;
- advice as to how the students can assess their own responses;
- advice about how to get feedback from other people;
- empathy about difficulties they may have had.

Finally, remember that you will also have an opportunity to discuss the worksheets and texts with the students. You can give reassurance about and guidance on possible errors they may have made and deal with any comments on issues raised by the activities.

Writing materials for distance and blended learning

These days we use more online learning options.

There are a few ways that this is happening for literacy learning in Ireland:

- Learn with NALA provides:
 - Over the phone tuition – posting materials and worksheets; emailing and messaging learning content; 30 minute tutoring call a week minimum.
 - Online interactive website **learnwithnala.ie** where students are working independently or with support. Students can work towards and gain awards at QQI Levels 2 and 3.
 - Blended – combination of phone and online.
- Blended and online learning with local adult literacy services (through the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and community centres. This involves phone work, posting materials and more recently online video learning calls on a platform such as Zoom.

When writing materials for distance and blended learning there are **additional things** to keep in mind.

Students involved in distance and blended learning projects do not have a tutor beside them to explain instructions and to go through the worksheet or to give them the answers.

For distance learning worksheets, therefore, you need to have all that support built into them. They should be a 'win-win' for the students. This means we have to think carefully about the structure of the distance learning worksheet, ensure instructions are clear and look at how to provide the answers.

When designing materials for distance learning you should consider a number of actions – see checklist on the next page.

Checklist for designing a worksheet for distance and blended learning

Make sure you consider the following when designing a worksheet for distance and blended learning:

Action		Done
1	State the purpose of the worksheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Define all terms on the worksheet, especially new ones.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Give clear instructions on what needs to be done; sometimes it is best to also include an example on the worksheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Ensure the text is clear and concise .	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Be consistent throughout. For example, use the same words in instructions or questions as they appear in the text.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Give hints and tips where appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Refer students to other parts of the workbook or website where other relevant supporting information or progression exercise is available.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Make sure it is well designed and formatted, don't have too much text on a page – leave some white space.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Provide feedback – answers, for instance, may be given at the end of the print material or, if online, given immediately.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Use NALA's plain English guidelines and National Disability Authority's accessibility guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>

Online technology tools

There are a range of online technology tools we can use to create accessible, engaging and student-centred materials to support learning. Examples include Padlet, Kahoot and Menit. We have listed more of these in section 5.

It is important to let students choose. Technology should not be imposed but rather students should want to use these tools.

You can use technology tools to:

- encourage students' collaboration and interaction;
- check students prior understanding of a subject or skill;
- practise skills, for example using vocabulary.com;
- revise what students have learned;
- check understanding and provide feedback; and
- give students the chance to improve their digital literacy skills.

Check out our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/nalairreland where you can watch a range of NALA Webinars on teaching and learning, including using technology tools.

'Text-to-speech' tools allow students to access material that they might not be otherwise available to them.

Students are in charge here. If a particular tool does not suit, then tweak, trial or try another approach!

Take note! The use of technology tools could inadvertently widen the gap between students. Affordability, internet access, and unmet digital skills can all be a factor in students' accessing these tools.

Developing materials for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students

When designing materials for use by students for whom English is a second or other language, there are additional points to keep in mind. Some of these tips are based on or adapted from the Education and Training Foundation's 'New to ESOL Guidance' resources.¹¹

- **Meaning, understanding and talking comes first.**

Priority at ESOL level is to establish genuine communication. Texts of student's lives and experiences created using the language experience approach are useful at this level.

See NALA Webinar: Get them Talking in the ESOL Classroom with Michelle Benson for ideas. You can find this webinar on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/nalairland

- **Localise it!**

The language learning which relates to the local is often more meaningful. Adapt material to make them relate – change place names, visuals to reflect student's locality. Ask students to bring in texts they have to interact with or use every day.

- **Keep it visual!**

When language is limited, a picture speaks a thousand words. For example, picture packs are useful or picture-word mapping exercises. Encourage students to bring in their own photos to the class. Remember that visuals are not value free; they need to be inclusive and culturally appropriate.

- **Keep it real!**

Spend time getting to know the ways in which students use literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in their everyday lives and make materials based on this. We live in a world where communication is moving towards the visual and the digital. It is important to equip students with the skills to take part in the real-world communication contexts that they meet in their daily lives and will encounter in the future.

- Some students will need **material to support** letter writing and handwriting. For example, those students literate in a language written in a non-Roman alphabet such as Arabic.

- **Resources need to be highly flexible and plentiful.**

Language learning needs reinforcing and repetition so materials need to be in plentiful supply and have a variety of approaches and activities.

- **Create short simple listening exercises.**

These should reflect different accents and varieties of English as spoken in Ireland. Make your own by recording radio programmes, or by recording students and tutors talking about different subjects.

¹¹ Education and Training Foundation (2019). New To ESOL Guidance: Teaching And Learning Materials For Students New To ESOL And Literacy - <https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf3083>

Writing materials for numeracy

When developing numeracy materials there are additional concerns to keep in mind.

Numeracy has mathematics as its core. NALA defines numeracy as a life skill that gives adults 'the confidence to manage the mathematical demands of real-life situations'.¹²

The challenge for you is to identify 'contexts' that have meaning to the individual student and to identify the mathematics an individual might use in his or her everyday life. The everyday mathematical needs of the majority of the adult population are covered through the following mathematical strands:

Strand		Examples taken from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) level 2 awards for numbers
1	Quantity and number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognising numbers from 1 to 100. ■ Use the plus, minus and equals signs and operations. ■ Estimate quantities to the nearest value.
2	Space and shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2D shapes and 3D shape forms. ■ Relationship between area and volume.
3	Data handling and chance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify uses of data in everyday life, for example price comparisons. ■ Interpret pictograms or bar charts.
4	Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify numbers in a range of everyday circumstances, for example daily budget, planning an outing – including distances, dates, times and costs.
5	Patterns and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify number patterns, for example increases in steps of two. ■ Use number to describe pattern, for example clapping out a rhythm, visual descriptions - two yellows, one red.

Remember, as with all areas of learning, numeracy is not value-free. Therefore the context of the worksheet or learning material being developed needs to be culturally appropriate and inclusive.

Numeracy: Posing real world problems

The way we pose a particular problem will influence the way that students respond.

Consider these two examples, where the same situation is put in two different ways.

Example 1: Consider how adult students might respond to the following problem:

'You have gone out for pizza with two of your friends and you are going to share the cost. Let's say the pizza cost €18.20. How would you and your friends pay for it?'

There are many real life or 'real world' answers to this question. Some people might do an approximate calculation. Some might work it out precisely. Some might make a rough estimate to a convenient current note and get one person to pay the extra. One might say that they would take their turn to pay the full bill, because that is the custom within the group. The benefit of this way of posing the problem is that it allows students to solve relevant problems in a range of ways available to them in their everyday lives.

Example 2: The question could also be posed in the following way:

'Three friends went out for a pizza and shared the cost equally. The total cost of the pizza was €18.20. How much did each person pay?'

This question is not a real life problem but a mathematical problem. Adults often recognise these problems as 'school mathematics' and respond accordingly, by providing an exact answer. Some adult students are interested in this mathematics and want to master it. Others will want to avoid 'school mathematics' altogether and focus on the 'real world' mathematics such as that in Example 1 above.

Tutors need to develop materials to suit both types of student.



Be clear about the focus of the numeracy worksheet

Tutors also need to be clear about what they are asking the student to do and what the focus and learning objective of the worksheet is.

For example, a worksheet might ask the student to do the following:

$$3 + 4 =$$

In this activity, you are asking the student to add 3 and 4. The focus is on giving practice in the skill of addition (**not** on how well the student can write the numbers, for example). So it might help if the worksheet included the numbers 0 – 9. That will help the student to form the shape of the number – in this case, 7. They will still have to do the calculation and select the correct answer, but are freed from the pressure of remembering how they should write the number 7.

The way addition, subtraction or multiplication problems are written does not necessarily have to follow the 'school' approach. Use a variety of ways of asking these problems and encourage students to format the problem in a way that they prefer.

For example, there are different ways to format, or lay out, the following calculation: "A cup of coffee costs me €3. I buy a cup of coffee 4 times a week. How much do I spend every week on coffee?"

We could format this as: $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 12$

or

we could format it as: $3 \times 4 = 12$



Design materials that use a range of formats and help students to become familiar with them.

Visuals and graphics in numeracy materials

Using graphics and visuals is an excellent way of building numeracy skills, especially number sense. The use of photographs, for example, could be a starting point for students talking about and building such skills. Questions such as “how big is the building?” or “how many people are in the photograph?” encourage students to use their own strategies for working out an answer.

You could try using simple pictures – for instance, tomatoes on a vine or children in a playground - as a starting point for developing number skills.

Select pictures and other visuals carefully. They need to be inclusive and culturally appropriate.



Conventions for writing numeracy materials

Numbers

Group individual digits in three's from the right. Insert a comma to separate each group.

Four Digit numbers

2,345

Four or more digits

20,999

200,400

2,345,567

Units and symbols

When a symbol is being used for the first time include it in brackets after the full word.

For example "The road was 10 metres (m) long".

After that, use just the symbol. Here is a glossary.

Glossary of mathematical symbols

Measurement	Symbol
Length	
millimetre	mm
centimetre	cm
metre	m
kilometre	km
Weight	
milligram	mm
gram	g
kilogram	kg
tonne	t
Volume	
millilitre	ml
litre	l
Area	
square metres	m ²
Volume	
cubic metres	Cm ²

Relationships: For example you will need 2.5L of paint for every square metre to be painted. **Symbol:** 2.5 L/m²

The National Standards Authority of Ireland have published rules for writing mathematical symbols. – see www.nsai.ie for more details.

Signs

Always use \times rather than $.$ (full stop or dot) or multiplication.

Spelling

- The correct spelling for metre is 'metre' (not meter).
- The correct spelling for gram is 'gram' (not gramme).

Working on numeracy with ESOL students

We must work to achieve a shared understanding of the meaning of words and symbols used in numeracy.

Mathematical concepts are common to many languages and cultures, but they are learned and expressed through particular languages. For example, whereas ' $3 + 3 = 6$ ' may be widely understood, the English expression 'three plus three equals six' is not. Many words used in maths are borrowed from everyday language. These words tend to be ambiguous. They have one meaning in mathematics and another meaning in everyday language. Examples include the words 'mean', 'natural', 'power', 'difference' and 'take away'.

Remember:

- Different countries have different conventions for writing mathematics. There are conventions around the way we use symbols. For example, in Ireland the sum 'seven multiplied by four' is symbolised as 7×4 . In other countries the same sum would be written as 7.4 .
- The same or similar words may have different meanings in different countries. For example, the American 'ton' weight is a different unit of measurement to the European 'metric tonne'.
- Languages also differ in how they write numbers greater than a thousand and in how they write decimals. The number 'twenty thousand five hundred and sixty' would be written as 20,560 in Ireland but as 20.560 in most non-English speaking countries.
- While in Ireland 'nine point four' is written as 9.4, in many countries the decimal point is replaced by a comma: 9,4.
- Another common difference is the method of writing long division. For example, if 6 people are sharing a restaurant bill of €82.60 equally there are a number of ways to write the division:

$$6 \overline{) 82.60}$$

$$82.60 \overline{) 6}$$

$$82.60 : 6$$

Section 3

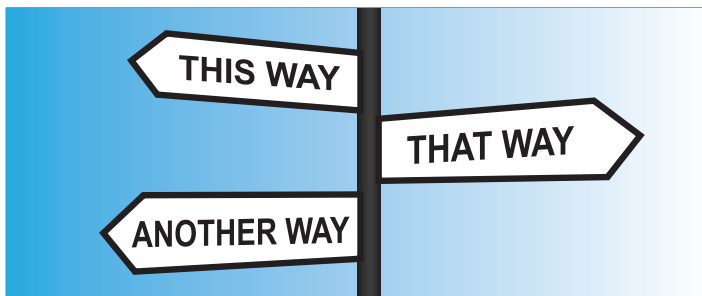
Designing and formatting learning materials

The design of learning materials is just as important as the content. More and more literacy tutors and practitioners like you are linking in with designers and printers. That is why it helps to have a sense of how visuals and design techniques can add to the learning experience.

Writing and design tips

The following guidelines have been influenced by NALA's Plain English work and also our experience of working with printers and designers. These guidelines should be kept in mind when designing learning materials.

Use plenty of signposts



Headings and subheadings

Headings and subheadings help people to work their way around a text or worksheet. They also make a long text less intimidating. They are a useful signpost for readers. You should keep the format of headings and subheading consistent so that readers can more easily tell them apart.

Page numbers

It is helpful to use number pages. Put the numbers in the same place on each page.

Clearly label questions or tasks with numbers or letters.

Use at least 12 point type

We use at least 12 point type in all NALA publications because it is easy to read.

Make important points stand out clearly



When you want to emphasise a heading, instructions or a sentence use a **bigger size font** or **bold**.

Do not use all capital letters (also called upper case) to make text stand out. USING ALL CAPITALS makes the text harder for people to read.

It is also best not to use *italics*. *As this you can see from this example, it can be difficult to read.*

Choose a readable typeface

Fonts are usually grouped as serif or sans serif (see illustration below). A sans serif font does not have small lines or tapers (serif) added to the top or bottom of letters. If you are using a computer you have access to a wide range of typefaces. It is best to stick to clear, easy-to-read sans serif fonts like Arial or Helvetica.

	<p>The serif typeface is distinguished by the short stroke that projects from the top of the letter.</p>
	<p>The other major group of typefaces is the sans serif, from French word sans, meaning without.</p>

Watch your line spacing

Line spacing refers to the amount of space from the bottom of one line of text to the bottom of the next line. Too little space and the reader will drop to the next line. Too much and the reader will be unsure if the lines of text refer to each other. If you are using 12 point text, the recommended line spacing is **1.5 or 18 point**.

Left is best

Align or **alignment** is a term used to describe how **text** is placed on the page. It is best to align texts to the left. Left aligned texts give a straight left edge. This makes it easier for the reader as they know where the line will start each time. If you are using a left aligned text, it is easier for readers if headings are also left aligned.

Avoid using justified text as this can lead to large white space between words. This makes sentences difficult to read.

<p>Justified text</p>	<p>This type of text can be called either 'left aligned' or 'ragged right'.</p>
<p>Try not to justify text, as this can lead to gaps in words. It is best to use left aligned and right ragged margins. Be generous with your margins.</p>	<p>Try not to justify text, as this can lead to gaps in words. It is best to use left aligned and right ragged margins. Be generous with your margins.</p>

Use white space effectively

- Allow enough room for images and text. Otherwise the page looks dense or crowded.
- Use lots of 'white space'.
- Have margins that are wide enough so that edges are not cut off when photocopied.

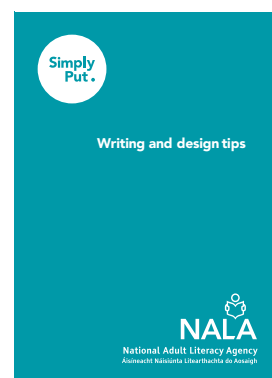
Stick to the guidelines given in NALA's **Writing and Design Tips**.

Words to use

- **Use everyday words**
This is very important as we can all get used to using a certain vocabulary or jargon. There is a difference between content and writing style. Don't use complicated language just because the content of your message may be complicated. Ask yourself "What would I say to the reader if they were sitting in front of me?" and write accordingly.
- **Use personal pronouns**
Use words like 'we', 'I', 'you', 'our'.
- **Use 'they'**
English does not have a genderless pronoun in the third person singular apart from 'it'. In general, we recommend using 'they' instead of 'he' or 'she'.
- **Use abbreviations sparingly and avoid Latin**
As far as possible, avoid 'etc', 'ie', 'eg'.
If you are shortening a word, make sure students know what it means – for example, Rd. is short for Road.
- **Use terms consistently**
- As a general guideline, we **recommend no more than 20 words per sentence**.

More information

For more useful tips, have a look at NALA's Writing and Design Tips booklet here www.nala.ie/publications/writing-and-design-tips/



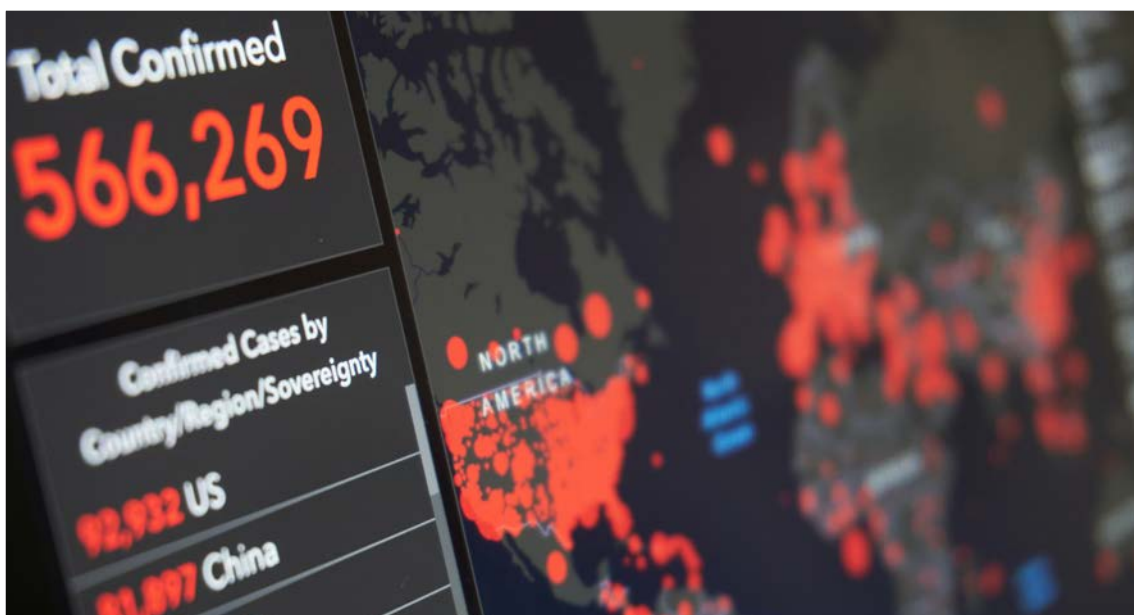
Using visuals

Visuals can be very helpful but they are not value free. They need to be inclusive and culturally appropriate. Using visuals can make a text more interesting and relevant. Images can help in the learning process by:

- telling us something about the text;
- emphasising certain information and facts;
- acting as a starting point for discussion; and
- offering a break from a large amount of text.

Examples of images include:

- a picture story;
- interactive lists;
- images on computer; and
- games format.



Guidelines for using images

- **Use images that connect with the student.** The challenge for you is to identify 'contexts' that are familiar and have meaning for the individual student.
If the context for the worksheet was poisons in the kitchen, and to support the student you were using an image of potentially dangerous poisons, it would be best to set the image in an everyday setting.
- **Pair images with words.** Texts and images should be placed close to each other. It is generally better to put a text above or underneath an image, rather than alongside it.
- Pictures need the **same margins** as text.
- Make illustrations clear with **no background distractions**.
- When **using graphs**, make sure that they are 'real', relevant and clear.
- Acknowledge the **source** of the image.

More information on images in this article. <https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/visuals-elearning-tips-and-examples>



Tip - Remember visuals should never clutter a page.

Section 4

Using learning materials

There are a number of things you can do to help students engage fully with the materials.

Examples of activities and exercises



Tips

1. Remember to **test your worksheet!** That means:
 - Do the worksheet yourself, as if you were a student. Are the instructions clear? Is there space to add your answers? Is the answer sheet, if any, correct? Adjust as necessary.
 - See how well it photocopies. Do the edges get cut off? Are images faithfully reproduced? Adjust as necessary.

More information here: <https://www.tefl.net/esl-worksheets/guide.php>

2. Before introducing a text, whether the text is a book or **handout** or set of instructions, **preview** it with the group first.

Some prior knowledge of the content and of the key words in the text will make it easier for your students to read and understand. You can prepare a **glossary of terms** you will be using and discuss them.

Ask students questions as this helps them to link the new text with their own knowledge and experience. An example of this type of question would be:

'We have read instructions on other public forms. So what kind of information would you expect to find on this one?'

3. When you are introducing a text, start off by telling students the **purpose of the activity** both in general and in relation to individual learning plans or objectives.

Give as much information as you can about the materials you are using. Make sure to explain clearly what the student will need to do and how long this will take.

4. After you have used the materials and texts, **review** them. You can ask the students for feedback. How did they find the materials and the exercise? What did they like about it and what did they not like? Would they change anything if they were doing it again?

Examples of activities and exercises

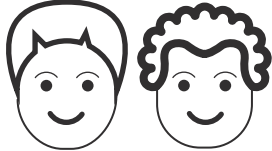



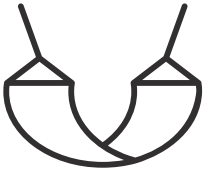


Activities and exercises like those outlined encourage students to do something with a particular text:

- Some aim to develop a more active and critical approach to a text.
- Some are an invitation to reflect and help students think about 'how they learn'.
- Others support the learning of specific skills.

When deciding which type of activity to include in a worksheet, you should:

match the activity to the learning objective.



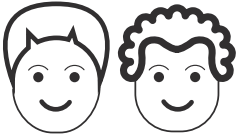






You chose activities for a certain purpose. These purposes may be:

Think it out	Write it down	Talk about it
		
Practise a skill	Look at how I learn	Draw and create
		
Reflect	Ask critical questions	Play, fun and games
		



Tip - To make the most of resources, we can change the instruction not the activity.

Here are some **examples of activities** under each purpose.

Think it out	Write it down	Talk about it
<p>Just think their response – no need to record.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tick boxes in a checklist. ■ Answer a multiple choice question. ■ Underline phrases in a text. ■ Complete a table. ■ Complete a sentence. ■ Fill in blanks in a sentence - cloze exercise. ■ Fill in blanks left in a word. ■ Write a word or phrase or number in a box. ■ Put something in order – sequencing. ■ Write out the steps in a calculation. ■ Match similar words, phrases or numbers. ■ Answer questions – comprehension. ■ Write or key in a letter, word, sentence or paragraph. 	<p>Talk in pairs or small groups and discuss their response.</p> 
Practise a skill	Look at how I learn 	Draw and create 
<p>All activities outlined relate to practising skills.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Note questions or observations that arise – 'I'm noticing', 'I'm wondering', 'I'm thinking', 'I'm feeling'. ■ Note strategies they use – 'I've seen this before....' and 'This approach worked / didn't work the last time'. ■ Note what they already know or can do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Draw a graph, chart or diagram. ■ Add to a graph, chart or diagram. ■ Make a sound recording or podcast. ■ Take photographs or videos.
Reflect	Ask critical questions	Play, fun and games
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Write a 'blog'. ■ Take part in a discussion forum. ■ Keep a journal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where did this text come from? ■ Who wrote it? ■ Who funded it? ■ What does it say / what does it infer? 	<p>Do any learning games and puzzles, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ wordsearches ■ anagrams ■ bingo, using letters or words or numbers ■ card sorts and matching activities ■ crosswords or cross-numbers 

Integrated teaching and learning activities

Integrated teaching and learning activities could include:

- **talk and discussion:** tutor-student in a one-to-one setting; group discussion and interaction; informal and formal discussion;
- purposeful, planned, evaluated **action:** individual or group projects, relating to personal contexts and/or social contexts and goals;
- reflection on **experience:** the actions/experiences of everyday life, as distinct from projects planned as part of the learning programme;
- **creative expression** using a variety of media; individual or collaborative;
- **problem-solving** – critical incidents, case studies, a range of focused games and puzzles;
- **activities that take account of multiple intelligences**, different learning styles and the associated entry points to learning.

You can use activities like these to help students develop a range of literacies in an integrated way. They also help both you and your students to identify realistic, relevant learning goals in reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills and to choose 'really' useful worksheets and materials.



Reflection sheet on using learning materials

What tips did you find most useful in this section?

What new activities and exercises will you try out?

Make a note of what you need to do now.

Section 5

Sample materials and other resources

In this section, we have included some sample materials and worksheets, with comments on their learning and design features.

We give samples of worksheets on:

Topic	Item	Page no
Reading	■ Simplifying texts	41
	■ Scanning	46
	■ Skimming	48
	■ Fluency	50
Writing	■ Finish the story	53
	■ What do you see?	55
Spelling	■ Word building	56
	■ Root words, suffixes and prefixes	57
Language	■ Tell your group about...	59
	■ Symptoms, Medicines and Treatments	61
Numeracy	■ Working on numbers	62
	■ Estimating	64
	■ Working it out	65
Digital and media literacy	■ Ready, steady, share	66
	■ Get the facts	67
Puzzles and games	■ Crossword	68
	■ Word games	69
	■ Chinese numbers	70



Tip - Always ask yourself: Is this worksheet suitable for the student and not is my student suitable for this worksheet.

Reading: Simplifying texts

Simplifying makes tough texts more accessible to students. It involves changing some of the language and layout of a text while keeping its meaning.

It allows for a wide variety of materials to be available to students which otherwise might be too difficult to read or understand. By simplifying the materials, we can make the texts readable and accessible and we can provide a text which can be used as the basis of reading practice.

Versions of the same text, at different levels of readability, can also provide a scaffold for students as they progress towards being able to read the original text.

When judging the difficulty of a text, you need to consider a number of factors. The difficulty of a text depends on the type of language used **and** how it is laid out, including print size. You also need to consider what the reader brings to the task of reading. Students will often find reading a text more difficult or challenging if they have not come across the subject or ideas before or if they don't find the text interesting or useful.

When simplifying texts, you will find it helpful to consider the following questions:

- How can you **involve the student** in the simplification process (see below)?
- **Why** am I simplifying the material? Is it to make it easier to read or is it to make it shorter? Do you want to highlight particular pieces of information from a more detailed text?
- Do **keywords** - the vocabulary needed by students in order to gain access to a subject - or key pieces of information need to be kept in the simplified version? If they are taken out will the student be disadvantaged in some way? Could you reduce the amount of new vocabulary by repeating some words where it is appropriate?
- Will changing the **order** of the piece make it easier to read?
- What about **layout**? The layout and how the text is organised is often a significant factor in it being difficult to read. Do you need to line-break the text (breaking the text into meaning phrases)? Would headings help? Is there a photo or illustration with the original text that tells something about the text? What about the size of print and line spacing?
- Can longer **sentences** be simplified by breaking them into shorter ones?

How to simplify a text

It is important to make a note of the main points, while keeping the overall meaning of the text.

- **Simplify** the vocabulary, while keeping words that are crucial to the meaning.
- **Reduce** the amount of new **vocabulary** by repeating some words where appropriate.
- **Avoid idioms** or colloquialisms with which the student might be unfamiliar.
- Where possible, **break longer sentences** into shorter ones, so that each phrase of five to ten words takes up one line.
- **Use the active voice.** It is easier to read than the passive. For example, "The woman posted the letter" rather than "The letter was posted by the woman".
- Try and **limit the length** of the text to 200-250 words.
- Make sure that the text is **spaced clearly**. Text with headings, paragraphs, indentations and margins is easier to read than dense print.
- **Size of print:** Print which is small or densely packed together adds to the reader's difficulty. But if it is magnified or spaced out too much, it may cause problems as it makes it difficult to scan and pick up word groups.
- **Use illustrations (from the original text or other sources)** if appropriate as these can give clues to the context.

Involving students in the process

Before you begin, use material that connects to students' lives. So the first step is encouraging students to identify reading material that matters to them.

Students can be involved in simplifying information. You can read the text to the student who can then paraphrase it in their own words. One trainer working in a Centre explains this process in the context of simplifying the instructions for a woodwork task.

The trainees were having difficulty reading the instructions. The trainer thought:

'....Who better to simplify the sheets than the trainees who were having difficulty with them? I read out the original instructions and stated what I understood them to mean....I then asked the trainees to tell me what **they** understood them to mean. As they told me, I wrote down exactly what they said...' [Michael Cummins, **Skillwords**: Integrating Literacy Materials Pack, NALA 2003]

This is a variation on the **language experience approach**, commonly used in adult literacy work, where the tutor acts as scribe for the students' own words. In this case, the process produced a text that the particular students could more easily read and understand. As well as meeting the needs of those particular students, it meant that Michael had two texts at two different levels of difficulty that he and future groups of students could choose between as appropriate.

He then developed vocabulary-building activities in relation to both texts. In the simplified version (See page 44) he used a word scramble exercise to work on key words for tools used. He also developed a word-matching exercises where words from the simplified version were matched with the key words from the original text in the second version (See page 45).

When acting as a scribe

- Take down what the student says, word for word;
- Write it in clear sentences, line breaking the text if necessary;
- Read back the text when the student is finished;
- Discuss what the student/author might like to change or indeed leave out; and
- Edit text a second time according to the student's requests.

This process guides the student through the various stages of writing – from discussion and planning, to getting ideas on to the page, to editing and proofing.

Reading: Simplifying texts

Learning objective: Building and extending vocabulary

The following worksheet is taken from Skillwords (NALA 2003).

Woodwork: Making a serving tray

Instructions

1. Pick the wood and the tools you need.
2. Write or tell your trainer what you are going to do.
3. Get the wood from the trainer. Measure the wood using a ruler. Mark the wood with a pencil and try square.
4. Cut the wood along the lines with a tenon saw.
5. Plane the wood down to the lines with the smoothing plane.
6. Rub the wood with sandpaper until it is clean and smooth.
7. Make your tray with small nails and glue, and put varnish on it.
8. Tell your trainer what you did well and what you think you could do better.

Written by trainees in Finglas West CTW (Community Training Workshop)

Unscramble the letters to find the names of the tools used when making a Serving Tray.

lrure

ytr qreaus

noten wsa

thooingsm palen

cliepn

mmerha

Reading: Simplifying texts

Learning objective: Building vocabulary

The following worksheet is taken from Skillwords (NALA 2003).

It also includes exercises to build vocabulary, by matching words from the simplified version to the key words from the original text.

Woodwork: Making a serving tray

Read the following instructions.

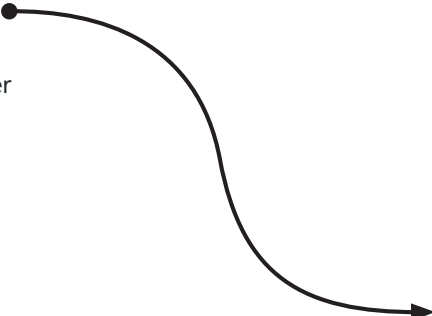
Instructions

1. Select the materials and tools needed to complete this project.
2. List or state to your trainer the steps you must go through to do this project.
3. Given the wood, measure and mark the wood to the correct size as per drawing.
4. Cut wood to size at marks, using a tenon saw.
5. Set the plane and level and square wood.
6. Sand and clean all wood surfaces.
7. Assemble the project, using adhesives and panel pins, following the drawing. Varnish the tray.
8. Discuss with your trainer the tasks you did well and the tasks in which you could have done better.

Written by trainees in Finglas West CTW (Community Training Workshop)

Match words with similar meaning.

The first one is done for you.

glue		assemble
finish		discuss
right		adhesive
put together		select
choose		complete
talk		tasks
jobs		correct

Reading: Scanning

Learning objective: reading - scanning a text

Teaching students how to apply different reading strategies at appropriate times is a significant way that we can assist them in their reading. Students who are not confident with reading are often only familiar with one reading strategy – close reading – where the text is read word-for-word regardless of purpose.

As a tutor, you need to help students develop other reading strategies. For example when looking up a directory or reading a recipe, we don't need to read or understand every word. We simply need to move quickly over the text to locate a particular piece of information. This form of reading is called **scanning**. It is an important skill to develop as it relates to many of the reading tasks used in our lives.

Some points to note:

- The **objective** of the worksheet is to encourage students to move quickly over a text to locate a specific piece of information.
- The **heading** tells the student what the worksheet is about.
- **Matching** the design to the learning objective: Underlining specific pieces of information encourages scanning. Students don't have to engage in the close reading of the text which 'writing down an answer' might require.
- When scanning a piece of text we usually have a **question** in mind. It is therefore best to ask the questions before scanning the text.
- Other **activities** that give practice at scanning include:
 - Ticking boxes in a checklist.
 - Ticking a series of true or false statements.
 - Verbal exercises: with the tutor asking for specific pieces of information from the text, such as 'What time is the next appointment?'
- **Layout:** Note the use of white space. The text is not crowded.
- Other **materials** particularly useful for scanning purposes include:
 - Content page or index of magazines or books,
 - Information from leaflets or screen on website or app.
- **Range of application:** It's important that students are encouraged to apply scanning strategies to a range of formats that matter to them – for example, scanning a TV Guide to find out what time a programme is on; or scanning a web or app page for specific information.

Reading: Scanning

Letter from the hospital

**Mr. Byrne has received a letter from the hospital.
Underline the following pieces of information in the letter.**

1. The ward he will stay in.
2. The name of the doctor taking care of him.
3. The date and time he must arrive at the hospital.
4. The phone number of the Admissions Office.

34 Seaport Road
Baldoye
Dublin 13
14 March 2021

Dear Mr. Byrne,

You are booked in for a procedure on Thursday 6 May 2021 with Dr. Peter Hayes. You will need to stay overnight in the General Medical ward.

Please arrive at the hospital at 8 am on Thursday 6 May.

If you cannot attend or do not need this procedure, please telephone the Admissions Office on 099 12345.

Yours sincerely,
MJ Ryan
Admissions Officer

Reading: Skimming

Learning objective: reading - skimming a text

Sometimes when we read we might just want to get the gist, the overall sense of a piece of text, to see if it is of interest or of use to us and if we want to read it in more detail. This form of reading is called **skimming**. Skimming helps us to read more quickly. When skimming a text we do not have to read the text word-for-word. Rather we should move our eye over the text looking for clues as to what the piece is about. Examples of such clues include key words, a title or heading, a photo or picture.

The following worksheet was designed to develop the skill of skimming.

Some points to note:

- The **learning objective** is to encourage students to read quickly over a piece of text to get the gist or find out what it's about and if the text is of interest to them.
- **Matching design to learning objective:** The activity helps the student focus on skimming through the texts to get the main idea, as this is all that is required to arrive at an answer.
- **Layout:** The worksheet makes good use of white space. It has large, clear print.
- **Graphics and clues:** The graphics encourage students to think about the kinds of clues we can look for to help us get the gist of a piece of text.





Clues might include:

- a title, heading or subheading;
- a photograph or picture;
- key words.

Finally another **activity** to support skimming is to:

Ask students to predict what a piece of text might be about using heading, photographs, first line of each paragraph or key words.

Reading: Skimming Matching exercise

Skimming for the gist	
1	2
	
3	4
	

Skim through the following pieces of text. Then decide which of the following descriptions belongs to which text. Put the appropriate number in each box.

Pizza leaflet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article on weather	<input type="checkbox"/>
TV guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holiday brochure	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reading: Fluency

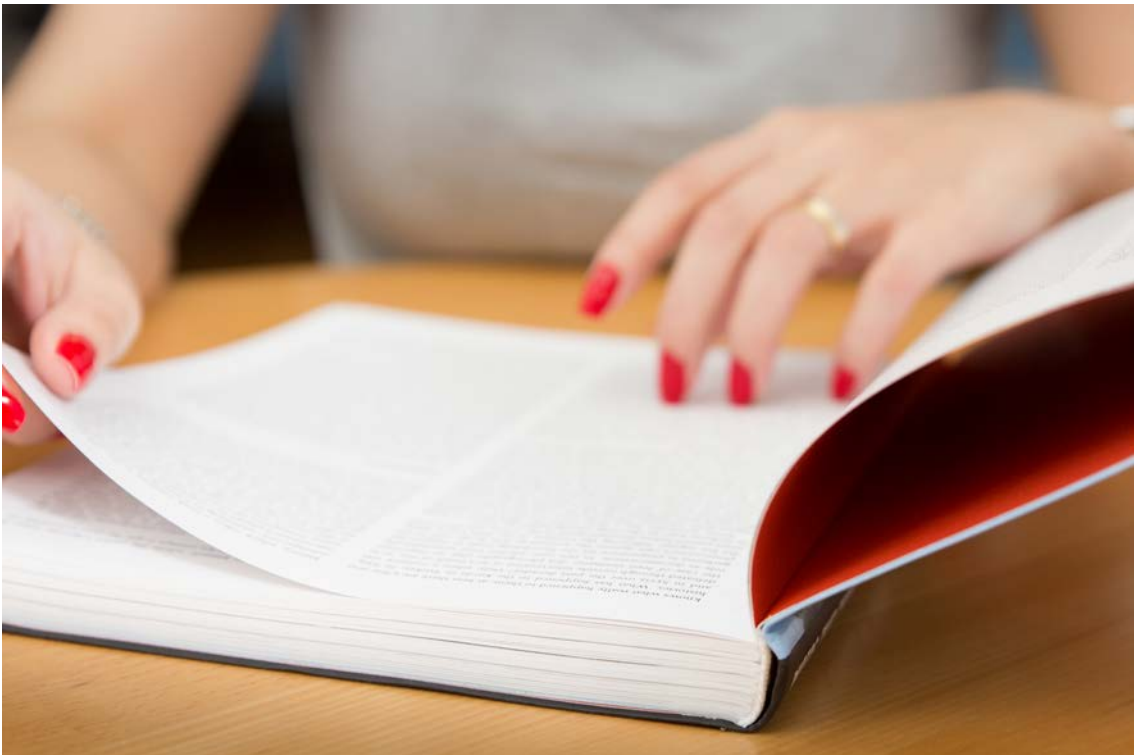
Learning objective: to improve fluency

Reading fluency refers to the speed and ease with which we read. It involves reading 'seamlessly' as opposed to word for word. Fluency can be difficult if we are a beginner reader or when we engage with new and unfamiliar texts. Fluency is best practised with texts that have vocabulary a student is familiar with. In this way the student can predict or recognise words without too much effort and can then more easily read with expression and pace.

Some of the ways fluency in reading can be supported is by:

- **modelling** fluent reading (this can be done by other students, tutor or on audio);
- helping students with **phrasing** - reading phrases helps to shorten the reading 'load'; and
- helping students to develop **sight vocabulary** related to the text.

The next worksheet 'John's story' was designed to develop the skills of fluency.



Reading: Fluency

John's Story


I have been mending nets since I was a small child. My happiest times were sitting on the pier with my Grandad, watching him mend the nets and listening to his stories.

Grandad showed me what to do, step by step. He always let me have a go and never said I was doing it wrong.

When I got it right, he would give me a pat on the head and say, "Good lad". I felt so good when I got it right. I never forgot what he told me.



Exercises

- Listen to the text being read and then read the text aloud.
- Join the phrases to make a sentence.
The first one is done for you.
 - I have been mending nets ●  since I was a child.
 - Grandad showed me
 - He always let me
 - I felt so good
 - I never forgot
- Read the sentence aloud. Where would you break the sentences into phrases?
 - I have been mending nets since I was a child.
 - Grandad showed me what to do.
 - He always let me have a go.
 - I felt so good when I got it right.
 - I never forgot what he told me.
- Read the text aloud one more time

Reading: Fluency

Some points to note:

- The text is **line broken** into meaningful sentences and phrases.
- **Matching** the design to the learning objective: The activities in the worksheet are designed to support reading fluency:
 - The first exercise gives students a chance to listen to the text being read fluently and to then echo this.
 - The second exercise promotes phrase reading as students join two meaningful to make a sentence from the text.
 - The third exercise asks students to listen for natural breaks in a sentence.
 - The fourth asks the student to re-read the piece aloud. (Be aware that some students will find reading aloud challenging.)
- The **illustration** used tells us something about the text. It is fit for purpose.
- **Clear font and size** is used in the text and worksheet.
- Tasks are **labelled clearly**.

Other activities to promote fluency include:

- **Language experience** approach - where the tutor acts as a scribe as the student tells their story (see page 43). In this way, the text is more familiar to the students and can be more easily read.
- **Paired reading** – the student reads with a tutor or another student who is comfortable with the text. They start reading together until the student signals they are happy to read alone.
- **Choral reading** – where students read the text together as a ‘community of Readers’. It can take pressure off the individual student.
- **Repeated reading** – where the text is read a number of times over a number of weeks.



Tip - Reading aloud in an encouraging context is particularly helpful for ESOL students.

Writing

Learning objective: Creative writing – beyond functionality

Creative writing can have a powerful effect. By writing stories or poetry, for example, students can explore, form and shape their experiences and ideas into their own original work. Students are able to feel in charge of something.

Creative writing also gives voice to students' imagination and self-expression. It has a particular empowering effect when students have an outlet to share their pieces.

Creative writing does not prioritise areas like spelling, punctuation, grammar. However, the process does seek to develop other essential aspects of literacy such as planning and structure, vocabulary extension, consideration of an audience, effective description and communicating meaning.¹³

Some points to note:

- **Matching** design to the learning objective - The creative writing worksheets that follow are designed to act as prompts for writing.
- Some students are visual students and might find the **visual prompt** works best for them.
- The **line spacing** is generous to allow for different handwriting styles.
- Creative writing activities are examples of where you might suggest how 'big an answer' is needed. You could suggest how many words should be written in response to the prompt. On the other hand the student may not want to be confined in this way. This is something that can be talked about.
- Some students might prefer to use their phone, tablet or laptop for this exercise.

¹³ Shakespeare, H. (2013) Beyond functionality: Writing for a better future in RAPAL Taster Edition, Summer 2017

Spelling: Word building

Learning objective: to work on initial blends

1. Put **cl** before the following to make words.

__ __ e a n
__ __ i f f
__ __ o s e
__ __ i m b

2. Put **bl** before the following to make words.

__ __ o w
__ __ a d e
__ __ a c k
__ __ i n d

3. Put **cl** and **bl** before the following to make words

__ __ o c k	__ __ o c k
-------------	-------------

Spelling: Root words, suffixes and prefixes

Learning Objective: Identify suffixes and prefixes

Definition	Example
A root word is a word with nothing added at the beginning or at the end.	Cover
A prefix is added to the beginning of a root word to change its meaning or make a new word.	Dis cover
A suffix is added to the end of a root word to change its meaning or make a new word	Cover ing

Read this passage.

Going back to learning

When I look back now I was very scared and unsure of taking that first step. Of course it was the best thing I ever did. I began learning with a one-to-one tutor for two hours a week. Then after a while I moved into a small group and had more hours. I loved coming to the centre for my classes and made some great friends. Over a year I worked on my spelling, reading, writing and maths. One day the tutor introduced us to computers and we went on the internet. I was amazed at all the information you could look up. My kids are unhappy with this as they now can't get me away from the laptop at home.

**Underline the prefixes and suffixes in the passage.
Write out the prefixes and suffixes.**

Language: Tell your group about...

Learning objective: Speaking

Grammar function: simple regular past

The worksheet is designed for use in a ESOL setting. Specifically it is designed to promote the skill of speaking using a game. Whole class activities can be quite intimidating for some students and can favour those that are more confident at speaking. This is why pair work and group work is so important. This exercise gives everyone a chance to speak in turn after having thrown the dice and moved on to a square respond to a question.

Some points to note:

- **Matching** the design to the learning objective – the learning objective is to encourage students to speak using the simple regular past. The questions on each square elicit the simple past form of verbs.
- Focuses on **one learning point**.
- Uses a **font** that is easy to read and large enough size.
- Has **margins** that are wide enough so that edges are not cut off when photocopied.
- Uses **visuals**.





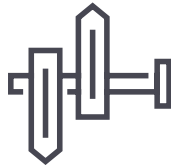
How to play

1. Put the game board in the middle of the table.
2. All players put their counters on the square marked START and throw the dice. The first player to throw a six starts the game.
3. Player A throws the dice and moves their counter along the board according to the number on the dice.
4. Player A then reads the topic on the square they land on and talks about it for a short time.
5. If a player has nothing to say on the topic they have landed on, they are allowed to pass and miss a turn, but they can only do this once during the game.
6. The game continues until the first player reaches the square marked FINISH.

Note: This game is about thinking what you are going to say and how to say it.

Language: Tell your group about...

We adapted the game from Onestopenglish.com, McMillan Publishers Ltd.

	The last time you had some exercise	Something you hated when you were a child	Your first foreign holiday	Go back 2 spaces	The last time you danced
	The job you wanted to do when you were a child		Finish		Where you stayed on your last holiday
	The last time you visited friends				Your first job
	Go back 2 spaces		Something you watched on television last night		Something you wanted for your last birthday
	Your favourite movie		Go back 3 spaces		The last time you listened to some music
	The last time you had a meal in a restaurant		Someone you liked when you were a child		Go back 1 space
Tell your group about...					A place you visited last year
Start	The last time you stayed in a hotel	Your grandfather's job	A game you played when you were a child		A subject you hated at school

Language: Symptoms, Medicines and Treatments

Learning objective: describe their children's symptoms in English and ask for or give information on appropriate medicine or treatment.



My baby is _____

My child's _____
hurts

My baby has _____

Work in groups. Write symptoms children have and possible treatments in the chart. Then think of some questions that you should ask before you leave the chemist.

Symptom	Treatment	Questions
My baby has a temperature.	Give her calpol.	What do I do if her temperature remains high?
My child has a cut.	Use a plaster and cream.	
My son has diarrhoea.		

Numeracy: Working on numbers

Learning objective: Counting and writing numbers 0 - 5

Some points to note:

- Always use the **alphabet** rather than numerals in lists.
- Include **big boxes** to write the answers in. This allows students form the numbers more accurately.
- When teaching to count numbers always **start from 0**.
- When teaching numbers up to 10 start at the number 0. This helps make sense of the zero in the number 10.
- Make sure the number **four** is in a **font** that matches how you have taught the number to the student.

For example:  

- Include the **answers** at the end of the worksheet.
- Collect **pictures** that are familiar to the students - for example, pictures of their own locality or community - to use in worksheets and other materials.

Numeracy: Working on numbers

Write the answers in the box beside each picture.

The numbers you need are here:

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

1. How many children are in this picture?



2. How many tomatoes are on this weighing scales?



3. How many women are in this photograph?

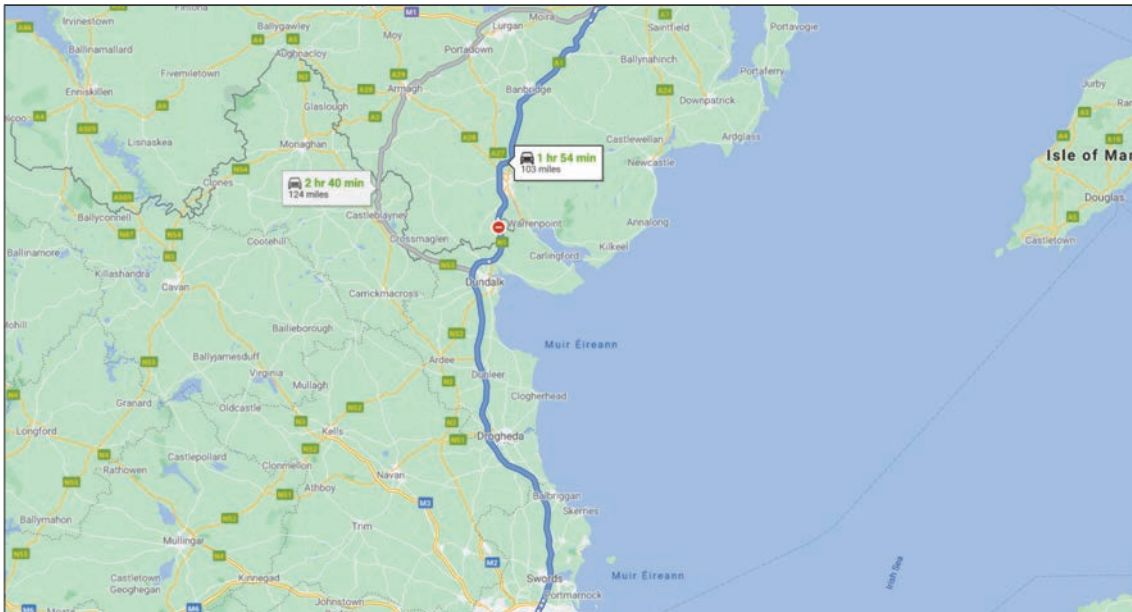


Numeracy: Estimating

Learning objective: to develop skills of estimation and approximation.

This worksheet uses 'real world' strategies to help students estimate the approximate cost of something – in this case, the approximate cost of petrol for a particular car journey.

The cost of petrol



John travels by car from Belfast to Dublin.

The distance is about 169 Kilometres (Km).

The car uses on average of 6 litres per 100 km.

The average prices of one litre of petrol is €1.16.

Which of the following statements is true?

Put a circle around your answer.







1. John has to pay more than €150 for petrol.
2. John has to pay less than €9 for petrol.
3. John has to pay a little bit more than €10 for petrol.
4. John has to pay a little bit less than €12 for petrol.

Numeracy: Working it out

Learning objective: to work out the new price of all these items that are on sale

(Remember 25% is the same as $\frac{1}{4}$)



<p>1. Coffee machine</p> 	<p>2. Washing machine</p> 
<p>Old price €180</p>	<p>Old price €360</p>
<p>New price € _____</p>	<p>New price € _____</p>
<p>3. Fridge old price</p> 	<p>4. 44 inch Television</p> 
<p>Old price €644</p>	<p>Old price €996</p>
<p>New price € _____</p>	<p>New price € _____</p>
<p>5. Laptop</p> 	<p>6. Raincoat</p> 
<p>Old price €560</p>	<p>Old price €56</p>
<p>New price € _____</p>	<p>New price € _____</p>

Digital and media literacy: Ready, steady, share

Learning objective: to improve critical thinking and show the need to ask questions.

Read this headline and answer the questions below.



1. Would I share that story on Facebook?

Facebook?	Yes	No
Twitter?	Yes	No
Instagram?	Yes	No
WhatsApp?	Yes	No

2. If you would share it on any of these, why?

3. If you wouldn't share it on any of these, why not?

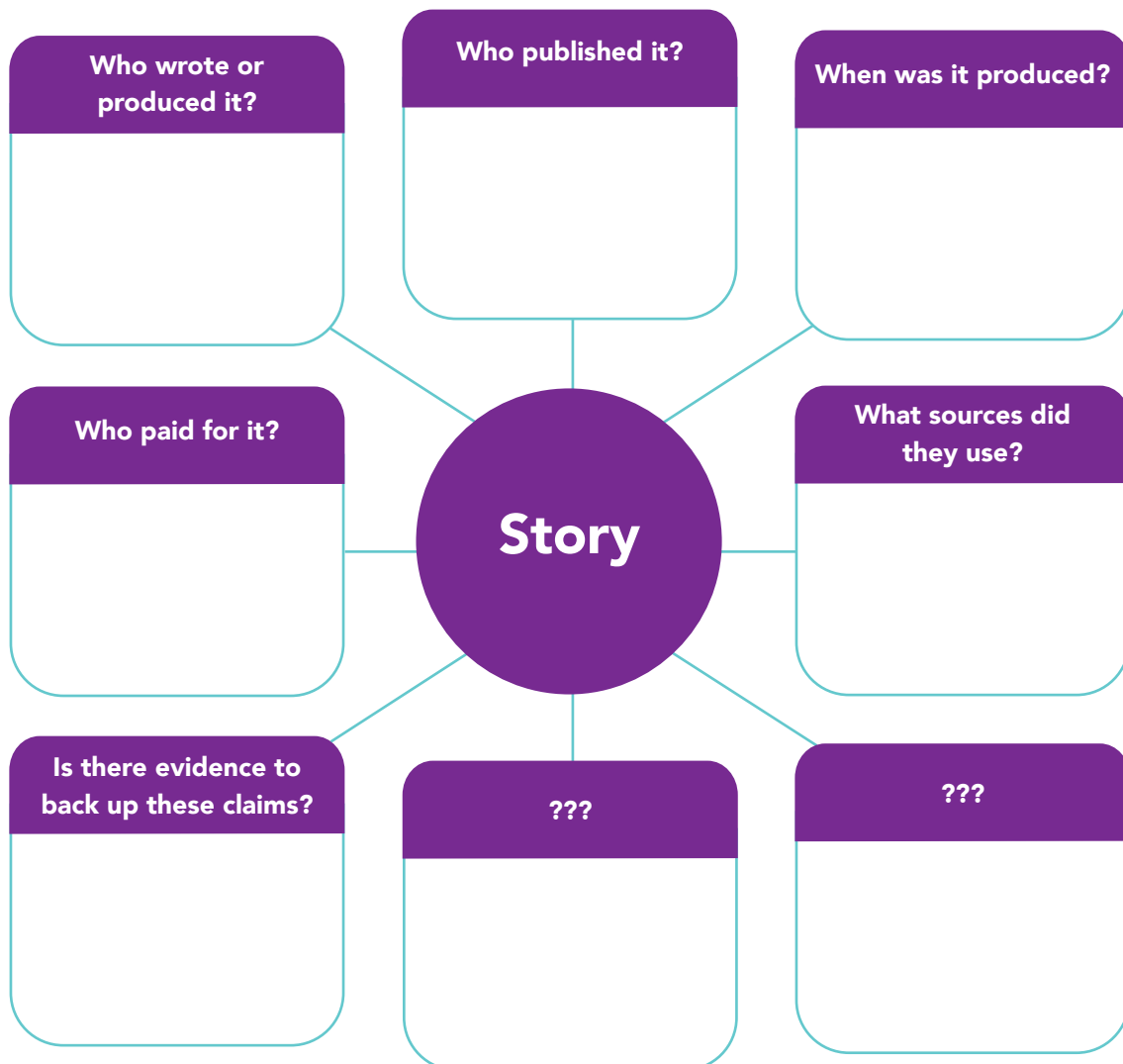
4. What worries have you about sharing this story?

5. What would you do if your friend posted this video or sent it to you on WhatsApp?

Digital and media literacy: Get the facts

Learning objective: to go behind the headline and ask questions about who wrote it, when, how and why.

We need to learn more about this story. How can we do that?



Make a note

Where did we check our facts?

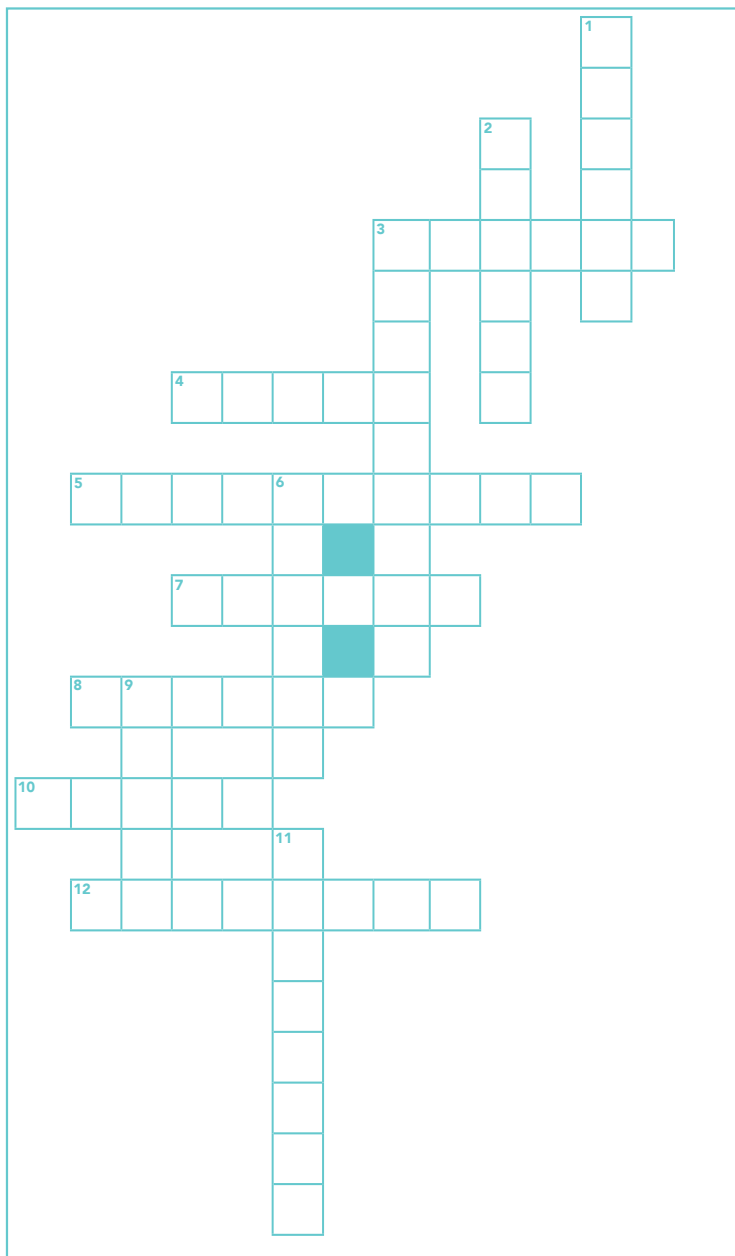
Puzzles and games: Crossword

Words with -ight

fight	night	tight	flight	eight	fortnight	straight
light	right	bright	slight	weight	midnight	overnight
might	sight	fright	delight	height	tonight	flashlight

Fill in the crossword.

The answers are all words from the word list above.



Across

3. A shock (6)
4. Not heavy (5)
5. Use this to see in the dark (10)
7. Small (6)
8. Shiny (6)
10. The number 8 (5)
12. Not crooked (8)

Down

1. A trip on a plane (6)
2. How heavy something is (6)
3. 2 weeks (9)
6. How tall you are (6)
9. Not wrong (5)
11. 12 o'clock at night (8)

[Taken from NALA
Worksheet for Distance
students, Edition 57,
June 2019]

Puzzles and games: Word games

Look at the clues below.

These six clues lead to six answers.

The number after each clue tells you how many letters are in the answer.

The first letter of each of the answers spells a famous city.

Where is it?

1. When something is funny you do this (5) _____
 2. The first number (3) _____
 3. This is what you are called (4) _____
 4. There are seven in a week (4) _____
 5. What is a fruit and a colour (6) _____
 6. You smell with it (4) _____
- The famous city is _____

Look at the clues below.

These five clues lead to five answers.

The first letter of each of the answers spells a colour.

What is the colour?

1. Opposite of boy (4) _____
 2. You turn it on to listen to it (5) _____
 3. You can boil or scramble them (4) _____
 4. We have two of them to see with (4) _____
 5. A person, place or thing (4) _____
- The colour is _____

Puzzles and games: Chinese numbers

Look at the numbers 1 to 10 in Chinese

一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Find the answers to the questions below.

Try writing your answer using Chinese characters.

1. 一 + 二 = _____
2. 二 + 四 = _____
3. 二 + 五 = _____
4. 三 + 六 = _____
5. 十 - 二 = _____
6. 七 - 二 = _____

This worksheet was taken from NALA's 'Voices Matter' workbook (2021).

Other resources

NALA materials

You will find a list of all our resources at www.nala.ie

Most popular resources for students

- **Better handwriting for adults** is a book full of tips, ideas and lots to practice.
- **Brushing Up** is a workbook that covers the basics of spelling, grammar and punctuation
- **Write On** is a learning support book with information about going back to learning, improving your skills, stories and poems from literacy students, a personal dictionary and a learning journal.

We also have a distance learner monthly worksheet, numeracy workbooks and themed resources. You will find these on our website here www.nala.ie/publications/

On our website we have a Tutors Information Hub and you can search for resources using keywords or topics. This list all worksheets and videos on that topic.

Check out <https://www.nala.ie/tutors/>

Resource guides on developing materials

Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners (2003)	http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf
New To ESOL Guidance: Teaching And Learning Materials For Students New To ESOL And Literacy (2019)	https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf3083
Materials for literacy section of handbook by Oxfam 'Adult Literacy: A handbook for development workers' (1995) https://bit.ly/3mYaArz	https://bit.ly/3ssQdnj

Websites with good learning materials and exercises

Literacy

BBC Skillswise https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/skillswise	A collection of free videos and downloadable worksheets to help adult learners improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills.
Excellence gateway https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/interactive-resources/literacy	Lots of literacy interactive resources
Vocabulary.com	Combines dictionary with an adaptive learning game that will have you mastering new words in no time.
Skills workshop https://www.skillsworkshop.org/	There are over 2000 free Functional Skills and Skills for Life resources.
Online worksheet generator https://quickworksheets.net/	Create ESL, spelling, vocabulary and grammar worksheets.

Numeracy

http://www.mathsonline.org/	Has lots of maths materials and puzzles
https://ie.ixl.com/	Provides comprehensive, curriculum-aligned maths and English content from primary school right through to Junior and Leaving Certificate.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/skillswise/maths/zfdymfr	Free videos and downloadable worksheets to help adult learners improve their calculation and numeracy skills.
http://www.haveyougotmathseyes.com/	Resource for Parents, Students, Tutors and Teachers who would like to support and help others to develop their maths eyes.

Digital literacy

<p>Webwise</p> <p>https://www.webwise.ie/teachers/digital_literacy/</p>	<p>Short course for teachers on developing digital literacy skills.</p>
<p>Learn My Way</p> <p>https://www.learnmyway.com</p>	<p>Free courses for you to learn digital skills to stay safe and connected.</p>
<p>https://www.typing.com/</p>	<p>Teaches keyboarding, digital literacy and coding.</p>

Puzzles and games

<p>www.puzzlemaker.com</p>	<p>Create your own word games and crossword puzzles.</p>
<p>https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro</p>	<p>Good game that looks at fake news.</p>
<p>https://www.merriam-webster.com/word-games</p>	<p>Word games and quizzes</p>

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

<p>One Stop English</p> <p>http://onestopenglish.com</p>	<p>You will find thousands of resources for English language teachers.</p>
<p>Cambridge English Assessment</p> <p>https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/</p>	<p>Wide range of resources for teachers and students.</p>
<p>Fáilte isteach</p> <p>http://www.thirdageireland.ie/failte-isteach</p>	<p>Fáilte Isteach is a community project involving predominantly older volunteers welcoming migrants through conversational English classes.</p>

Online learning

<p>Khan Academy</p> <p>https://www.khanacademy.org/</p>	<p>Good selection of free courses including lessons on maths.</p> <p>https://www.khanacademy.org/math</p>
<p>Learnwithnala.ie</p>	<p>Interactive learning website to help you improve your literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. You can work towards a certificate at QQI Level 2 or 3. And if you need help, we have tutors on the phone.</p>
<p>Libraries</p> <p>https://www.librariesireland.ie/elibrary/elearning-courses</p>	<p>There are over 400 courses available to you. You can access this service using your library barcode.</p>
<p>TED</p> <p>https://www.ted.com/</p>	<p>Free knowledge from the world's most inspired thinkers — and a community of curious souls to engage with ideas and each other, both online and at TED and TEDx events around the world, all year long.</p>

Online technology tools

<p>https://kahoot.com/</p>	<p>Educational platform that is based on games and questions. Through this tool, teachers can create questionnaires, discussions, or surveys.</p>
<p>https://www.mentimeter.com/</p>	<p>An interactive presentation tool to engage audiences in real time. Teachers sign up using an email address or through Google or Facebook logins. Audiences join from the app or through menti.com and enter a six-digit join code in order to see and respond to the questions.</p>
<p>https://padlet.com/</p>	<p>Free online tool that is similar to an online notice board. Padlet can be used by students and teachers to post notes on a common page. The notes can contain links, videos, images and document files.</p>
<p>https://quizlet.com/</p>	<p>Provides a platform for students and teachers to create and share their own learning materials, including flashcards and diagrams.</p>

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing distance learning services and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

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SOLAS
learning works



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