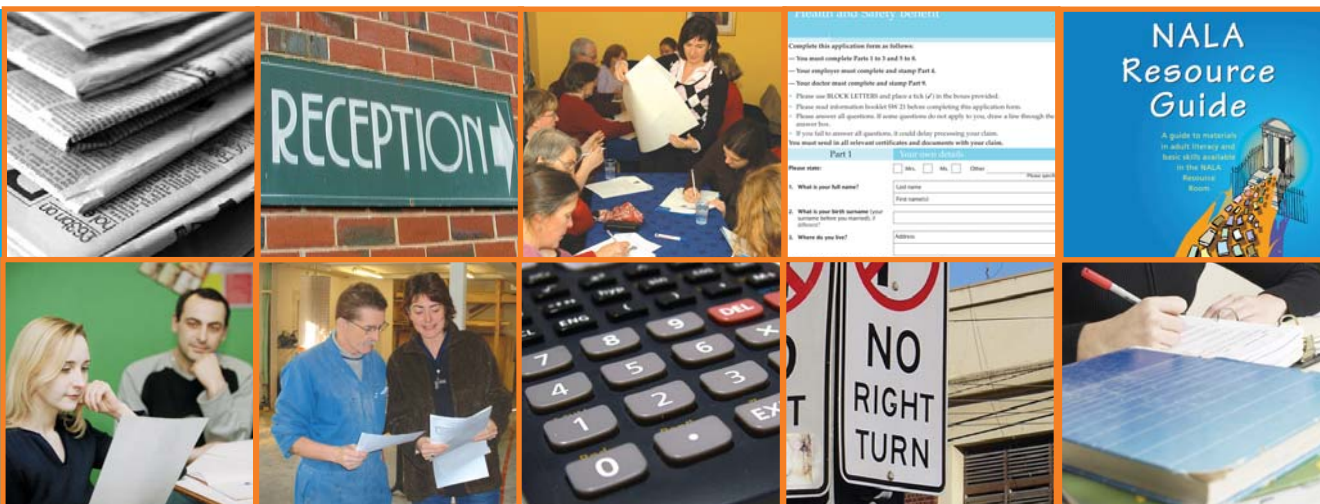


Preparing learning materials

A guide for literacy and numeracy tutors



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The National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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Introduction

This guide is intended to give tutors practical ideas and suggestions for the design, writing and development of learning materials for adult literacy and numeracy work.

Learning materials can take many forms. They can include:

- texts such as books, magazines;
- everyday material such as newspapers, forms, bills, letters;
- online and multi-media material, such as websites, CDs, TV and video;
- environmental texts such as signs, posters, street names.

How the guide is organised

The guide is divided into four sections:

Section 1: A context for materials development

Section 2: Planning and writing materials

Section 3: Design considerations

Section 4: Sample materials and formats

At the end of the guide you will find information on further resources.

We hope that the guide will:

- inform you about the principles of adult literacy work;
- give you ideas and practical suggestions for the development of learning materials; and
- give you some ideas for how to link materials to particular literacy and numeracy objectives.

We wish to thank and acknowledge:

- Derek Rowntree for his ideas on activities and ways of engaging learners with materials;
- Terry Maguire for guidelines on numeracy worksheets;
- Fergus Dolan for guidelines on ESOL materials;
- the members of the NALA Materials Board who worked on this guide: Joyce Burns, Pauline Hensey, Jennie Lynch, Bláthnaid Ní Chinnéide and Helen Ryan.

Section 1

A context for materials development

Before looking in detail at the design and development of materials in this section we will outline key elements in NALA's approach to adult literacy work. We believe that worksheets and other materials are only part of the teaching and learning process in literacy work.

That process is based on the following understandings:

Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information. It includes more than the technical skills of communication; 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. (Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work, NALA 2005).

Numeracy is a lifeskill that involves the competent use of mathematical language, knowledge and skills. Numerate adults have the confidence to manage the mathematical demands of real-life situations such as everyday living, work-related settings and further education, so that effective choices are made in our evolving technological and knowledge-based society. (NALA Numeracy Strategy 2004).

Adult literacy work is effective when:

- ✓ there is respect and equality between the learner and tutor;
- ✓ the learner actively chooses what and how to learn, with the support of the tutor;
- ✓ learning plans are discussed and agreed with individuals and groups;
- ✓ we keep in mind that learning literacy and numeracy has many dimensions: technical, personal, social, political, emotional and creative;
- ✓ we make sure that the materials and topics are relevant to the learners' needs, interests and goals; and
- ✓ we use a wide range and variety of 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 and 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 and the associated entry points to learning.

Activities such as these can help develop a range of literacies in an integrated way. They also help the tutor and students to identify realistic, relevant learning goals in reading, writing and numeracy and to choose useful worksheets and materials.

Questions to help identify needs and goals include:

- What are the the students' most relevant or immediate literacy and numeracy needs?
- What reading and writing do they do now and for what purpose?
- How do they use written and spoken language in their everyday lives?
- How do they use numeracy in their everyday lives?
- What would they like to be able to do more effectively?
 - Reading for what purpose?
 - Writing for what audience?
 - Communication skills and confidence for what situations?
 - Numeracy knowledge and skills for what purpose?

Focusing on the ways in which they use literacy in their everyday lives - for example in the workplace, home, community - can help students identify their current strengths and skills, as well as their needs and goals.

Section 2

Planning and writing learning materials

Setting out

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who will be using the materials? Are they for a specific group or groups of students or are they for general use?
- Is there a specific context the materials will be used in? For example, are they for use with groups or in a one-to-one setting; for face-to-face learning or for distance learning; with youth groups or in a work - based learning setting?
- How much do you know about your intended student? How do you find out?
- Are there existing relevant materials to consider?
- Is there a clear set of learning aims and objectives? How will these be conveyed to the learner?

Learning materials: some points to consider

- Learning materials should show variety, suit different levels, be relevant and be enjoyable.
- They should be culturally appropriate and inclusive.
- They are most useful when they reinforce and build on what the student already knows and can do.

- Keep level/s of literacy and numeracy in mind. The Mapping the Learning Journey (MLJ) framework identifies three broad levels of literacy and numeracy tasks: beginning, mid and upper. It takes account of the 'spikiness' of levels: for example, a worksheet could be at the beginning level of writing, the mid-level of reading, and the upper level of range of application. We can also identify literacy and numeracy levels with reference to FETAC awards, particularly Levels 1, 2 and 3. Keeping levels of literacy and numeracy in mind is useful when designing materials for publication or for general use. When designing for a particular student or group, the main aim is to pitch the materials at the level appropriate for their particular goals and needs.

- Include materials that allow students 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. The four cornerstones of learning identified in the MLJ framework might be a useful reference point. They remind us to develop materials that support learning and progress in:
 - knowledge and skills;
 - depth of understanding and critical awareness;
 - fluency and independence; and
 - range of application.

(Further information on Mapping the Learning Journey is available through NALA and can be found on the website www.nala.ie).

- Where students are working towards accreditation, it would be useful to 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 FETAC modules.

- 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.

Types of learning materials

Texts and materials can be drawn from a variety of sources. These include:

- ✓ formal letters - school, doctors, FÁS, social welfare, tax office, employers;
- ✓ official documents - tax forms, home and car insurance, mortgage and rent documents;
- ✓ work-related texts - contracts, work rotas, 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 of community group meetings, other community documents; (the 'community' may be based on place, interest, ethnic group, and so on);
- ✓ poetry, novels and short stories, songs, drama;
- ✓ language experience - texts produced by the learners themselves;
- ✓ graphs, diagrams, charts;
- ✓ texts related to reading the environment - signs, posters, street names.



Helping learners engage with the materials

There are a number of things you can do to help learners engage fully with the materials. For example:

- Ensure the activity is clearly relevant to the learning objectives and topic in hand.
- Explain the purpose of the activity
 - in general;
 - in relation to individual learning plans or objectives.
- Indicate the time needed.
- Suggest how 'big' an answer is appropriate.
- Avoid "busy work" - exercises with no clear focus or objective.
- Avoid vague activities - for example, asking students to 'Jot down a few ideas about...' without giving some guidance and structure.
- Consider alternatives to writing or keying.
- Ensure variety.
- Use graphics where appropriate.
- Be consistent throughout - for example, use the same words in instructions.
- Don't have too much text on a page - leave some white space.
- Give satisfying 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;
 - sympathy about difficulties they may have had;
 - reassurance about, and guidance on, possible errors they may have made;
 - comments on issues raised by the activities.

Examples of activities and responses

Students can be asked to make a range of responses to a particular text or worksheet. They may be asked to:

- ✓ just think their response - no need to record;
- ✓ talk and discuss their response;
- ✓ tick boxes in a checklist;
- ✓ answer a multiple choice question;
- ✓ underline phrases in a text;
- ✓ complete a table;
- ✓ complete a sentence;
- ✓ fill in blanks left in a sentence (cloze exercises);
- ✓ 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;
- ✓ add to a graph, chart, or diagram;
- ✓ draw a graph, chart or diagram;
- ✓ make a tape recording;
- ✓ take photographs;
- ✓ write or key in a letter, word, sentence or paragraph;
- ✓ do any of a wide range of learning games and puzzles, such as
 - wordsearches;
 - anagrams;
 - bingo, using letters or words or numbers;
 - card sorts and matching activities;
 - crosswords or cross-numbers.

Students can work individually or collaboratively.

When deciding which type of activity to include in a worksheet remember to

match the activity to the learning objectives.

Distance learning

When writing materials for distance learning, such as the literacytools.ie website, there are additional things to keep in mind.

Remember that students involved in distance learning projects do not have a tutor beside them to explain instructions, to go through the worksheet or to give them the answers. The distance learning worksheets therefore 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.

When designing a worksheet for distance learning you should:

- ✓ always state the purpose of the worksheet;
- ✓ define all terms on the worksheet, especially new ones;
- ✓ give an instruction so students are clear what to do; sometimes you might need to include an example on the worksheet;
- ✓ ensure the text is clear and concise;
- ✓ be consistent throughout, for example use the same words in instructions;
- ✓ give hints and tips where appropriate;
- ✓ refer learners to other parts of the workbook or website where other relevant supporting information or progression exercise is available;
- ✓ don't have too much text on a page - leave some white space;
- ✓ think of length - for example worksheets on a particular theme designed for the [literacytools](http://literacytools.ie) website, should be no more than six pages;
- ✓ provide feedback - answers, for instance, may be given at the end of the print material or, if online, given immediately;
- ✓ be aware of the National Disability Authority's accessibility guidelines. (www.nda.ie)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

When designing materials for use by students for whom English is a second or other language, there are additional points to keep in mind.

- What are the students' most relevant or immediate ESOL needs?
- What reading, writing and spoken English communication do they do now, and for what purpose?
- What would ESOL learners like to be able to do more effectively?
- Consider levels of literacy and language.
- Use 'realia' - real life materials from students' everyday lives. These help make the language understandable and connect classes to the real world.
- Include themes and exercises relevant to the students' culture. Develop materials that reflect positively the students' ethnic groups, customs and lifestyles.
- Develop materials that involve a high level of learner participation and communication.
- Materials should encourage the development of transferable skills.
- Audio material should reflect different accents and varieties of English as spoken in Ireland. Make your own by recording radio programmes, or by recording adult literacy students and tutors talking about different subjects.

Numeracy

When writing materials for numeracy teaching there are additional concerns to keep in mind.

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

The challenge 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:

- Quantity and number
- Space and shape
- Data handling and chance
- Problem solving
- Patterns and relationships

Remember, as with all areas of learning, numeracy is not value free. Therefore the context of the worksheet or learning material 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 learners 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 learners 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 learner.

Be clear about the focus of the numeracy worksheet

Tutors also need to be clear about what they are asking the students 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:

$$3 + 4 = \square$$

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 learner 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.

Remember that 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 learners 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 €2. I buy a cup of coffee 4 times a week. How much do I spend every week on coffee?"

We could format this as: $2 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 8$

Or we could format it as: $2 \times 4 = 8$

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 learners to use their own strategies for working out an answer. Simple pictures - for instance, tomatoes on a vine or children in a playground - can be used as a starting point for developing number skills. Visuals are not value free; 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.

The next page has a glossary of mathematical symbols.

Glossary of mathematical symbols

Measurement	Symbol
Length	
millimetre	mm
centimetre	cm
metre	m
kilometre	km
Weight	
milligram	mg
gram	g
kilogram	kg
tonne	t
Volume	
millilitre	ml
litre	L
Area	
square metres	m^2
Volume	
cubic metres	m^3
Relationships For example: You will need 2.5 litres of paint for every square metre to be painted	2.5 L/m^2

The National Standards Authority of Ireland have published rules for writing mathematical symbols. (www.nsai.ie)

Signs

Always use **x** rather than **.** for multiplication.

Spelling

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

Numeracy and ESOL

It's important to ensure there is 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 x 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.

- Although 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 14 people are sharing a restaurant bill of €62.60 equally there are a number of ways to write the division:

$$14 \overline{)62.60}$$

$$62.60 \overline{)14}$$

$$62.60 : 14 =$$



Section 3

Design considerations

The design of learning materials is just as important as the content. More and more literacy practitioners are interacting with designers and printers and therefore have a sense of how visuals and design techniques can add to the learning experience.


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.

■ Headings


Headings should be a feature of every piece of text or worksheet and should guide the reader as to the content of the material. Keep the format consistent, so that readers can distinguish between headings and sub-headings, and use them as guides to reading and understanding the text.


■ Text

Do not block text - don't use all capital letters. Block text throughout makes it harder for people to read.

BLOCK TEXT
THROUGHOUT MAKES
IT HARDER FOR
PEOPLE TO READ. 

For emphasis use bold print.


*In general, use bold
for emphasis, not
italics.* 

**In general, use bold
for emphasis, not
italics.** 


■ Alignment

It is best to left align text instead of centring. Do not fully justify text. When text is fully justified, the spacing between words is usually uneven. This causes the eye to stop tracking and to readjust to the spacing.


Example of centred text:

It is best to left align
text instead of
centring. 

Example of fully justified text:

When text is fully
justified, the spacing
between words is
usually uneven. 

Example of left aligned text:

It is best to left
align text instead
of centring. 

■ Typeface

Typefaces come in 2 basic varieties: serif and non serif. Serif are best for writing and the most popular is Times New Roman. Try not to use unusual serifs which might look more attractive but make the text harder to read.

- 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'.

- Be sparing with abbreviations and Latin phrases.

As far as possible, avoid 'etc', 'ie', 'eg'.

- Use terms that are consistent.

- As a general guide we recommend no more than 20 words per sentence.

- Use 'white space' effectively.

Allow enough room for images and text. Otherwise the page looks dense or crowded. Use lots of 'white space'. Stick to the guidelines given in 'Writing and Design Tips' (available from NALA).

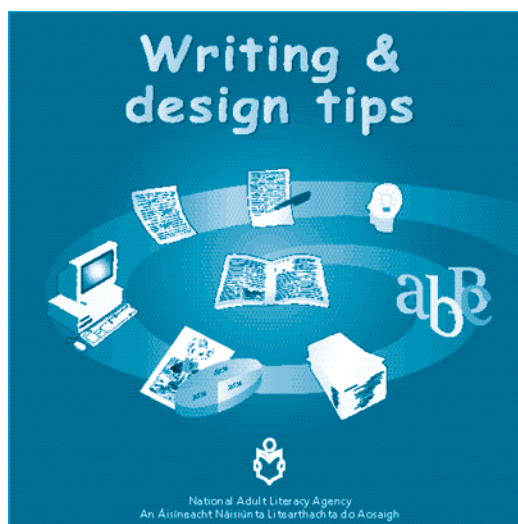
■ Visuals

Using visuals can make the text more interesting and relevant. Ensure that images tell you something about your text. Examples of visuals include:

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

The following guidelines are recommended when using visuals:

- ✓ People relate better to images when the context is familiar. If you were writing a health worksheet on poisons in the kitchen, and were using an image of potentially dangerous poisons, it would be best to set the image in an everyday setting.
- ✓ When using images to show a procedure or set of instructions, place the image alongside the relevant text so as to best reinforce the message. It might help to number each image so that the reader can follow the correct order.
- ✓ Make illustrations very clear with no background distractions.
- ✓ Use action captions to reinforce points.
- ✓ When using graphs, make sure that they are 'real', relevant and clear.



Section 4

Sample worksheets and formats

In this section we have included some sample worksheets, with comments on their learning and design features. We also outline two key techniques for the development of materials - simplification and the language experience approach.

Sample 1: Letter from the Hospital

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. Learners 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.

It is important to develop other reading strategies. For example when looking up a telephone 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 everyday life. The worksheet on page 26, "Letter from the Hospital", was designed to help learners apply the skill of scanning. It is reproduced from Read Write Now 1 (NALA).

Some points to note:

- The objective of the worksheet is to encourage learners 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.
- 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:
 - telephone directories;
 - contents page or index of magazines or books;
 - information from leaflets.
- Range of application: It's important that students are encouraged to apply scanning strategies to a range of formats - for example, scanning a TV Guide to find out what time Fair City is on; or scanning web pages on the Internet for specific information.

Letter from the Hospital



34 Seapark Avenue,
Baldoye,
Dublin 13.

23rd October 2000

Dear Mr. Byrne,

A bed has been reserved for you in the General Medical Ward under the care of Dr. G. Hayes. Please attend the hospital before 11.30 a.m. on Thursday 10th November.

If you are unable to come for admission on that day, please telephone the Admissions Office as soon as possible at 01-7892xxx. A new admission date will be arranged for you.

Yours sincerely,

Tom O'Connor
Admissions Officer.



Underline the following pieces of information.

1. The ward the bed will be in.
2. The name of the doctor taking care of him.
3. The date and time of admission.
4. The phone number of the Admissions Office.

Sample 2: Match the text with the subject

Learning objective: reading - skimming a text

Sometimes when we read we might just want to get the gist, the main ideas in a piece of text, to see if it is of interest or of use to us. 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 main ideas contained in it.
- 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.

Sample 3: 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.

Working on Numbers

Write the answers in the box beside each picture. The numbers you need are at the bottom of the page.

a. How many children are in this picture?



b. How many tomatoes are on this weighing scale?



c. How many women are in this photograph?



0 1 2 3 4 5

Sample 4: The cost of petrol

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.

See page 14 for more on 'real world' strategies in numeracy.



The cost of petrol



John travels by car from Belfast to Dublin.
The distance is about 160 kilometres (km).
The car uses an average of 6 litres per 100 km.
The average price of one litre of petrol is €1.06.

Which of the following statements is true? Put a circle around A, B, C or D.

- A John has to pay more than €150 for petrol.
- B John has to pay less than €9 for petrol.
- C John has to pay a little bit more than €10 for petrol.
- D John has to pay a little bit less than €12 for petrol.

Answer: C

Sample 5: Mapwork: using a grid reference

Learning objective: to read, understand and use grid references

The exercise on the following is taken from the NALA resource pack, 'Missing the Tóbar'.

Note that it takes the student through a series of stages:

1. understanding what a grid reference is and where it is used;
2. seeing an example; and
3. practising.



Mapwork: using a grid reference

What is a grid reference?

Look at the map on page 69. It is a map of some areas in Dublin.

It has three **columns**: A, B and C, and three **rows**: 1, 2 and 3.

These cross over each other, making a **grid**. The grid divides the map into small sections.

Each section is named after the column letters and the row numbers: for example, B2, A3. This is the **grid reference**.

This helps us to find places. It means we can search just in that small section of the map for the place that we want.

How do we use the grid reference on a map?

Most maps have a list of places on the map, with the grid reference written beside it.

For example, on this map **King's Hall** would be listed with the grid reference **B1** beside it. That means that we can find King's Hall in **column B** and in **row 1**. So now we just have to search the small section B1 instead of the whole map.

Now try the exercise on the next page.

Using a grid reference

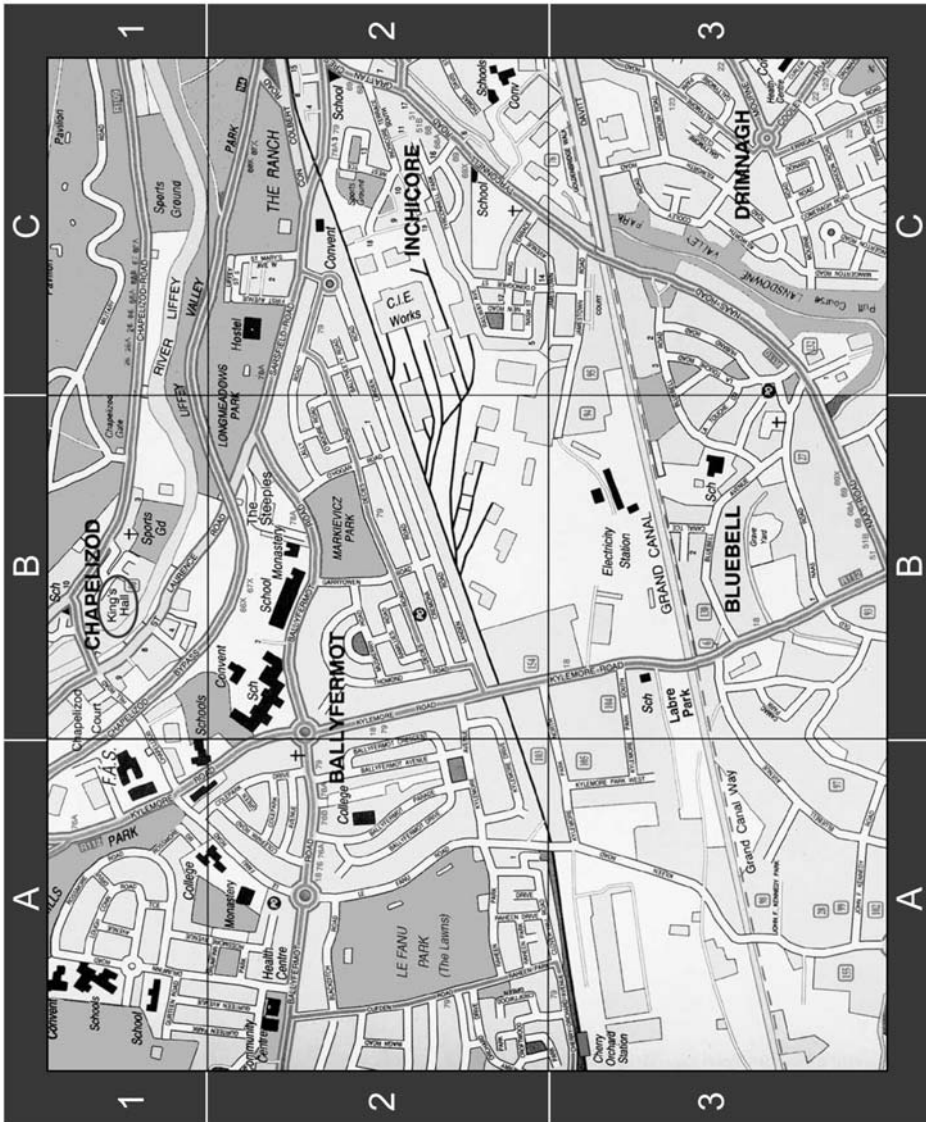
Look at the map on the next page.

Use this grid reference to help you find the following places. Mark them on the map.

The first one is done for you.

Place	Grid Reference
C.I.E. Works	C2
Electricity Station	B3
FÁS	A1
King's Hall	B1
Labre Park	B3
Le Fanu Park	A2
Markievicz Park	B2

Get a map of your own town or village, with a grid reference index. Practise using the grid reference to find places in your locality.



Sample 6: Instructions

Learning objective: Read and understand instructions

The writer of the worksheet in Sample 6 used two useful techniques for materials development:

- simplifying text; and
- language experience.

We have included here an outline of both techniques and a description by the tutor of how the worksheet evolved.

Simplifying texts

Simplifying means changing some of the language and layout of a text while retaining its core meaning. It allows for a wide variety of materials to be available to learners 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 learners as they progress towards being able to read the original text.

When making judgments about the difficulty of a text there are a variety of factors to consider. The difficulty of a text depends not only on the type of language used and the layout and print size of the text but also on what the reader brings to the task of reading. Learners will often find reading a text more difficult or challenging if they have not come across the subject or ideas before.

When simplifying texts it is useful to consider the following questions:

- What is the reason for 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 learners in order to gain access to a subject - or key pieces of information need to be kept in the simplified version? 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? Do you need to line-break the text? Would headings help? Is there a photo or illustration with the original version that would aid comprehension? What about the size of print and line spacing?
- Could longer sentences be simplified by breaking them into shorter ones?
- How can you involve the student in the simplification process?

Students can be involved in the simplification process. The text can be read to the student who can then paraphrase it in his or her own words. One trainer working in a Community Training 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, quoted in the Introduction to the Skillwords 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 learners' own words. In this case, the process produced a text that the particular trainees could more easily read and understand. As well as meeting the needs of those particular trainees, it meant that Michael had two texts at two different levels of difficulty, that he and future groups of trainees could choose between as appropriate.

He then developed vocabulary-building activities in relation to both texts - including word-matching exercises where words from the simplified version were matched with the key words from the original text. (See sample 7)

When acting as a scribe remember to:

- ✓ 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;
- ✓ 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.



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

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 _____

Sample 7: Making a serving tray

Learning objective: Building vocabulary

The following worksheet is reproduced from Skillwords (NALA 2004).

It contains the original instructions on which the previous exercise (Sample 6) was based.

It also includes exercises to build vocabulary, by matching words from the simplified version (Sample 6) to the key words from the original text.



Making a serving tray

Making a serving tray

Woodwork

Read the following instructions. They are taken from the FÁS Integrated Assessment System.

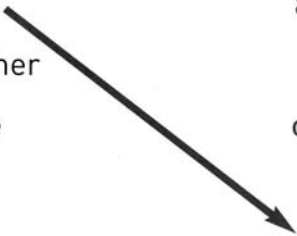
Instructions

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

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



Sample 8: Distance learning worksheet

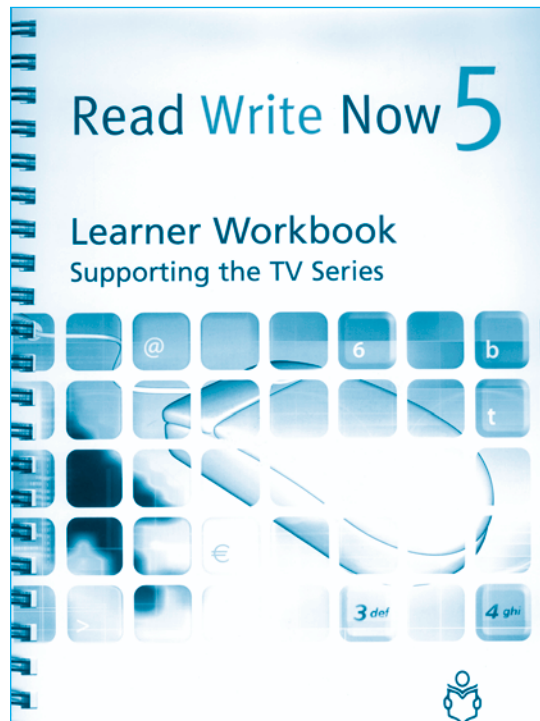
Learning Objective: Using the apostrophe

The following worksheet is reproduced from Read Write Now 5 (NALA).

Some points to note:

- ✓ The worksheet defines the term 'apostrophe'. It is important that terms are defined in distance learning worksheets.
- ✓ A clear instruction is given and an example is done. Remember that learners involved in distance learning projects do not have a tutor beside them to explain instructions.
- ✓ Plenty of white space is used.

Because learners don't have a tutor to check their answers you may include answers at the end of the workbook or on the sheet itself.



Distance learning worksheet

Spelling: apostrophes

Sometimes we run two words together and shorten them to make one word.



An apostrophe (') is used to replace missing letters.

For example: she 'll is short for she will

↓
The apostrophe is used to show that
the letters 'w' and 'i' are missing.



We often speak using the shortened form of words.



Match the words with apostrophes to the words written in full.
The first one is done for you.

won't	we are
haven't	he is
you'd	did not
can't	will not
he's	I will
I'll	you would
we're	cannot
didn't	have not



The answers are on page 181.



Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 for help
with this worksheet.

Appendix

Further resources

City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (1991) '*Making Materials Work*', CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit, Dublin.

Gittens, R., (1998) '*An Introduction to Literacy Tutoring*', Basic Skills Agency, London.

National Adult Literacy Advisory Group (2004) '*National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Programme Implementation Plan*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (2005) '*Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (2005) '*Mapping the Learning Journey*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (2006) '*Missing the Tóbar*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (annual publication) '*Resource Guide*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (2005) '*The Big Picture*', NALA, Dublin

National Adult Literacy Agency (2003) '*Skillwords: Integrating Literacy Resource Pack*', NALA, Dublin

Rowntree Derek 1994 '*Preparing Materials for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning*', Kogan Page, London.

Websites

www.nala.ie

www.literacytools.ie

www.readwritenow.ie

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise

www.mathgoodies.com

What is 'Preparing Learning Materials'?

'Preparing Learning Materials' is a guide for literacy and numeracy tutors. It outlines the principles that underpin NALA's approach to the design and production of teaching and learning materials. It gives practical ideas and suggestions for tutors in relation to selecting and designing literacy and numeracy materials.

What is NALA?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a non-profit membership organisation, concerned with national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland. The Agency was established in 1980 and from that time has campaigned for recognition and response to the adult literacy issue in Ireland.



The National Adult Literacy Agency

An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

National Adult Literacy Agency

76 Lower Gardiner Street
Dublin 1

Telephone: (01) 855 4332

Email: literacy@nala.ie

Website: www.nala.ie

NALA Cork

c/o VTSU Building
Tramore Road
Cork

Telephone: (021) 431 7011

Email: mmurray@nala.ie

NALA Mullingar

Education & Employment Centre
Austin Friar Street
Mullingar
Co Westmeath

Telephone: (044) 40374

Email: pkiernan@nala.ie

General NALA website: www.nala.ie

Literacy learning and tuition website: www.literacytools.ie

Read Write Now TV literacy series 5 website: www.readwritenow.ie

Freephone support line: 1800 20 20 65

