



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Write On



A learning
support book

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General

Introduction

Write On is a learning support book.

It has useful information about:

- » **Going back to learning**
- » **Improving your skills** including hints and tips on:
 - scanning text
 - when to use capital letters
 - how to use a calendar
 - common words used in forms
 - texting from your mobile phone

It also contains:

- » a **Personal dictionary**

This is where you can write down new words that you come across.

- » a **Learning journal**

This is where you can jot down your thoughts about your learning journey.

What is NALA?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent membership organisation. We work to ensure that adults with literacy and numeracy needs can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs.

How to improve your literacy and numeracy?

Literacy and numeracy skills are part of everyday life. Think of all the notices and signs around us, how we use money everyday and send text messages. Everywhere we go we are faced with text, numbers and technology.

Literacy and numeracy are like muscles - if you don't use them, then you lose them. If your skills are a bit rusty then now is the time to brush up on them. You can do that through:

- » NALA's Distance Learning Service
- » local adult literacy services (delivered through the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs))

* NALA's Distance Learning Service

Since 2000 NALA has been delivering basic education through the media. We developed a number of television series that were broadcast on RTÉ television. These include:

- » **Read Write Now** ran for five series from 2000 to 2004.
- » **The Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers** was broadcast for 24 weeks in 2006-7.
- » **Written Off?** series one and two was broadcast in 2008-9. It followed 11 adult learners who returned to learning over 8 weekends.
- » **Stuck for Words** (2010) told the personal stories of people with literacy difficulties and the profound impact going back to education had on their lives.

- » **A story with me in it** was broadcast in 2011 where well known Irish authors teamed up with six adults who had struggled with writing throughout their lives.
- » The **Family Project** was broadcast for two seasons 2014-15. It was about family learning and matched six very different families with different learning needs with six well known Irish personalities and family learning experts.

NALA freephone support line

NALA runs a freephone support line - **1800 20 20 65**. It is open from Monday to Friday, from 9.30am to 5pm. It is a free and confidential service.

You can talk to a trained adult literacy tutor who can discuss your options around learning. This may include being sent some learning materials in the post and work with a tutor over the telephone. You can also learn online through our learning website www.learnwithnala.ie. It is free and confidential. You can practise your skills and work towards a certificate.

They can also put you in contact with your local ETB adult literacy services throughout Ireland.



* Adult Literacy Services

There are adult literacy services throughout the country. Adults can attend their local centre to work with trained tutors on a one to one basis or in small groups. The service is free and confidential. The local Adult Literacy Organiser will meet you and find a suitable tutor and or programme for you.

There are currently about 61,000 adults learning in literacy centres around the country. There are 5,000 adult literacy tutors working in literacy centres and they are trained by their local literacy service.

For information on your nearest service contact the NALA freephone support line on **1800 20 20 65** or check out the NALA website at **www.nala.ie**

Awards

Many learners like to have their learning recognised with a certificate of accreditation.

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland. QQI give awards at different levels starting at levels 1 and 2 and moving to level 3 (similar to Junior Certificate) and level 4 (similar to Leaving Certificate).

If you are learning with the NALA's Distance Learning Service and or ETB Adult Literacy Services, you can choose to work towards a certificate. This will be supported by an adult literacy tutor.

Going back to learning

Learning is a personal journey, whether it is learning to drive, learning to use a computer or learning a sport. There are many things to consider such as what you are interested in learning, how you would like to learn and how you will fit this learning around your life.

Some areas to think about are:

- » Starting off
- » Learning to learn

Starting off

One of the first things to do is to think about what it is you would like to learn and to set some goals.

When you begin a new learning programme, think about ...

- » What reading and writing do you do now, and for what purpose?

- » What is your everyday experience of numeracy?

- » How do you use technology? Mobile phones? Computers?

» What skills would you like to improve?

- reading
- writing
- communication skills and confidence
- numbers
- technology and computers

And now think about for what purpose you would like to use these skills?

| Improve | What purpose |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Reading | |
| Writing | |
| Communication skills and confidence | |
| Numbers | |
| Technology and computers | |

Setting learning goals

After you consider these questions, you can set your learning goals. For example, to fill in a lodgement slip in the bank or to help your children with their homework.

It is important to have a goal for what you want to learn. It is then easier to see your progress as you go along.

Planning to succeed

Before you get stuck into doing the work, think for a while about how you're going to manage it. It's good to remember that when you start something new, there can be times you find it hard. It's a good idea to plan and to be ready.

Here are a few suggestions:

- » Commit to a set number of weeks or study sessions.
For example, decide to give it 4 weeks to see how it goes.
You can then see how you get on and plan the next 4 weeks.
- » Make practical plans to be able to study, thinking about:
 - **What commitments do I have?**
This means looking after children or family, work and hobbies and sport.
 - **What time do I have?**
This means finding time in the week for learning and planning what to do in that time.
 - **What space do I have to study?**
This means finding a quiet space to study and keep all my work.
- » Reward yourself! For example, treat yourself to something special after the first 4 weeks.
- » Think about how to get support for yourself during this learning journey. Will you be comfortable talking to a family member or friend who would be there for you? Keep the number of the NALA freephone support line nearby – 1800 20 20 65. If you need some support, then ring us on the Freephone number, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm.

Learning to learn

Learning to learn is about knowing how you learn best. This helps you to learn more effectively.

Everyone learns in different ways.

There is no right or wrong way to learn. We all learn differently. Here, for example, are two ways of looking at this.

Learning styles

Each of us has a different style of learning.

Some of us may learn by:

» **seeing** (visual)



» **hearing** (auditory)



» **doing** (kinaesthetic)



Think about how you prefer to learn. Do you like to see instructions? Or do you prefer to hear them? Or just go and do it?

It's good to know which learning style you prefer. If you understand how you learned one thing, it can help you to learn new things.

Multiple intelligences

We are all intelligent in different ways. Intelligence is the ability to use what we have learned and apply it to our situation.

Dr. Howard Gardner, an American psychologist, believes that we all have different types of intelligence. We use each kind of intelligence to a greater or lesser amount every day.

There are 8 kinds of intelligence and how you might use them are listed below.

- » **Word intelligence** – you use this when you are talking to people
- » **Number / Logical intelligence** – you use this when you are working out problems
- » **Music intelligence** – you use this when you are listening to music or learning by repetition, for example learning times tables
- » **Picture intelligence** – you use this when you are reading maps or looking at 3D objects
- » **Body intelligence** – you use this when you are playing sport or are good with your hands
- » **Self intelligence** – you use this when you know and understand yourself
- » **People intelligence** – you use this when you get on with people
- » **Nature intelligence** – you are using this when you are enjoying the natural world and when you are aware of your surroundings

Study skills

When learning anything new, we often need to find ways of gathering information and practising what we have learned.

We learn most things by a mixture of speaking or communicating, reading and writing and listening and doing.

Study skills for listening

- » Listen for information you want
- » Ask questions if you don't understand
- » Ask the person you are learning from to repeat what they have said
- » Practise what it is you are learning – this helps you to remember what you have learned



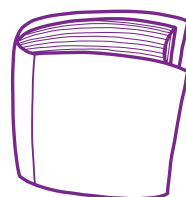
Study skills for speaking

- » Draw up a plan of what you want to say – for example, making telephone calls to find information, making a speech or going for an interview
- » Practise until you get it right – saying what you want to say out loud
- » Know how to ask and answer questions



Study skills for reading

- » Skim – reading to get a general gist of the information
- » Scan – reading to find particular information
- » Read for understanding
- » Read for enjoyment



Study skills for writing



- » Brainstorm your ideas – think about all your ideas and write them down
- » Use spidergrams – put a circle with your topic in the middle of a page and write your ideas around this circle
- » Write drafts – make a rough copy
- » Use the dictionary

Reviewing progress

When you are learning it is a good idea to review what you've learned.

It is not always easy to know when you have finished learning something. You go on learning some things all our lives. For example, no one is a perfect speller or knows the meaning of every word in the dictionary.

If you want to be sure that you have learned something, you need to put the learning into practice. For example if you never write, you cannot know if your spelling is improving or not.

When you review your learning you:

- » look at what you've learned
- » look at what you haven't learned
- » remind yourself of information you thought you'd forgotten, such as a spelling rule
- » look at things in a new way

Reviewing your learning means that you can work out what stage you are at in your learning and see what more you have to do. Before you start, remember to fix a date for your review. And of course celebrate your progress.

Learners' stories and poems

Anne, Ifrah, Olive, Vincent and Stephen featured with other adults in the Written Off? Television programme in 2008 and 2009. These three stories and four poems share their experiences with us.

These writings were first published in a book in 2009 called Written Off? Thank you to these five adults for allowing us to publish them in this support book.



School Days

by Anne Aherne

My name is Anne Aherne.

I lived in a place called Belgard Castle. I was Mum and Dad's little princess. I lived there with my three brothers and one sister. We were a very close family. We did everything together; we all helped out on the farm and it was great, as we learned all about the animals and how to look after them. Dad taught me how to milk the cows and to look after the crops. We were totally self-sufficient. Mum would bake bread and apple tarts and make all her own butter and cheese. We were all loved very much and we knew it.

When I was a child, I was called in the morning to go to school. Mum would have hot porridge ready and the fire in the kitchen would be nice and cosy. The smell of hot toast with the butter melting into it was gorgeous. Mum would have my uniform ready to put on. It was a white shirt and a navy skirt and tie – I thought I looked great. Mum was always singing – you could hear her from the bedroom. I liked it when she sang; her voice was sweet as honey. I would get dressed and go away to school on the bar of my brother's bicycle. We would have great fun going down the big hill past all the big trees with the wind in our hair.

One day, a big bull got out of the field and chased us to school – we were early that day. In the autumn, on my way home I would kick the golden leaves on the footpaths up over the top of my head. It was great fun for me but not for my mother, who had to clean our uniforms. When I arrived home, there was always a smell of the baking in the kitchen. Mum cooled the baking on the window sill. It was great seeing the big window full of all the cakes and bread – I loved it. I would start my homework, but as you can see, not very well.

While Mum made dinner, we would go and play in the grounds of the castle. My mum's sister sent us a trunk of old Elizabethan clothes from her Auntie Minnie, who lived in Narrowwater Castle. When we opened the box it was like Pandora's box with all the glitter and shoes with jewels – it was amazing for two little girls to see. I remember our eyes open wide with delight. We would dress up and play away to our little hearts' content. I would pretend to be the lady in waiting or we would pretend we were having high tea on the lawn and then go for a spot of tennis. We would skip along home to our own house, where Mum would have tea ready. Dad would be home by then. We would all sit down and talk about what we all got up to today. After dinner we would sit at the big red fireplace looking at the sparks lighting up the chimney. Dad would tell us stories about when he was a child – we found the stories so funny. He would peel us apples and oranges then. They were amazing days.

The day I lifted the Kildare Times and read the advertisement in it about NALA looking for people to apply to return to learning, I replied immediately and to my surprise they called me. I nearly fainted when I received the phone call. It has been an amazing experience working with all the people on the programme. It has changed my life completely, not only from the spelling and the learning point – it has made me get my confidence back in more ways than one. If I can do it, so can you.

Don't Be Ashamed.

A Long Way from Home

By Ifrah Ahmed

My name is Ifrah, I lived in Somalia until I was 17. I did not attend school in Somalia because of the war but I learned the Koran. I left Somalia because of the war. My mother, brother and sister are all dead – they were all killed in a war incident. My father and brother were not at home when the soldiers came and I was left for dead. We grieved for our family members. My father, brother and I lived in the house for a while. My father and brother have been taken away by the soldiers since then and I do not know if they are dead or alive. Now I find it hard to talk about family. I was very unhappy without my family.

When I left Somalia I did not know about Ireland. I left Somalia intending to go to America. My aunt who lives in America paid a man to get me out of Somalia and I met this man, Hassan, in the bus station in Addis Abba. He knew me because I was the only person left in the bus station. I stayed with his family. He had two beautiful children and I loved to play with them. But all this time I was very sad, scared and lonely and I did not know what was in store for me each day, let alone in the weeks or months that lay ahead. I was collected from this house by another man and he told me that he had come from America and that he was taking me back to my aunt in America.

We took a plane from Ethiopia and he warned me not to speak to anybody. The plane landed in another country and then he told me to get off the plane and he gave me a passport. He said that I was not to talk to him and if there was any problem that I was not to say that I knew him. There were five people in the queue between us – I was ahead of him.

When I got through I was booked onto another flight and I did not know where I was going – the next thing I knew, I was landing in Dublin Airport. Dublin was unknown to me. I had never even heard of Dublin or Ireland. I did not know about U2, Westlife, Roy Keane or Riverdance.

I got off the plane in Dublin on 29 January 2006 in the late afternoon. It was pitch dark – I was frozen stiff. I was wearing a Somalian long black dress and sandals. I had never experienced such cold weather. I thought I was in America.

I went to a hotel with this man somewhere in Dublin city. He wanted me to share a room and to sleep with him. He told me that if I would not sleep with him that he would call the police and I would be sent back to where I came from. I begged him not to come near me – I told him I could not sleep with him. I was crying and I told him the troubles I had already experienced and he just went to another room.

The following morning I could not eat. I was just scared and frightened. The people all around were white. I was still wearing the clothes I arrived in. We took a taxi and he told the taxi driver to bring me to go to the Department of Justice. He told me where to go. He told me this was not America but it was safe country, and my God it is a safe country.

At the Department of Justice I was sitting down. I sat in front of a man at his desk. We were separated by a counter. He was an oldish man and he was very kind to me. I laugh now, he could not speak Somalian and I could not speak English. At that moment I was really, really scared. He identified the language I spoke and then showed me a piece of paper, which was in Somalian and English and we both worked from this.

I waited and waited for him and I had my fingerprints taken. As I was a teenager, I was given a social worker. The social worker spoke to me and she got a Somalian lady to translate for me. I was brought to a hostel. A Somalian girl opened the door of the hostel. I could not believe it. I just hugged her and cried. I only had the clothes I was wearing. She said it is OK, we are here now, we are both safe. I was freezing and I sat close to the heater. I was asked by the carer in the hostel if I wanted a drink - I did not know what a drink was. He then said tea or coffee so I knew what he meant. I sat cold and scared in the room for a few hours. The social worker gave me her jumper, a black jumper. It kept me warm and I wore it but I still did not have shoes to wear.

I still did not see any other black person. We had Indian food for tea – the Somali girl gave me a nightdress to sleep in. I could not shower, the water was too cold. The following morning I was offered cornflakes for breakfast and I did not want to eat. They offered bread and I would not eat that either. I only want eat Somali food. I went to English classes and I knew I had to make friends and a new life for myself.

Coming to Ireland has made a big difference for me. I am happier now. I am having a good life here, there are a lot of Irish people around me and I trust them all. I work in the community and I am an activist against female genital mutilation (FGM). I am a victim of FGM and I want to do my best to prevent this from happening to other young girls. I integrated myself into Irish society, I went on the St Patrick's Day parade and I really enjoyed it!

Education is Great

by Ifrah Ahmed

I say education is great.

It creates and allows you to make life decisions.

Education is key to set you free from joblessness.

Education relieves you from ignorance.

Education is key to set your life free.

Education opens the door for opportunity.

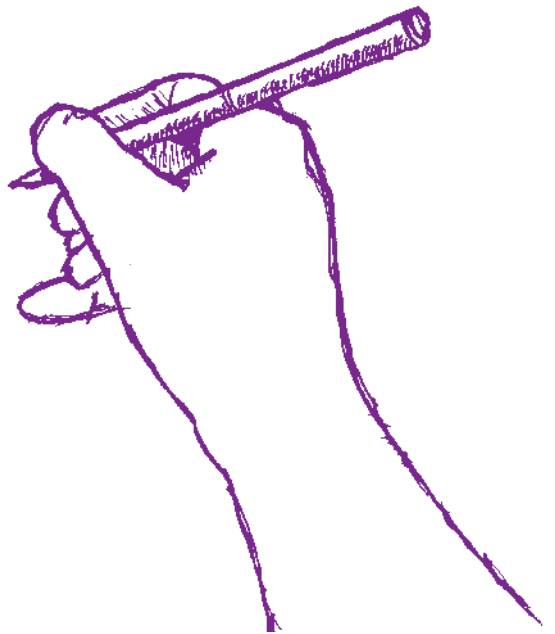
Without education is without light.

Education allows you to be what you want to be, like Obama.

Free Falling

by Olive Phelan

I would love to go free falling if just for a little while to let go of all the cobwebs that build up inside. They can go and rest on the tall grass that grows along the riverbank and when the morning mist falls upon my cobwebs of every size then the morning sun will rise to a bright new dawn and my dewy cobwebs will be nature's chandeliers with all the colours of the rainbow gently blowing in the breeze.



Celtic Education

by Olive Phelan

Have you seen the Celtic tiger? Did it come near you?

Our politicians celebrated it, boasted about it and bled it dry.

I would like to see education be given priority, a solid foundation.

No young child should fall through the net. Teenages should leave school with a good education and, for parents and grandparents, more funding and grants made available for education.

Let there be a common bond for all.

We have to start with a good foundation.

Turn negative into positive

And positive into energy

For life learning.



Better literacy and numeracy is better for everyone.

Hidden Thoughts

by Vincent Gaffney

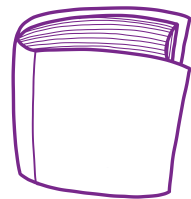
Hidden thoughts go through my mind
It's a place of loneliness where I must
Unwind, there's stories to be told where
There's no one to hear, it's one of my problems
And that is my fear.

I think of the past, those tears trickle and fall
Just me and my surroundings as I wait for a
Call, my mind it does wonder as time slips
Away, it's my shadow of darkness, it's there
By night and day.

My words are unspoken with no confidence
At all, with a literacy problem and that is my
Downfall, there's doors to be opened, it's a
Place you can't see, I'm trapped in my
Surroundings with my memories and me.

There's people out there who feel the same way,
Just a simple phone call and they can have a say
There's some out there who will listen of course
Just take a short trip into those open doors.

As a I walk through those doors, there is laughter
And cheer, with smiling faces you are welcome
In here, as I take my first step there's people like me
NALA is the place where I should be.



Learning is a Journey

by Stephen Cullen

In 1989, my wife Carmel, daughter Fiona, aged nine and son Niall, aged four, ventured on a journey to Canada. We decided we wanted a change and we wanted to see what it was like to live in another country. We had no family or friends out there so it was a really big adventure. We did not have jobs or schools organised at the time.

When we landed in Toronto on 2 August 1989, the sun was shining and we all felt great – we were looking forward to this new experience. We went to a place called Kitchener, an hour from Toronto, as we had a contact there. We rented a house and settled down. Carmel got her first job as an accountant working in an Indian Gallery and then went to work in a software company, which later asked us to relocate to London in 1997. I went to work in Sketchley's Dry Cleaners. Fiona went to school each day and Niall went to a babysitter.

After two months there we bought our first house – it had a swimming pool. We thought this was great and we had many barbecues with friends by the pool. Lots of family visited over the years and they loved the pool and often would swim at night, which was great fun. We made lots of good friends in Canada from all different parts of the world and they became our family and were very important to us. We have stayed in contact with some of the people we met and they are looking forward to seeing the Written Off? programmes online.

After eight years Carmel was relocated to a job in London, England, and we made another journey. At this stage we were ready to leave Canada and make our way back, as we missed our family. We bought our house in Old Bawn in 1997, the first year we got back to London. I stayed in England for over two years and then came back to Ireland to renovate our house. Carmel, Fiona and Niall stayed in London and did not come back until 2001. Fiona decided to stay in England and

still works and lives there today. While it was great to be away, we were happy to return to Ireland.

I have embarked on another life journey - I have returned to learning. After many years of hiding the secret that I could not read or write, I decided to join the Written Off? programme to improve my skills.

My school experience was very poor and I learned nothing – not a “c ” from a “g”. At the age of sixteen I wrote SG for my initials and one of my friends told me it should have been SC. I learned more in that few minutes than I did in the years I was in school. With that gem of knowledge I knew I had to learn to write my name and address. I taught myself to do that – no one else knew that I had missed out on the opportunity of getting basic skills. I was the only member of my family to slip through the net.

Before we married I told Carmel that I could not read and coming up to the wedding day I was more nervous about getting my name and address correct on the marriage registry than I was about saying “I do”. When we bought our first house, I had to learn the new address. And so on when we moved and bought our second and third house in Dublin, it was the same. When we moved house in Canada, same again and also when we lived in London. That was the very first thing I had to do in each house and I did manage to do that on every one.

The day I left home to go to Moyvalley to meet seven other people who were on the same journey, I was very nervous. All of us were very nervous. In fact, I nearly did not go at all, except when I told Niall I was thinking of not going, my son said to me “if you do not go I will drive you there myself”. I did not want to let Fiona, Carmel or Niall down as I have 100 per cent support from them at all times in everything thing I do.

By the first evening, we were all feeling a bit better. To help the group to bond and to learn about learning we did a jeep and a tank-driving exercise. We all had fun together and from then on we all became friends. We have met so many interesting people on this

journey and everyone is so supportive. I now feel I can tell my family and in-laws as no one in the family was aware up to now, but they are all happy for me.

This journey I hope will set me up for another journey. I want to do two things – I want to travel to Australia and I also want to retrain to be a carer and to work with adults who have special needs.



Improving your skills: Hints and tips

Reading

This section has information and tips on:

- » Scanning and skimming
- » Alphabet A – Z
- » Alphabetical order
- » Using the dictionary
- » 100 most common words



Scanning and skimming

Many texts do not require close reading. For example, when you are looking up a telephone directory or reading a newspaper, you don't have to read every word. You are often just looking for a particular piece of information or getting the gist of the text. Two useful reading strategies are **scanning** and **skimming**.

Scanning: Think of looking up the ingredients of a yogurt carton to find out how much sugar is in it. Scanning means moving quickly over a text to find the particular piece of information that you want. It is an important skill to develop as it relates to many of the reading tasks used in everyday life.

Skimming: Think of reading the front page of a newspaper. We just want to get the gist to see if a particular article is interesting to us. This is called skimming - moving our eyes over the page looking for clues as to what the piece is about. These clues can include heading, key words and photos.

Alphabet A - Z

| Upper case or capital letters | Lower case or small letters |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A | a |
| B | b |
| C | c |
| D | d |
| E | e |
| F | f |
| G | g |
| H | h |
| I | i |
| J | j |
| K | k |
| L | l |
| M | m |
| N | n |
| O | o |
| P | p |
| Q | q |
| R | r |
| S | s |
| T | t |
| U | u |
| V | v |
| W | w |
| X | x |
| Y | y |
| Z | z |

Alphabetical order

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

It is useful to know alphabetical order when trying to find a particular word. For example, a name in an index or a word in the dictionary.

Look at a telephone book.

You will see that the surnames starting with the letter **A** come first. After that there are the surnames that start with the letter **B** and so on.

For example: Look at this list of names.

O'Reilly Young Byrne Neill McDonald Adams

In the phonebook they would be listed in this order.

Adams Byrne McDonald Neill O'Reilly Young

Try this: Look at this list of names.

White Lynch Fagan Connell Smith Jackson

Write this list in alphabetical order as you would see them in a phonebook.



Alphabetical order

When names or words begin with the same letter then what do you do?

You look at the second letter in each word and use that to decide the order.

For example:

We would find

builder baker beautician

written in alphabetical order in the local directory as

baker beautician builder

And if the first two letters of a group of words are the same, you look at the third letter and so on.

For example:

Our local directory would have

butcher builder business

listed as:

builder business butcher

Try this:

Put these words in alphabetical order.

forester fitter florist farmer fireman



Using the dictionary

A **dictionary** is a book that gives the meanings of words. The words are listed in alphabetical order.

For example:

apple, bread, cake leaf, man, nose yard, zoo

Choose a dictionary to use and have it handy while you're reading this.

Notice these things:

There are **guidewords** on the top of each page.

The guideword on the **left** is the first word on the page.

The guideword on the **right** is the last word on the page.

For example:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>cook</p> <p>cook, -v. 1 to prepare (food). 2 to alter. 3 make false (accounts, etc)</p> | <p>cooler</p> <p>cooler, -n. A cooler is a container for keeping something cool, especially drinks.</p> |
|--|---|

Using the dictionary

One word might have more than one meaning.

All the meanings will be listed and numbered.

For example: Here the word cook has 3 meanings.

3 different meanings of a word

cook, -v.

1 to prepare (food)

2 to alter

3 make false (accounts, etc.)

You might see letters after the word.

For example:

See the -v beside the word cook in this example.

cook, -v.

1 to prepare (food)

2 to alter

3 make false (accounts, etc.)

The -v is short for verb. Verb means action word.

Here are some other letters you might see beside a word.

n = noun

adj. = adjective

adv. = adverb

pron. = pronoun

Don't worry about these for now. They just tell us more about the type of word it is.

TIP

Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on this.

100 most common words

These 100 words make up, on average, half of all reading.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| a I it the all be for his on so with an before call come do from her into little make much no off or out see their there up went when will your | has if like made me my now only other right some then two well what which and he is that was at are have not said we about been by can did first go | in of to as but had him one they you back big came could down get here just look more must new old our over she them this want were where who |
|--|--|--|

This list was written by Edward Dolch, University of Illinois.

Writing

This section has information and tips on:

- » Handwriting
- » Writing sentences
- » Spelling tips
- » Filling in forms
- » Writing a note or memo
- » Letter layout – formal
- » Letter layout - informal



Handwriting

You can improve your handwriting by practising.

Before you write

- » Sit comfortably
- » Put the paper at a slight angle
- » Check how you hold the pencil - it should be between the thumb and first finger

To form the letters you need to use different movements.

Practise these groups of exercises.

Group 1 – to practise movements



List 1 b h n m p r

List 2 b a f h i k n

List 3 i l t u y

List 4 k v w x z

List 5 c o c o c o

Group 2 – These letters should be all the same height.



List 1 a c e i m n o r s u v w x z

List 2 b d f h k l t

List 3 g j p q y

Group 3



| | | | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|
| ab | _____ | ja | _____ | qu | _____ |
| ac | _____ | je | _____ | qua | _____ |
| ad | _____ | ji | _____ | que | _____ |
| af | _____ | jo | _____ | qui | _____ |
| ag | _____ | ju | _____ | quo | _____ |
| ak | _____ | | | | |

TIP

If you would like more help with handwriting, contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65. NALA has a workbook 'Better Handwriting for adults' - ring us to order a copy.

Writing sentences

When do you use capital letters?

1. At the beginning of every sentence.

For example: The place is lovely.

2. For the letter i when it refers to yourself.

For example: I'll ring you when I get home.

3. For the first letter of

- names of people

For example: Tina, Alex, Hicks, O'Connell

- names of places

For example: Main Street, Sligo, Portugal

- the title of a person

For example: Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, Fr

- days of the week and months of the year

For example: Monday, Friday, June, October

- names of books, songs, films, newspapers

For example: Eastenders, Citizen Kane, Irish Independent

Full stops

A full stop goes at the end of every sentence.

For example: Jane has to go to the hospital for a check-up.

Dissolve the jelly in ½ pint of boiling water.

Jack filled in a competition form.

The full stop may also be used to shorten words.

For example: Ave. = Avenue

Rd. = Road

Co. = County

Wed. = Wednesday

Sept. = September

TIP A sentence always begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. For example: The film is out on Friday.

Verbs

A verb is an *action* word.

For example: Mary **walks** in the park.
The swimmer **dives** into the pool.

The time of a verb is known as a tense.

There are 3 tenses:

- the **present** tense
- the **past** tense
- the **future** tense

1. The **present** tense is used for actions happening now.

For example: I am hungry and I want to eat now.

We are reading this book together.

The concert is in the RDS.

2. The **past** tense is used for actions that have taken place.

For example: I was sick yesterday so I didn't go to work.

She went to the cinema.

The party was great.

3. The **future** tense is used for actions that will happen.

For example: I will go and book the holiday tomorrow.

The hospital will ring on Tuesday.

They will go to the races next Sunday.

Nouns

A noun is a name of an object or thing.

There are different types of nouns:

1. Common nouns
2. Proper nouns

1. Common nouns - objects around us without a special name.

For example: The **letter** arrived yesterday.

We saw their new **couch**.

They are playing with the **dog**.

2. Proper nouns - name given to a particular person or place.

All proper nouns begin with a capital letter.

For example: **Mary** and **John** are on holidays.

I am watching **Eastenders**.

The **River Liffey** flows through **Dublin**.



Contact the NALA freephone support line on 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on this.

Spelling tips

1. Choose a word you would like to learn to spell.
Look at something you have written.
Are there words that you think are not spelt right?
2. Now that you have chosen the word you want to spell, find out how to spell it.

You can do this by:

- » Looking up a dictionary
- » Asking somebody

3. Now that you have the correct spelling, how can you learn it?

There are many ways of developing spelling skills. Usually when we spell a word wrongly, we have some of it right!

Some of these methods include:

a) **Look, say, trace, cover, write, check**

Look at the word carefully.

Say the word.

Trace over each letter with a finger or a pen or make the shape of the letters in the air.

Cover the word and try to say the letters.

Write the word without looking.

Check if it has been written correctly. If not, repeat from the top.

Practise the same word after 10 minutes, at the end of the day and the following day until you are happy that you can spell it.

b) Visual approach (learn by seeing) Look at the word and ask ... 

» Can I break the word up?

For example:

party breaks up as par / ty

forgetful breaks up as for / get / ful

» Within the word, are there smaller words?

For example:

together = to / get / her

shoelace = shoe / lace

» Does the word have a familiar beginning or ending?

For example:

unkind = un + kind

helpful = help + ful

singing = sing + ing

» What does the word look like?

- How many tall letters are there? If so, where do they come in the word?

c) Auditory approach including phonics (learn by hearing)



Look at the word and try to:

» Sound out the word.

TIP

To learn more about the connections between letters and sounds, contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65.

» Say the word as it is spelled. For example, k-nee, lam-b

» Look out for words that have sound patterns or rhymes.
For example: Hand, sand, land, stand, understanding

d Kinaesthetic approach (learn by doing)



- » Write the word.
- » Trace over the letters saying each one.
- » Write the word without looking.
- » Use joined writing – this can be helpful as you see the word as one unit rather than a series of small letters.
- » Practise little and often on a regular basis.

e) Word association

Try and associate letters in a word with something to help you learn to spell a word. It is fun to think up these associations yourself. Sometimes the sillier the better as the word becomes more memorable!

For example:

occur = Oh Carol's computer upgrade's rocking

business = bus – i - ness



Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on spelling.

Filling in forms

Below are common words that you will come across when filling in forms.

Surname is your second name.

For example: Byrne, Murphy, Ryan
(This may also be called Family name)

First name

For example: Mary, John, Peter
(This may also be called Christian name)

Address For example: 203 Peter's Avenue

Telephone Number For example: 01-843xxxx
or 087 123 4567

Date of Birth (D.O.B.) For example: 2nd December 1971
or 02 / 12 / 71
or

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Day Month Year

Nationality is belonging to a certain country
For example: Irish, Welsh

Country or Place of Birth

For example: Ireland, England, U.S.A

Sex

For example: Male ☐ Female ☐ or M ☐ F ☐

PPS Number is your Personal Public Service Number.

For example: 1234567A

Each person in the country is given a PPS number that is unique to them. You use it for your tax affairs and when dealing with social protection services.

Filling in forms

Other questions you can find on a form are:

Please tick ✓ appropriate box

Married ☐ Single ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated ☐

Occupation is your job.
For example: Office assistant, Butcher

or

Please tick ✓ appropriate box.

Employed Person ☐ Self-employed person ☐
Unemployed ☐ Pensioner ☐
Student ☐ Other, please state _____

Dependants are your children under a certain age (usually 18).

| Surname | First name | Date of Birth | Sex | Place of Birth |
|---------|------------|---------------|-----|----------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Sign the form.

Signature _____

Date _____

Writing a note or memo

There are different kinds of notes or memos.

1. Note to yourself

Ring builders
Collect photos
Post office – TV licence
Pick Maria up at 4.30 pm

TIP

Don't worry about capital letters and full stops when you are writing a note for yourself.

2. Note to a family member or friend

Brian,

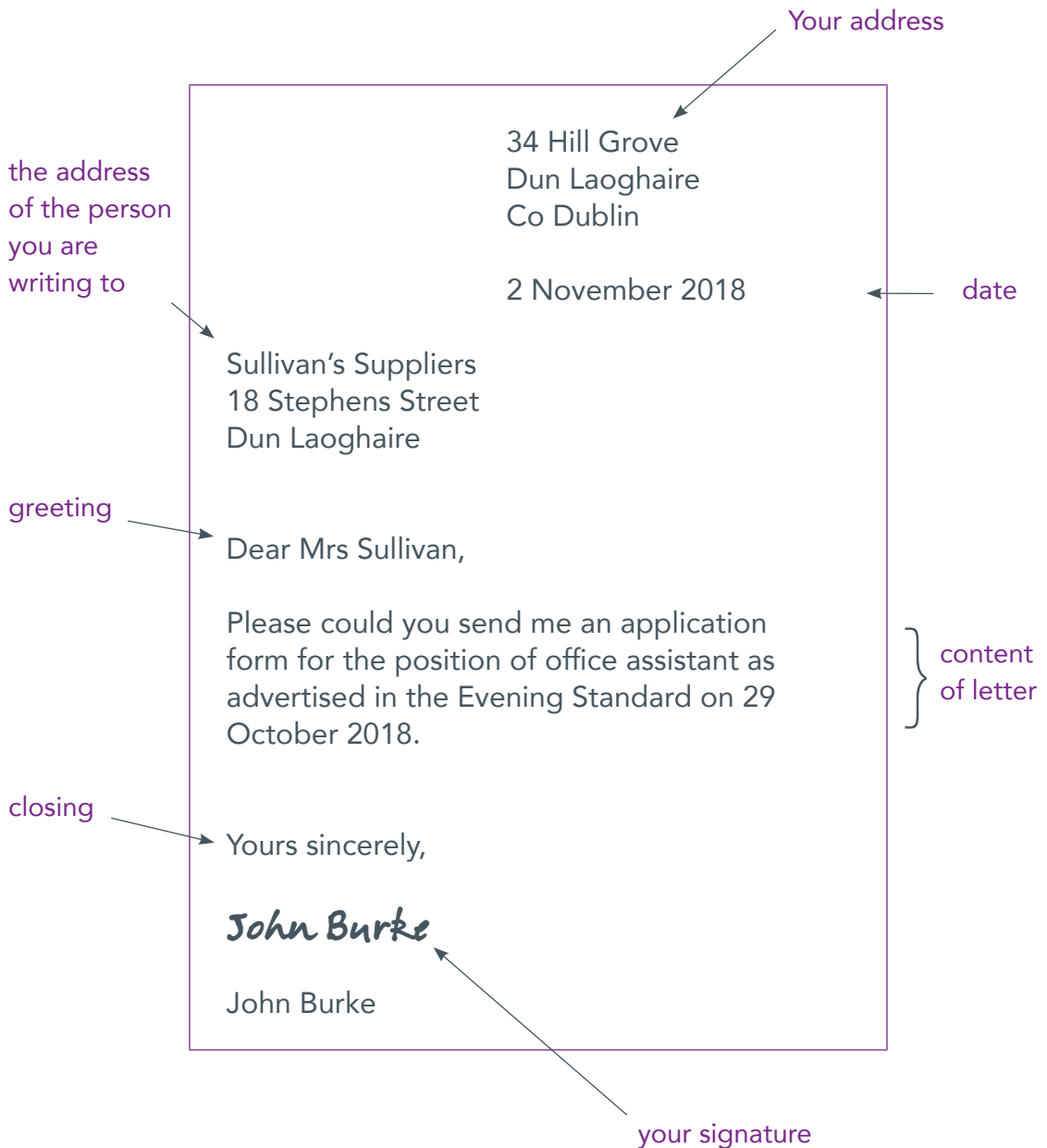
Damian called –
can't make it to
football practice.
Will ring you
tomorrow.

Jean

TIP

Write down the key information.

Letter layout - formal



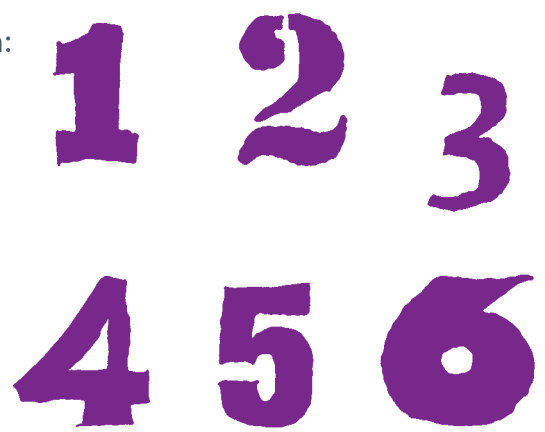
Letter layout - informal



Numbers

This section has information and tips on:

- » Numbers 1 to 100
- » Time
- » Calendar
- » Writing dates
- » Numbers in words



Numbers 1 to 100

The 100 number square shows the numbers from 1 to 100.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 |
| 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |
| 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 |
| 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
| 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |

It is good to help with:

- » seeing numbers visually
- » finding different patterns in numbers,
- » exploring times tables, and
- » counting in intervals.

Time: am and pm

The news is on TV at 6 o'clock in the evening.

How do you write this time so it is clear it is 6 o'clock in the evening and not 6 o'clock in the morning?

To make it clear we use **am** and **pm**

6 pm is 6 o'clock in the evening.

6 am is 6 o'clock in the morning.

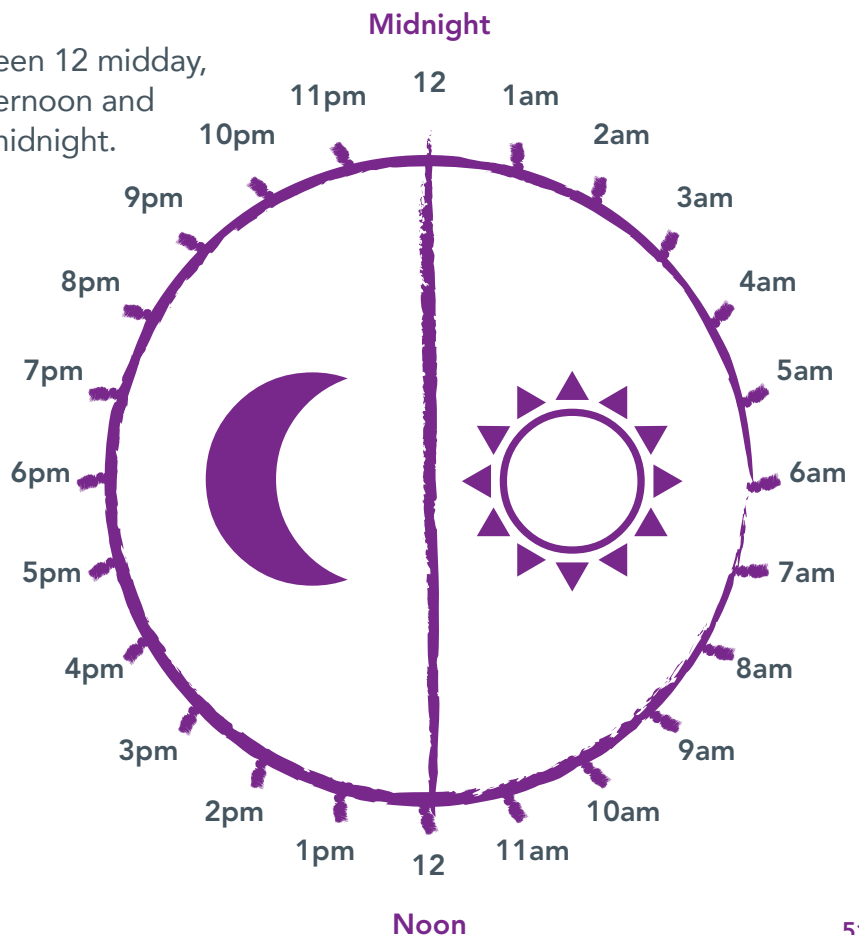
Remember

am

the hours between 12 midnight, through the morning to 12 midday.

pm

the hours between 12 midday, through the afternoon and evening to 12 midnight.



Time: 24 hour clock

There are 24 hours in one day. The 24 hour clock is mostly used when times have to be accurate. For example, for bus and train times.

The 24 hour clock shows times as usual up to 12 noon. When the time passes 12 o'clock noon (midday), instead of going back to one o'clock for the next hour it goes on to 13 o'clock, then 14 o'clock, then 15 o'clock and so on up to 24. Each hour in the day has its own number.



So the 24 hour clock times are below.

| Usual hours | 24 hour clock | Usual hours | 24 hour clock |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 12 o'clock midnight | 00.00 | 12 o'clock midday | 12.00 |
| 1 o'clock in the morning | 1.00 | 1 o'clock lunch time | 13.00 |
| 2 o'clock in the morning | 2.00 | 2 o'clock return to work | 14.00 |
| 3 o'clock in the morning | 3.00 | 3 o'clock in the afternoon | 15.00 |
| 4 o'clock in the morning | 4.00 | 4 o'clock in the afternoon | 16.00 |
| 5 o'clock in the morning | 5.00 | 5 o'clock in the evening | 17.00 |
| 6 o'clock in the morning | 6.00 | 6 o'clock teatime | 18.00 |
| 7 o'clock in the morning | 7.00 | 7 o'clock in the evening | 19.00 |
| 8 o'clock breakfast time | 8.00 | 8 o'clock at night | 20.00 |
| 9 o'clock start work time | 9.00 | 9 o'clock at night | 21.00 |
| 10 o'clock in the morning | 10.00 | 10 o'clock at night | 22.00 |
| 11 o'clock break time | 11.00 | 11 o'clock at night | 23.00 |

Calendar

Days of the week: There are **7** days in the week

| | |
|-----------|--------|
| Monday | Mon. |
| Tuesday | Tues. |
| Wednesday | Wed. |
| Thursday | Thurs. |
| Friday | Fri. |
| Saturday | Sat. |
| Sunday | Sun. |

Months of the year: There are **12** months in the year.

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| January | Jan. |
| February | Feb. |
| March | Mar. |
| April | Apr. |
| May | May |
| June | Jun. |
| July | Jul. |
| August | Aug. |
| September | Sept. |
| October | Oct. |
| November | Nov. |
| December | Dec. |

TIP The days of the week and months of the year all begin with a capital letter.

Calendar

A calendar can sometimes look like this.

April 2018

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

Or like this.

September 2019

| Mon | | 2 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 30 |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| Tue | | 3 | 10 | 17 | 24 | |
| Wed | | 4 | 11 | 18 | 25 | |
| Thurs | | 5 | 12 | 19 | 26 | |
| Fri | | 6 | 13 | 20 | 27 | |
| Sat | | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | |
| Sun | 1 | 8 | 15 | 22 | 29 | |

Writing dates

There are 31 days in a month.

24 of those dates have 'th' at the end of them.

For example:

| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 4th | four th |
| 10th | tenth |
| 18th | eighteenth |
| 26th | twenty-six th |

Here are the other 7 dates.

| | | |
|-----|------|------|
| 1st | 21st | 31st |
| 2nd | 22nd | |
| 3rd | 23rd | |

Dates are often written like this.

For example:

| |
|--------------------|
| 21st November 2015 |
| 16th March 2022 |

| | | | |
|------------|------|-------------|-------------|
| 1st | 11th | 21st | 31st |
| 2nd | 12th | 22nd | |
| 3rd | 13th | 23rd | |
| 4th | 14th | 24th | |
| 5th | 15th | 25th | |
| 6th | 16th | 26th | |
| 7th | 17th | 27th | |
| 8th | 18th | 28th | |
| 9th | 19th | 29th | |
| 10th | 20th | 30th | |

Dates can be written in other ways.

For example:

| | | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|--------------|
| 21st Nov. 2017 | or | 21 / 11 / 2017 | or | 21 / 11 / 17 |
| 16th Mar. 2020 | or | 16 / 3 / 2020 | or | 16 / 03 / 20 |

In plain English it is best to write dates like this:

2 November 2018
4 July 2019

TIP Here's a rhyme to remember the days in each month.

30 days has September, April, June and November.
All the rest have 31 except February, 28 alone.
Except in leap year once in four, when February has
one day more.

Numbers in words

| | | | |
|----|-----------|-----|--------------|
| 1 | one | 21 | twenty-one |
| 2 | two | 29 | twenty-nine |
| 3 | three | 30 | thirty |
| 4 | four | 31 | thirty-one |
| 5 | five | 39 | thirty-nine |
| 6 | six | 40 | forty |
| 7 | seven | 41 | forty-one |
| 8 | eight | 49 | forty-nine |
| 9 | nine | 50 | fifty |
| 10 | ten | 51 | fifty-one |
| 11 | eleven | 59 | fifty-nine |
| 12 | twelve | 60 | sixty |
| 13 | thirteen | 61 | sixty-one |
| 14 | fourteen | 69 | sixty-nine |
| 15 | fifteen | 70 | seventy |
| 16 | sixteen | 71 | seventy-one |
| 17 | seventeen | 79 | seventy-nine |
| 18 | eighteen | 80 | eighty |
| 19 | nineteen | 81 | eighty-one |
| 20 | twenty | 89 | eighty-nine |
| | | 90 | ninety |
| | | 91 | ninety-one |
| | | 99 | ninety-nine |
| | | 100 | one hundred |

Technology

This section has information and tips on:

- » Computers
- » Mobile phones



Computers

We are living in a world with computers all around us. When we take money out of an ATM, or send an email, we are using computers.

Here are some common computer terms that you may know.

www An abbreviation for world wide web, which is another way of saying the internet.

Email Known as electronic mail, where you send a message over the internet.

Download To open and save information from the internet onto your computer.

Home page The first page on a website. It usually has an index, which you click on to take you to other pages.

TIP Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on this.

Mobile phones

There are two types of mobile phones:

1. Standard
2. Smartphone

On a **standard mobile phone** there are three types of keys on the mobile phone keypad.

1. Number keys with letters on them
2. A star key ★
3. A hash key #



TIP The letters of the alphabet are written on the numbers 2 to 9. You will use these keys when you are text messaging.

On a **smartphone** there is a keyboard. You use this to write text into your phone, for example writing a text message or looking up something in Google.

Each mobile phone has a **menu**. The menu contains many functions.

Some of the menus are:

- » Phonebook – This lets you save names and numbers on your phone.
- » Messages – This lets you send and receive text messages.
- » Clock – This lets you set the time and an alarm. There is also a stopwatch.
- » Calculator – This lets you add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers.

TIP Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on this.

Text messages

Texting is sending a text message from one mobile phone to another.

On a standard mobile phone, to get a letter you just keep pressing the number until the letter appears. For example, to get the letter 'e' you press the number 3 twice.

On a smartphone the keyboard comes up and you can type a message.

A text message can only contain a certain number of characters.

A character is a letter or a number.

Every time you press a key you use one character.

This is why text is often written in a form of shorthand.

Here are some examples of text language:

c – see

you – u

cd – could

wd – would

gr8 – great

4 – for

Emoji

Many people use emoji in their text messages. Emoji are small images that express emotions in your message.

For example:

Smiley



Surprise



Sad



Angry



Wink



Thumbs up



Kiss



Contact the NALA freephone support line at 1800 20 20 65 if you would like more information on this.

Personal dictionary

There are always new words that you will come across. It is often useful to write these words down so you can look them up if you need to.

In this personal dictionary, you can jot down new words that you find.

The diary is in alphabetical order from A to Z.



Check the spelling in a dictionary or ask someone if you need help.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <div>A a</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>B b</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>C c</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |
| <div>D d</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>E e</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>F f</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |
| <div>G g</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>H h</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>I i</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |

J j

K k

LI

M m

N n

○ ○

P p

Q q

R r

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <div>S s</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>T t</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>U u</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |
| <div>V v</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>W w</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>X x</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |
| <div>Y y</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div>Z z</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | |

Learning journal

A Learning Journal is a space for you to jot down how you are finding your learning journey.

It can help you to:

- » develop and check in on your understanding of your learning journey.
- » reflect on and take more control over your learning.

Setting a regular time for journal writing is useful.

Here are some suggested headings that you can think about.

My goal is

In the last week, I have learned

This was easy.

This was hard.

I plan to do this.

On the next few pages there are some blank learning journal pages for you to use.

Why not fill one in?



Learning Journal

Date:

Week:

My goal is:

.....

In the last week, I have learned

.....

.....

.....

This was easy.

.....

.....

This was hard.

.....

.....

I plan to do this.

.....

.....

.....

Learning Journal

Date:

Week:

My goal is:

In the last week, I have learned

This was easy.

This was hard.

I plan to do this.

Learning Journal

Date:

Week:

My goal is:

.....

In the last week, I have learned

.....

.....

.....

This was easy.

.....

.....

This was hard.

.....

.....

I plan to do this.

.....

.....

.....

Learning Journal

Date:

Week:

My goal is:

.....

In the last week, I have learned

.....

.....

.....

This was easy.

.....

.....

This was hard.

.....

.....

I plan to do this.

.....

.....

.....

Learning Journal

Date:

Week:

My goal is:

.....

In the last week, I have learned

.....

.....

.....

This was easy.

.....

.....

This was hard.

.....

.....

I plan to do this.

.....

.....

.....

Becoming a NALA member

Please join NALA as a member.

You can join as:

- a **free** individual member or
- €25 to join for extra benefits.

We also have large and small organisation members.

We have over 2,000 members. By joining NALA you are showing your interest and support for literacy and numeracy and the work we do.

To join NALA please go to this link
www.nala.ie/support-us/join-nala-today

or

telephone NALA on **01 412 7900**.

Feedback

We welcome any feedback on this support book. Ring our Freephone support line at 1 800 20 20 65 to tell us what you think.



National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent, membership organisation, concerned with developing policy, advocacy, research and offering advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland. NALA was established in 1980 and has campaigned since then for the recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland.

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