Learning literacy skills

Adults often forget how they learnt to read and write as children. This means that the process of teaching literacy can sometimes be difficult and confusing. Where literacy training is available, trained facilitators are the best people to pass on these skills. However, a basic understanding of literacy training may be very helpful to parents and to the family and friends of people learning literacy skills.

Word cards

Word cards are a really good way of helping both children and adults learn. Write out short, familiar words on card or paper. (You can even stick them around the home as labels). Help people to recognise the words and to make short sentences with the cards. Simple pictures can help people to remember the words.



Whole words

Traditionally, children first learnt to recite the letters of their alphabet. Today people usually first learn to recognise the shape of whole short words. Later they learn the sounds of letters to enable them to recognise longer words.

Letter shapes

As people learn to recognise words, they need to practise writing them. At first, a few grid lines can help people to recognise the different shapes made by letters.

Learners can copy them and learn to write words – usually starting with their name.



Dealing with longer words

Once people gain confidence in recognising and reading short words, they need to learn how to break up longer words they do not recognise. By making the sounds of the letters, they can then work out the new word. One very useful technique is to take a long word that has been discussed during the literacy meeting and break it up. For example, take the word **educate**:

Work out how many different vowels the word contains (vowels are \mathbf{a} , \mathbf{e} , \mathbf{i} , \mathbf{o} , \mathbf{u}) and write these along the top of the grid. Work out how many different consonants there are and write these down the side of the grid:

	e		u		0	
d	de	ed	du	ud	da	ad
С				uc		
†	te		tu			
		٥,	ıu	uī	ta	at

Practise saying each of these combinations. If possible, make new words from the combinations and letters – cat, data, date. Then go back and practise saying and writing the original word.

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Capital letters

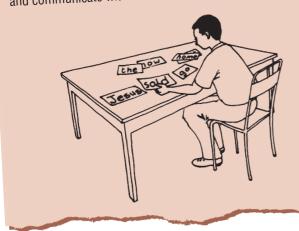
This applies only to the Roman script.

People often make the mistake of thinking that capital letters are easier for people to read. In fact, learning capital letters is like learning a second language. Words should always be written in lower case except for names.



New words

Once learners have basic skills in reading and writing, new groups of words can be learnt, each word related by a particular theme, such as the family, the house, vegetables. This helps learners remember new words and their meaning. Emphasis should be given to helping learners to understand and reproduce new words as well as recognise them. Learning to read and write should be fun! Games and songs are an enjoyable way for learners to practise their new skills and communicate with others.



Ways of practising literacy

Posters

The best posters use very few words. Posters that share information using a few necessary words are a good way to give confidence to people learning literacy skills. People can design the poster together, decide what writing is needed and practise the words before writing them on the poster.

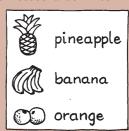


Charts

All kinds of charts can be prepared. The leaves of useful trees can be collected and labelled. Simple drawings of vegetables or fruit can be labelled.

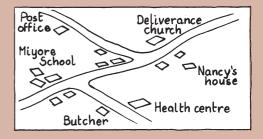
Charts can also show different seasonal activities –

for example, how people's income changes through the year or health concerns through the year. All of these require labels and information to be written.



Maps

Maps are a very useful way for people to find practical uses for their new literacy skills. Learners can work together to produce maps. These could be maps of their local area, to show water resources or health risks. When the maps are completed, people can agree on helpful labels and additional information. These could include the names of people living in particular houses, or the names of crops, vegetation, streams or community buildings.



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