Defining Adult Literacy

- What does the term literacy mean to you?
- What skills does a literate adult have?
- Has the term or the skills needed over the last 5, 10, 15 years changed?
- How would you define adult literacy?

- Record on note pad
- Let’s discuss
Adult Literacy Challenges

Take a moment to think about the challenges someone with low literacy skills may face daily...

- Record on note pad
- Let’s discuss
In Canada, some groups are more likely to experience literacy challenges. They include:
  • Canadians with fewer years of schooling
  • Immigrants
  • Indigenous peoples
  • Older Canadians

Why does literacy matter?
  • At home:
  • At work:
  • In the community:
At home:

- **Literacy matters for health.** Canadians with stronger literacy skills enjoy better health. Literacy skills help people find, understand and use health information.
- **Literacy matters for managing personal finances.** Numeracy is a key factor in financial literacy. Literacy matters for understanding rights and responsibilities. It helps people understand what to do in legal proceedings.
- **A literacy-rich home environment matters for developing young children’s literacy skills.** Having books and reading aloud at home are significant ways to support children’s long term literacy skills.
At work:

- **Literacy matters for employment.** Strong literacy skills are connected to being employed.
- **Literacy matters for earnings.** Stronger literacy skills are associated with earning higher wages.
- **Literacy matters for health and safety.** Understanding and following health and safety instructions can be critical for personal safety.
- **Literacy matters for success at work.** Improving literacy skills can increase efficiency and accuracy at work, and can decrease work-related stress.
- **Literacy matters for adult education.** People with stronger literacy skills are more likely to participate in adult education and job-related training.
In the community:

- **Literacy matters for community participation.** Canadians with stronger literacy skills are more likely to volunteer.
- **Literacy matters for political involvement.** Canadians with higher skills are more likely to feel they can influence government.
- **Research indicates that literacy skills may be an important factor** in interpersonal communication, community participation and inclusion.
**Adult Learner General Characteristics**

- Autonomous and self-directed
- Have a foundation of life experiences and knowledge
- Goal Oriented
- Relevancy Oriented
- Practical
- Need to be shown respect
✓ Adult learners are autonomous and self-directed

• Tutors must actively involve their student in the learning process and serve as facilitators of learning rather than fact generators.

• Get participants’ perspectives on the topics to cover and have learners work on projects that reflect their interests.
Adult learners have a foundation of life experiences and knowledge

• Tutors need to connect learning to that knowledge and experience base.
• Encourage learners to share relevant experience and knowledge.
Adult learners are goal-oriented

- Learners appreciate an educational program that is organized and has clearly defined elements.
- Show adult learners how the tasks relate to their goals early in the session
Adult learners are relevancy oriented

- The learning has to be applicable to your student’s life in some way
- Work, further education, personal, or other responsibilities
✓ Adult learners are practical

• They may not be interested in knowledge for knowledge’s sake but rather focus on what is most useful to them.
Adult learners need to be shown respect

• Tutors should acknowledge the abundance of experience and knowledge participants bring.
Our Adult Literacy Learners...

- English as a second language
- Learning disabilities
- Specific goals (grade 10, grade 12, trades, citizenship)
- Cognitive/Intellectual disabilities
- Traumatic formative years
- Laid off, unemployed, underemployed
- Retraining
- Mental health and wellness issues
When working with an adult literacy learner...

- Emotional factors can impact learning.
- Work to build a strong partnership.
- Teach to their strengths and point out those strengths.
- Only focus on one or two areas of concern at any given time.
- Always identify what your student is doing well before identifying what they need to work on.
- Move with your student at a pace that feels comfortable to them.
- Work towards their goals and help them break those goals down into attainable parts.
- Capitalize on teachable moments and let the session go where it goes.
• Poverty
• Fear
• Insecurity
• Stress
• Fatigue

• Assumptions
• Attitudes
• Financial problems
• Trauma
• Low self esteem

• Anxiety
• Lack of childcare
• Health issues
• Physical limitations
Problems with Reading because...

- Moved frequently
- Missed a lot of school
- Illness
- Lack of experience with text
- Not interested in reading materials that were presented
- Afraid of making mistakes
- Reading was not valued at home
- Poor vocabulary or oral skills
- Underdeveloped thinking skills
- Poor vision or hearing loss
- Emotional problems (abuse or trauma)
- Learning disability
Problems with Writing because...

- Not knowing how to start
- Not knowing the writing process
- Difficulty choosing a topic
- Mind going blank when asked to write or spell
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Afraid of making mistakes
- Past negative experience (pages covered in red marks)
- Fine motor skill issues
- Learning disability

Okanagan College - Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Program
Problems with Numeracy because…

- Difficulty understanding the question
- Struggle with concepts and mathematical vocabulary
- Knowing how to choose the correct operation
- Remembering all the steps
- Lack of speed
- Learning disability
Tutor’s Role is...

• To attend **training** session, workshops and other events.
• To **meet once a week for 1.5 hours**, or **twice a week for 1 hour** at the college.
• To assume the role as a **facilitator** rather than a counsellor.
• To **communicate** regularly with OC

• **To discuss any concerns** or issues as soon as possible
• To make and keep a **specific time** commitment.
• To create a **warm, safe and encouraging space** for the learner to grow in academic abilities and personal **confidence**.
• To notify the learner directly, if unable to tutor