



Grassroot Strategies

Reading

Set the scene

- Before any reading activity give learners an explanation of the purpose for the reading and what they will be looking for in the material – this way they will have a greater opportunity of deciphering the text.
- Encourage peer support, e.g. peer proofreading, pair work or buddy groups.

Build required skills

New vocabulary

- Write up new terms and key words and clarify meaning in use – elicit from learners or give an example of where learners may expect to see these words.
- Encourage learners to highlight key words and concepts in texts.

Reading strategies

- Encourage learners to develop reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, detailed reading and critical reading.
- If using a long or more difficult text – get learners to chunk it down to manageable bits by isolating certain key paragraphs in the text using a highlighter pen.

Make it clear

- Use readable, accessible texts – make sure that dense text is broken up and photocopied pages can be clearly read.
- Read key information in trainer notes or handouts aloud. Be aware that it is important not to ask someone else to read aloud if they do not want to. This can be a stressful and shaming exercise.

Use visuals as supports

- Find ways of presenting material in other ways than written information.
- Reinforce written materials with visuals – e.g. a diagram, photograph or a demonstration.
- Provide English language and first language vocabulary for key words to English as an additional language (EAL) learners.

Using reference material

- Demonstrate how to use reference material, libraries, the internet etc. Provide a clear set of 'how to' steps and expectations about how this information may assist workers to do their job.

Writing

Set the scene

- Discuss with the group the different types of writing required for different purposes, e.g. note taking, data collection or report writing.
- Encourage peer support, e.g. peer proofreading, pair work or buddy groups.

Build required skills

New vocabulary and spelling

- Reinforce written materials with visuals – e.g. a diagram, photograph or a demonstration.
- Provide English language and first language vocabulary for key words to English as an additional language (EAL) learners in upper and lowercase letters. Allow for practice.
- Offer some basic strategies for developing accuracy in spelling, e.g. Look-Say-Cover-Check, or assist learner to develop a personal dictionary of regularly needed words (with visual prompts).

Make it clear

Provide a scaffold

- Offer examples of the different types of writing as a model that learners can refer to later if necessary, e.g. a filled out safety checklist, an accident report form or a field trip report.
- When you provide a scaffold, discuss the various layout features of the text with the learner such as:
 - headings and sub-headings
 - linking words for paragraphs when writing explanatory information e.g. and, but, then, however
 - sequencing words for writing a factual account e.g. first, then, next
 - stock phrases for making contrasting points when presenting an argument, e.g. on the other hand, the points against are.
- Be aware of, and explicitly demonstrate the drafting process: planning, drafting, editing and proof-reading and preparing final copy.
- Build independence by providing less 'scaffolding' and encouraging more and more learner independence as they gain in experience and skill.

Power in numbers

- Help learners marshal their thoughts and organise what they want to write by leading a 'group brainstorm' on a whiteboard then structure and order the content to suit the type of text and style of writing required.

Speaking and listening

Set the scene

- Discuss the various types of speaking and listening required in the training and on the job. Discuss with the group the features of 'getting your message across' and 'understanding what someone else is saying'.

Build required skills

New vocabulary

- Cover key words, terms and phrases (based on written texts) which may be unfamiliar to the learner.
- Point out that terms have different meanings in different contexts e.g. a baker makes a cookie, an IT technician disables 'cookies' on a computer, a carpenter uses a 'cookie' to splice two bits of wood together.
- List and explain colloquialisms or avoid colloquial language (unless it is clear they are fully understood by the listener).

Make it clear

To get a message across

- Use gesture and intonation (stress on certain words in a sentence, rise and fall of voice) to indicate the key points.
- Repeat key ideas and learning points using the same language each time to give learners an additional opportunity for understanding.
- Assist learners to practise giving factual reports by providing a 'scaffold script' (similar to the points covered in writing). Adjust these for the spoken word.
- Use clear, unambiguous language.
- Speak naturally but at a moderate pace.
- Don't raise your speaking level for people who don't speak English as a first language or make them feel 'stupid' if they don't understand or need to ask questions.
- Give instructions or feedback using signposting, e.g. 'I am going to talk about 3 areas. The first...'

Use visual material as supports

- Highlight key points and terms on the whiteboard in a training room situation to reinforce oral explanations and as a visual cue to learners.
- Use pictures, diagrams and demonstration to support verbal information.

Think about cultural issues

- Be explicit about rules and conventions for different communication situations e.g. group tasks, workplace learning, or reporting to a supervisor.
- Recognise that politeness and answering question strategies vary culturally (see Culture at Work http://www.literacynet.dest.gov.au/WELL_NALP_resources/Language_nesb.htm).
- Recognise cultural differences in non-verbal communication (direct or indirect eye contact, use of hand gestures, etc.) and be sensitive to any miscommunication.
- Be aware that learners from non-English speaking background may be confused by instructions that are too 'soft', e.g. 'I wonder if you might try...' as opposed to 'Try...'.

Provide support with listening skills

- Learners may have highly developed listening skills in other language(s), but may be restricted in using these skills because of difficulty with English.
- Vocational trainers and assessors can help learners to extract relevant information by:
 - Avoiding long periods of teacher explanation
 - Giving a handout with the main points or questions before learners listen
 - Providing question sheets or tick boxes to complete when listening
 - Asking 'checking for meaning' questions to elicit a demonstration of comprehension
 - Avoiding closed yes/no questions such as 'Do you understand?'
 - Allowing learners to summarise or discuss what they have listened to in pairs and ask questions before moving on.

Numeracy

Set the scene

- Discuss with learners the importance of number in their lives. Discuss different cultural uses for the use of number. Discuss the reasons for using numeracy within the training and the skills required on the job.
- Encourage peer support, e.g. by asking another learner to explain the method.

Build required skills

The language of numeracy

- Revise the four basic functions – addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (according to the demand for use within the training program).
- Introduce the language of number, e.g. there are many ways to say ‘multiply’, such as ‘times’, ‘by’, ‘product’.
- Ensure that learners understand the ‘command words’ of problems, e.g. solve, evaluate, identify and estimate.
- Check learners are familiar with number as numerals and words e.g. 6 and SIX.

Make it clear

Different strokes

- Use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the different learning styles of learners to maintain their interest.
- Keep it practical and based on the task at hand.
- Offer different methods for solving problems – not assuming that there is only one way to do it (e.g. there are at least four ways of doing subtraction).
- New topics involving numeracy skills should be taught in short logical steps. Do not assume that learners achieving correct answers ‘on paper’ necessarily understand a process or concept in practice.
- Ask learners how they were taught to do calculations, and check that they have opportunities to select methods they feel comfortable with (but check that they are using a method that gives them the chance of arriving at a reasonable answer).
- Use direct teaching strategies to develop new skills, e.g. direct attention to key points, demonstrate, model, explain and illustrate, question and discuss.
- Design paper-based exercises that are relevant to the practical task and give learners opportunities to practise and reinforce the skills learnt in practice.

Using tools

- Use practical aids such as calculators, but ensure learners understand the limitations and functions of a calculator.
- Check learners are familiar with tools to measure length and volume, such as:
 - tape measures – mms, cms and m
 - measuring jugs – mls, L.