



"a bridge to a brighter future"

Ready, Set, **KNOW**

A Handbook for New Tutors

Ready, Set, KNOW : A Handbook for New Tutors

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NOTES ABOUT THE PUBLISHING OF THIS HANDBOOK

The pilot version of *Ready, Set, Know: A Handbook for New Tutors* was published out of the Halifax Community Learning Network and the Bedford-Sackville Literacy Network. The information within was compiled, written and laid-out by Dave Caulfield. *Ready, Set, Know* was made possible through funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

Ready, Set, Know was printed in May of 2003. Direct inquiries about this handbook to the Halifax Community Learning Network. You can contact the network at 902-422-7648 or hcln@ns.sympatico.ca.

section 1

Acknowledgments and a brief introduction to the handbook

Acknowledgments...

The author would like to acknowledge that handbooks aren't typically the most pleasant things to read but wants you to know that earnest attempts have been made to write this particular handbook in an enjoyable and decidedly *unhandbook*-like way. The author doesn't exactly expect you to sit down and cover-to-cover this thing nor does he recommend it for your next book club meeting but he does hope the information is useful and relevant and that the thought of leafing through it fails to induce procrastination, migraines or low-grade narcolepsy.

The author, the Halifax Community Learning Network (HCLN) and the Bedford-Sackville Literacy Network (BSLN) would like to acknowledge and thank the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) for financially supporting this project. The mission of the NLS is to ensure that Canadians have opportunities to develop and improve the ever-expanding literacy skills needed to function at work, at home and in the community, and to support the development and dissemination of information on literacy issues to increase awareness and understanding. The author, along with the coordinators, tutors and adult learners of the HCLN and the BSLN are grateful for the support.

The author would like to acknowledge that many new tutors who volunteer with literacy networks may feel nervous, scared or anxious and frequently find themselves saying things like *What in the world have I got myself into?* when they start. Feelings like these are neither wrong nor cause for alarm. Consider them normal, expected. It's pretty much a given that when someone decides to get involved with something as challenging and rewarding as teaching an adult to read and write. If you're feeling

Acknowledgments and a brief introduction

nervous, don't worry. It will pass! The author hopes this handbook will speed that process along and show you that others have felt exactly like you feel right now and that it will assure you that help is available when you need it.

The author would like to acknowledge the help of and express his gratitude to the parade of kind, intelligent people who helped create this handbook, through attending focus groups, through listening to and answering question after question after question from yours truly and through generally offering support when support was most necessary. These people are:

<i>Allan Banks</i>	<i>Janet Hallett</i>	<i>Margaret Rockwell</i>
<i>Margo Beveridge</i>	<i>James Jessome</i>	<i>Josephine Rogers</i>
<i>Sandra Blank</i>	<i>Avril Lewis</i>	<i>Henny Rykers</i>
<i>Sharon Boudreau</i>	<i>Christine Lockett</i>	<i>Gayle Saunders</i>
<i>Gerald Paul Bourgeois</i>	<i>Charlene Keddy</i>	<i>Karen Saunders</i>
<i>Heather Brittain</i>	<i>Sandra MacAulay</i>	<i>Betty Savoie</i>
<i>Erica Butler</i>	<i>Darlene MacInnis</i>	<i>Heidi Schedler</i>
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<i>Mary Crowley</i>	<i>Tylor McDuff</i>	<i>Wanda Stansbury</i>
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<i>Margaret Flood</i>	<i>Linda Oakley</i>	<i>Juanita Whalen</i>
<i>Tom Forsyth</i>	<i>Del Pearle</i>	<i>Dee Wilkinson</i>
<i>Zane Hair</i>	<i>Carole Poirier</i>	<i>Lesley Williams</i>

The author would like to acknowledge that this handbook is not meant to replace the 30-hour Nova Scotia Tutor and Instructor Training and Certification Program. Rather, this handbook tries to bridge the gap between a new tutor joining a literacy program to the tutor getting a seat in the Tutor Training program. Obviously you're

going to have a lot of questions; this handbook tries to answer as many of them as possible and attempts to show you where you can look and who you can talk to for more information. If you're interested in finding out more about the Tutor Training program, talk to your coordinator.

The author would also like to acknowledge that he hemmed and hawed over the issue of gender and pronouns in this handbook for a long, long time. Should *he* and *his* be used to describe learners and tutors when examples are used in this handbook? *He* has been the pronoun of choice historically (and not just in tutor orientation handbooks, but) in pretty much every example-providing book for the last few thousand years. The author then considered using *he* for the tutor and *she* for the learner, but this seemed problematic for similarly patriarchal reasons. The inverse, using *she* for the tutor and *he* for the learner risked bothering readers who tend to bristle at overt and obvious forms of political correctness. The author would like to acknowledge that using *he/she* and *him/her* was never an option because that kind of thing is downright annoying and would likely get in the way of the important info in the handbook. So, the author opted to use *she* and *her* for both tutor and learner. For the record, the author in no way espouses the belief that *all* women are either tutors or learners or that *all* tutors and learners are women.

And finally, the author would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of Kayte McLaughlin, the generous cartooning soul who lent her talents to this publication. Locally, Kayte's work graces the pages of *The Coast* and, in the near future, will grace blank garments near and far. Kayte is very talented and funny and her cartoons inject a sense of humour where and when it's most needed: as you embark on your new journey as a literacy volunteer.

Acknowledgments and a brief introduction

What's Inside?

In a perfect world, literacy programs would welcome new tutors like well-dressed celebrities en route to movie premieres. Red carpets stretched out before you as you exit the back door of a stretch limo to slow motion applause and flash photography.

Well, a perfect world this is not and the paparazzi are likely the last thing on your mind right now. More likely your thoughts sound something like this: *What on Earth have I gotten myself into? I have no idea how to tutor. Where do I start? and the ever-popular What happens if [insert worst imaginable tutoring experience here]?*

And while we are thrilled that you've chosen to become a tutor with our program, we've opted for a slightly different kind of welcome: this handbook! **Ready, Set, Know** is written and designed just for you. A lot of the information inside comes from tutors who have stood exactly where you find yourself standing today - nervous, excited, unsure. We hope it answers your questions, helps you get started and sets your mind at ease.

Inside this handbook...

...you WILL find practical information about:

- Getting started with your learner
- Building a successful tutor-learner relationship
- Helping your learner set realistic goals
- Planning lessons and assessing your learner's progress.
- Finding resources to use with your learner

But you WILL NOT find:

- Every answer to every tutoring question ever (but you will find out where to look for more information).
- Step-by-step tutoring instructions that are guaranteed to produce a successful learner. What you do with your learner will depend on what your she already knows and what she wants to accomplish.
- Tedious, bureaucratic language that may overwhelm you.

The handbook also covers what will be expected of you as a volunteer tutor, as well as what you can expect of both your learner and your program coordinator. The aim is to show you, as realistically as possible, what it'll be like when you start tutoring.

A couple of other things...

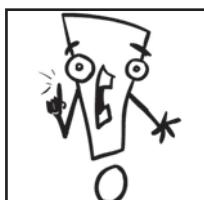
As you flip through this handbook, you'll see various pictures beside chunks of text. Each picture calls your attention to an important aspect of getting started as a tutor.



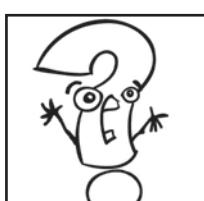
A Bright Idea! This picture appears beside ideas, activities and suggestions that will make your tutoring experience even better.



Don't stress out! Lots of things can make new tutors anxious or nervous. Sometimes a heads-up can subdue some of those feelings before they turn nasty.



Keep in mind... Any of a whole range of memory joggers whether it's about your program, your learner or this handbook.



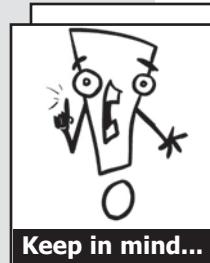
Why bother? Sometimes it helps to know why you're being asked to familiarize yourself with certain information.



For more info... A short list showing you where you might be able to find some more information about a given topic.

Acknowledgments and a brief introduction

So with these pictures in mind, let's get started. And since they're still fresh in your brain...



MINDING THE BINDING...

This handbook is a binder for a reason. In fact, it was the intent of this project that tutors be able to add information as easily as possible. Feel free to fill the rings of this binder with whatever information you find useful and interesting. Make it your own.

Likewise, don't hesitate to jot down notes in the grey margins. They're not there just because they look nice.

And finally, as you read through this handbook, you'll notice several *Success Stories*. As you start tutoring, you might feel disoriented or unsure about what you're doing. Reading these stories might help inspire you to reach your full potential and remind you why you decided to become a volunteer in the first place.

by Denise Morley, coordinator - HCLN

"Our volunteers are outstanding- they are truly the foundation of this organization."

Welcome to the Halifax Community Learning Network (HCLN) and thanks for your interest in volunteering with us!

As Network Coordinator, one of my duties is to recruit and support new volunteers, and I think the Ready Set Know Handbook will help us both a great deal as you begin your volunteer experience with us. I'm sure you have many questions about your role as a literacy tutor with HCLN, and I will do my best to answer the ones I'm asked most often. But first, a bit of background information about the organization...

Since 1994, the Halifax Community Learning Network has offered free adult education programs at various locations in the Halifax Regional Municipality. HCLN is a community-based non-profit organization that relies on volunteer tutors to assist with programming and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. HCLN is one of 30 community-based literacy initiatives funded through the Department of Education's Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL). NSSAL was created in response to the need for increased literacy and educational upgrading in the province, and HCLN programs are part of a system that supports students from basic levels of literacy to those studying toward a Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults.

In 2001, HCLN became a not-for-profit society. Books and classroom materials are purchased through fund raising initiatives during community events such as The Word on the Street, Literacy Action Week, Family Literacy Day, pancake breakfasts and theatre outings, as well as at information displays at local malls and community centres.

The organization also receives support through grants, partnerships and contributions from groups such as the Nova Scotia Department of Education Community Learning Initiative (CLI), Halifax Public Library (HPL), Bloomfield Centre, Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS), and the Metro Council on Continuing Education (MCCE). Corporate and community sponsors-including Dalhousie Law School Community Outreach Program, the Harbour Folk Society, Dalhousie University Medical School, Saltscapes Magazine, Canada Post, and Bedford All Saints Players-also provide financial support for the programs.

Acknowledgments and a brief introduction

Who are Our Learners?

Students at HCLN range in age from 19 to 80 and come from a variety of backgrounds and learning experiences. Some were forced to leave school many years ago to help provide for their families, while others have only recently dropped out. Each year, more than 200 learners attend HCLN programs and they vary in ability, from a basic level of literacy-wanting to read a newspaper more easily or write their first letter-to those working toward high school equivalency.

When and where do HCLN programs take place?

HCLN literacy programs are delivered from September until June through classroom sessions and one-to-one tutoring programs at five locations throughout Halifax, including The Keshen Goodman, Captain William Spry, Halifax North and Spring Garden Road branches of the Halifax Public Library and the Bloomfield Centre. The schedule varies each year depending on space availability and program needs, but a full schedule of programs can usually be found on the HCLN web site at www.hcln.ca. At each program location, you will have access to learning resources, a photocopier and a quiet corner for you to work with your student. And most importantly, you will receive the support of an HCLN Program Coordinator who will always be on hand to answer your questions, suggest learning resources and support you in your work as a tutor. Given the huge job the Program Coordinators have to do, they may also ask for your help when setting up for programs, organizing parties etc.

How long is my commitment as a volunteer?

Most literacy tutors volunteer 2 -3 hours per week (either an afternoon or evening session at the location that is most convenient) and are asked to commit to HCLN for six months. With programs running from September to June, we hope that volunteers are available over that time period, though there is always a need for new tutors to start in January or even as late as March. Some HCLN volunteers have been with us for seven years or more, while others are able to commit their time while attending university. We are always appreciative for whatever time you can give and understand when a new job or change in circumstances means you have to take a break or stop volunteering.

I hope that this introduction and the many useful tips and suggestions found within Ready Set Know will give you the confidence to get started as a volunteer with HCLN. My final bit of advice as you begin your experience as a literacy tutor, is simply to relax. There is no single right or wrong way to tutor and with patience and enthusiasm, you can achieve a great deal.

Best of luck and remember, help is only a phone call or e-mail away!

Denise

section 2

Understanding the basics about Adult Literacy

Handbooks don't ordinarily tell their readers that certain sections are optional, but this is such a handbook and *Understanding the basics* is such a section. If you don't want to read it right now, then by all means skip it. The information is quite valuable for new tutors, but you won't be asked to write a test on it and it won't magically disappear from the binder if you opt to jump ahead to section 3.



Why bother?

WHAT YOU'LL BE MISSING IF YOU SKIP AHEAD...

- 1** Since you've decided to volunteer as a tutor, you really ought to know what *literacy* is. The current definition may surprise you.
- 2** Adults who decide to upgrade their literacy skills do so for a variety of reasons; as a tutor, it's important to be aware of them.
- 3** Acronyms abound in the world of adult literacy and at times might start to sound like a foreign language. It's a good idea to be prepared for the inevitable day when your learner, your coordinator or a fellow tutor drops a couple on you.

what's inside this section...

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Understanding the basics

What exactly is *Literacy*?

Literacy, as you'll see, means many different things to many different people. Occasionally, these definitions can be kind of confusing, if not a little funny.

A sampling of websites (yes, these are real) suggests that *literacy* is like:

- An old uncle who everyone quietly respects but who rarely gets much attention at large family gatherings.
- An invisible liquid seeping through our culture, nigh impossible to pinpoint or defend against.
- Boats and telescopes, useful but not restricted to utilitarian ends.
- The menu in a restaurant. It tells you about dinner, but it cannot feed you.

You can see that there's quite a range of definitions – from elderly uncles to invisible liquids. The point is that if you ask a hundred different people what literacy is, you might get a hundred different definitions.

The definition you should familiarize yourself with comes from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), a study co-produced by Statistics Canada in the 1990s. You might hear this study referred to simply as *IALS* (pronounced *aisles*) or *The IALS study*. The IALS study is very well-respected and offers the accepted definition for most literacy programs in the country. Literacy, according to IALS, is defined as:

The ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

(And no, you won't be tested on the definition at the end of this section, or be asked to commit it to memory...)

But perhaps the most important part of the IALS definition is this: A person's literacy cannot be measured simply by asking, *Are you literate?* Literacy is not an either/or concept. Rather, there are levels of literacy.

WEIGHING IN ON THE IDEA OF LITERACY LEVELS...

Try not to think of literacy as a question of whether or not someone can read or write. Instead, think of literacy as a question of **how well** a person can read and write and **how well** a person can use numbers. Some people have low literacy skills; others may have higher literacy skills. **No one is completely illiterate.**



Keep in mind...

Other basic ideas from IALS...

When someone talks about a person's literacy level, there are three categories.

- 1 Prose Literacy** - A person's ability to understand and use information in written materials like stories, poems, newspaper articles and editorials, etc.
- 2 Document Literacy** - A person's ability to find and use information on written materials like job applications, maps, bus schedules, etc.
- 3 Quantitative Literacy** - A person's ability to understand and use math for things like balancing bank accounts, figuring out tips and calculating sales tax.

The IALS study uses the following levels to describe a person's literacy level:

Level 1 - People at this level have very low literacy skills. They may, for example, have trouble identifying the maximum daily amount of medicine to give a child based on the information printed on the package.

Understanding the basics

Level 2 - People at Level 2 can only deal with material that is simple, clearly laid out and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. You'll be amazed by how well adults with low literacy skills can adapt and get by with their skills, but when job requirements change, or they want to change jobs, they quickly realize that their literacy skills are preventing them from reaching their goals.

Level 3 - People at this level read well, but they may run into problems with more complex written materials and tasks. This is the level of literacy that most employers require in the workplace.

Levels 4/5 - People at Level 4/5 have very high literacy levels and have no trouble dealing with complex written materials.

Adult Literacy Rates in Atlantic Canada

- 25% of adults in Atlantic Canada function at Level 1.
- 27% of adults function at Level 2.
- 33% of adults function at Level 3.
- 15% of adults function at Level 4/5.



FOR MORE ABOUT ADULT LITERACY AND THE IALS STUDY...

The National Adult Literacy Database has just about every literacy survey, report and study you could ever want. You can find information about the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) on this page of their website:

<http://www.nald.ca/NLS/ials/ialsreps/ialsrpt2/ials2/back.htm>

You can also check out *Background Information on Literacy*, a booklet published by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Your coordinator should have a copy.

Reasons adults decide to upgrade

Close your eyes and consider what it would be like if you had trouble reading, writing or using numbers.

Imagine a child asking you to read a book, and having to tell her that you can't. Imagine being stuck in a job you don't like with little-to-no hope of being promoted or getting a better job. Imagine not being able to read bus schedules, street maps, road signs or a written driver's test.

Now consider other reading materials that might cause problems: prescription bottles, credit card statements, child permission forms for school and informed consent forms.

Reading, writing and basic math comprise so much of what we do every day that we sometimes take our competence in these areas

(continued on page 16)

UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS, UNIQUE MOTIVATIONS

An adult might upgrade her literacy skills so she can:

- Read to her children.
- Get a promotion or find a different job.
- Use a phone book or read the newspaper.
- Manage her finances.
- Earn a high school diploma or take the GED.
- Get around town on her own.
- Get a driver's licence.
- Be a more active member of her community.
- Feel better about herself.

As a tutor, find out why she's upgrading and then work with her to help her achieve that goal.



Understanding the basics

for granted. Adults with low literacy skills deal with all kinds of barriers every day and these barriers affect each adult differently.

As you start as a tutor, try to start thinking of adult learners as unique individuals. Each learner has her own reason for wanting to upgrade her skills. And the sooner you figure out what these reasons are, the sooner you can start working toward these goals with your learner.



Keep in mind...

WHY DO SOME ADULTS HAVE LOW LITERACY SKILLS?

Just as there are a variety of reasons why an adult might decide to upgrade her skills, there are a variety of reasons why an adult might have low literacy skills.

An adult learner might have low literacy skills because:

- She dropped out of school early to provide for her family.
- She had to take care of a sick family member.
- She has a learning disability.
- She had bad experiences while she was in school.
- She suffered a brain injury.
- She moved frequently when she was going to school.
- She became ill while she was in school.
- She is a newcomer to Canada and is learning English.
- She was abused as a child.

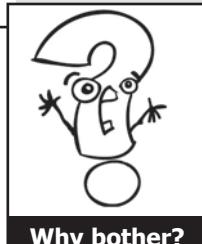
What are the educational options for learners?

Before we dive headlong into the educational options for adults, know this: you may find the world of adult literacy and the possible paths for adult learners to be quite dizzying. At times, you may even start to look around for an emergency exit.

Bear in mind though that the system is trying to accommodate an enormous range of people, each person with unique goals and a unique background.

WHY DOES A TUTOR NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OPTIONS FOR LEARNERS?

If you can begin to understand the basics of adult literacy (*What are the Adult Learning Program Levels? What is the GED? What is the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning?*), you'll have a much easier time when you help your learner set goals. You'll also remove a lot of potential confusion and frustration down the road. The more you know about the educational options available to your learner, the more you'll be able to help her make an informed decision.



And as confusing as it may get for you, think about how confusing it might be for your learner to grasp. So, with that, strap on your goggles and take a deep breath... **We're going in.**

Adult Learning Paths

This page walks you through a simplified version of the options available to adult learners. If you find it confusing, imagine how hard it would be for someone with low literacy skills. Each option along the path is explained further on the next page. And if the slew of acronyms leaves you scratching your head, you'll find pages 20 and 21 helpful.

1
An adult decides that she wants to upgrade her literacy skills.

You (the tutor)
are here.

2
If her skills are low, she may enrol in a community learning network, like the one you're currently volunteering with. Then, she may move on to step 3, 4 or 5.

3
If she wants to earn a high school diploma, it's possible that she'll attend FLECs, which is run by the Halifax Regional School Board.

4
If she wants to earn a high school diploma, she'll probably head to the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

5
If she wants to earn her GED Certificate instead of her high school diploma, it's possible she'll take a prep-course and take the GED tests.

6 She'll earn the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults or NSHSGDA (say either of those ten times fast...).

7 She'll earn the Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.

What's happening in step number...

1	If you're bewildered by the chart on the previous page, fret not. The point here: Adults upgrade their literacy skills for a variety of different reasons; it's a familiar but very important refrain. Once you recognize this, you'll be taking the first step on the road to successful tutoring.
2	Prepare thyself for the onslaught of acronyms (see the next page for help). You currently volunteer with a community-based learning program. Programs like these help adults with low literacy skills work through Adult Learning Programs (ALP) Levels 1A, 1B and 2 (similar to Grade 1-8). For more information about specific learning outcomes, see Appendix E on page 95. Depending on your learner's goals, she may move on to Step 3, 4 or 5 after she has successfully completed ALP Level 2 with your program.
3	The FLECs program (Flexible Learning and Education Centres), administered by the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) is one avenue an adult can take to earn a high school diploma. However, unlike programs like yours which use ALP levels, FLECs learners earn Public School Program credits, which are called PSP Grade 11 and 12. FLECs also offers a Grade 10-equivalent Foundations course. Once the requisite PSP Grade 11 and Grade 12 credits have been earned, an adult receives the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults (NSHSGDA).
4	If your learner wants to earn her high school diploma, chances are she'll head to the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) after you've helped her work through Levels 1A, 1B and 2. At the NSCC, she'll take ALP Level 3 and Level 4 courses. When she successfully completes 12 credits at ALP Level 4, she'll earn the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults (NSHSGDA). Note: ALP Level 3 is also available at the Cunard Centre.
5	<i>GED</i> stands for <i>General Educational Development</i> ; some people (who would benefit from this handbook's convenient acronym list on the next two pages) mistakenly refer to it as the <i>General Equivalency Diploma</i> . The GED is an international high school equivalency testing program. It consists of a series of five tests – one in each of these subjects: Language Arts: Reading, Language Arts: Writing, Math, Social Studies and Science. Adults who pass the tests earn a Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.
6,7	Some adults may need help figuring out which goal suits their needs better. For example, the NSHSGDA is useful for people who want to take post-secondary courses; the GED Certificate may not be. Appendix D on page 93 compares and contrasts the two.

Understanding the basics

Acronyms, Acronyms, Everywhere Acronyms (AAEA)

Your success as a tutor won't hinge on committing this list to memory, but these acronyms might come up as you tutor.

ALP - Adult Learning Program. There are four ALP levels (not to be confused with the IALS levels you read about on page 13-14), which are similar to school grades:

- Level 1A - Grades 1-3*
- Level 1B - Grades 4-6*
- Level 2 - Grades 7-8*
- Level 3 - Grades 9-10*
- Level 4 - Grades 11-12*

BIANS - Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia.

BSLN - Bedford-Sackville Literacy Network. Literacy Program serving adult learners (Level 1A, 1B and Level 2) between Hammonds Plains and Mount Uniacke.

CLI - Community Learning Initiative. Dept. of Education money administered by NSSAL that funds the province's community-based adult learning programs.

DALA - Dartmouth and Area Literacy Association. Administrative body which oversees the Dartmouth Literacy Network (DLN) and the Dartmouth Work Activity Society (DWAS).

DCS - Department of Community Services.

DoE - Department of Education or simply Dept. of Ed. Provincial body which oversees all of the province's adult education programs.

ESL - English as a Second Language.

ESMVLN - Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Literacy Network. Literacy program serving adult learners (Level 1A, 1B and Level 2) in the large area that connects Eastern Shore, Sheet Harbor and Musquodoboit Valley.

FLECs - Flexible Learning and Education Centres. Upper level adult upgrading courses (called PSPs, or Public School Programs) offered by the Halifax Regional School Board.

GED - General Educational Development. A series of five high school equivalency tests. If a learner passes the tests successfully, she earns the Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.

HCLN - Halifax Community Learning Network. Administrative body which oversees adult learning programs at Spring Garden Road Library, Halifax North Library, Keshen Goodman Library and Captain William Spry Library, as well as at the Bloomfield Centre and St. Leonard's Society.

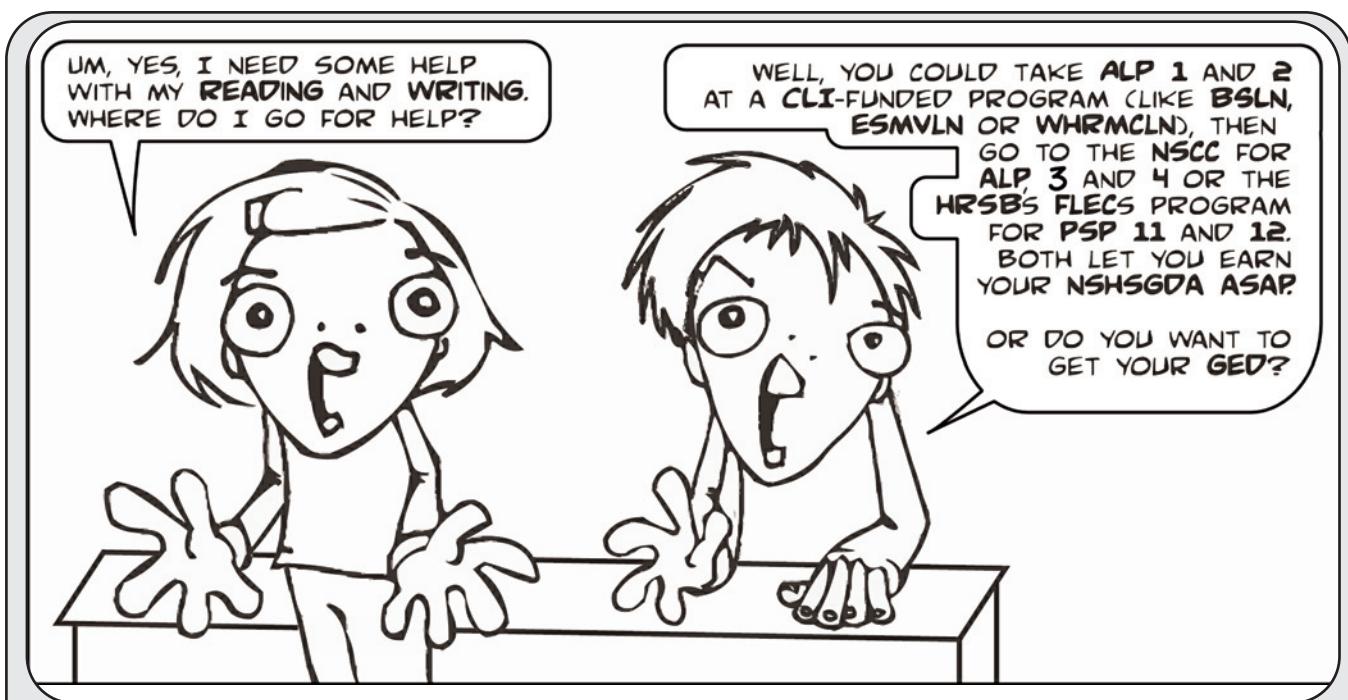
HRDC - Human Resources Development Canada.

HRL - Halifax Regional Library.

HRMLA - Halifax Regional Municipality Literacy Association. Coalition of community-based literacy programs in HRM which offer adult learners Level 1A, Level 1B and Level 2 programs.

HRSB - Halifax Regional School Board. Service provider of the FLECs program.

IALS - International Adult Literacy Survey. The seminal resource on adult literacy stats. For a more detailed explanation, see page 12.



LDANS - Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia.

MISA - Metro Immigrant Settlement Association.

NALD - National Adult Literacy Database.

NLS - National Literacy Secretariat or Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). Federally-based organization which funds projects that promote literacy and strive to make social, economic and political life more accessible to people with low literacy skills.

NSCC - Nova Scotia Community College. Two campuses offer Level 3 and 4 adult upgrading classes.

NSPLC - Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition. Recently changed its name to *Literacy Nova Scotia*.

NSSAL - Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. Administrative body within the Dept.of Ed.which supports the delivery of adult education programs at all ALP levels.

NSHSGDA - Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults. It is equivalent to the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma except it's designed specifically for adults.

PGI - Peter Gzowski Invitational. An annual golf tournament that takes place in each province and raises money for literacy programs.

PLAR - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.

PSP - Public School Program. Credits offered through the HRSB's FLECs program. FLECs offers PSP Grade 11 and 12 as well as a Foundations class. PSPs are similar to ALP Level 3 and Level 4.

WHRMCLN - Western Halifax Regional Municipality Community Learning Network. Literacy Program serving adult learners (Level 1A, 1B and Level 2) between Tantallon and Hubbards and around the Peggy's Cove peninsula.

Understanding the basics

Literacy Programs in the HRM

You might be surprised to know that there are actually ten different literacy networks in the Halifax Regional Municipality alone. These networks represent step 2 on the Adult Learning Paths page (on page 18). Five networks serve geographical regions and five serve communities of people.

The five literacy networks serving geographical regions are:

1. Halifax Community Learning Network
2. Bedford-Sackville Literacy Network
3. Dartmouth and Area Literacy Association
4. Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley Literacy Network
5. Western HRM Community Learning Network

The five literacy networks serving communities are:

1. Deaf Literacy Association of Nova Scotia
2. Nova Scotia ESL Network
3. Provincial Black Literacy Network - Black Educators' Assn.
4. Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre
5. College de l'Acadie

If you're interested in finding out more about any of these other networks, your coordinator can provide you with the contact information.

section 3

Getting started as a literacy tutor

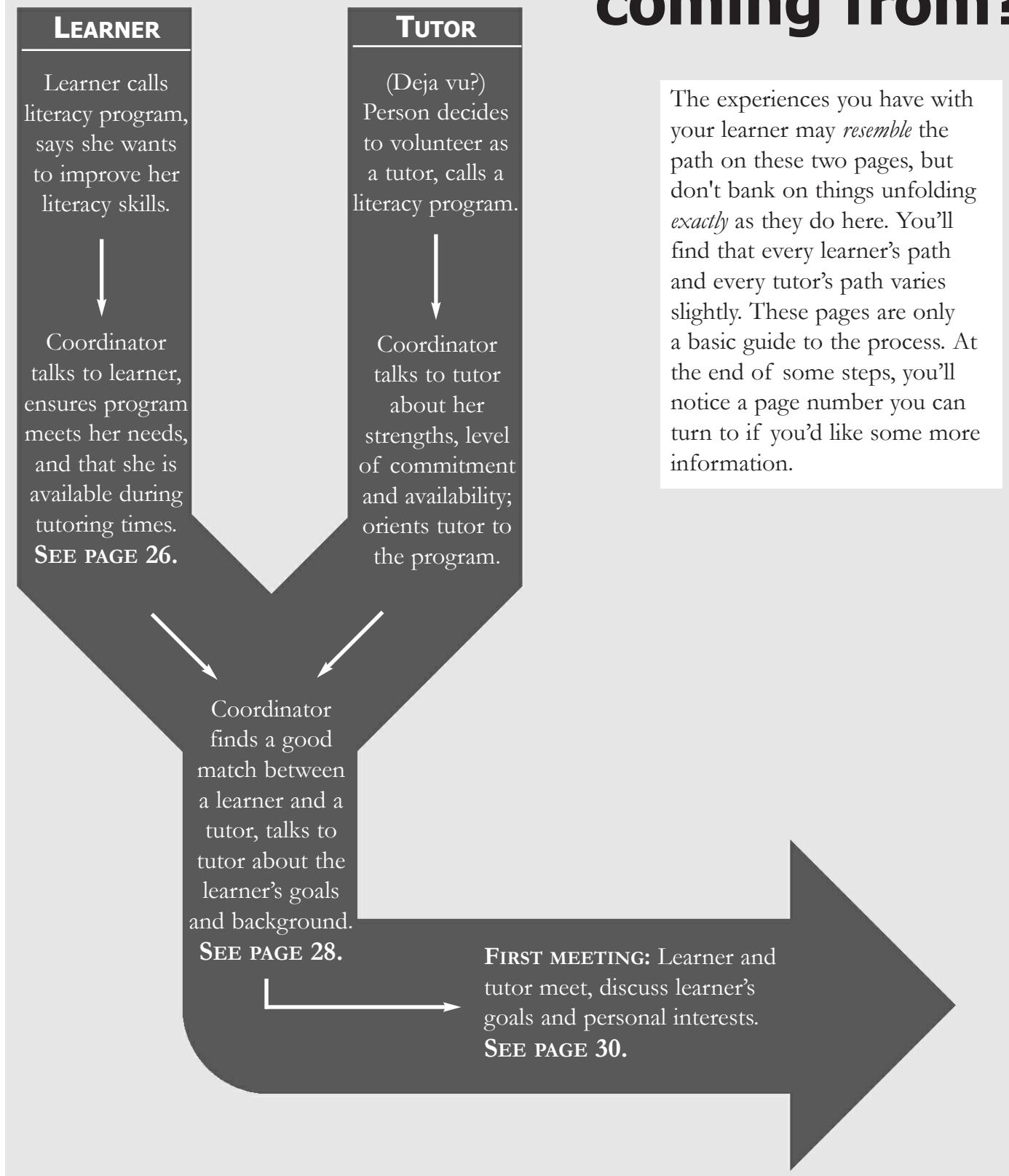
Think of this section as the main course of this handbook. It walks you through the process of *Getting started as a literacy tutor* - from saying you want to volunteer at a literacy program, to meeting your learner for the first time, to planning a few lessons and working through them with your learner.

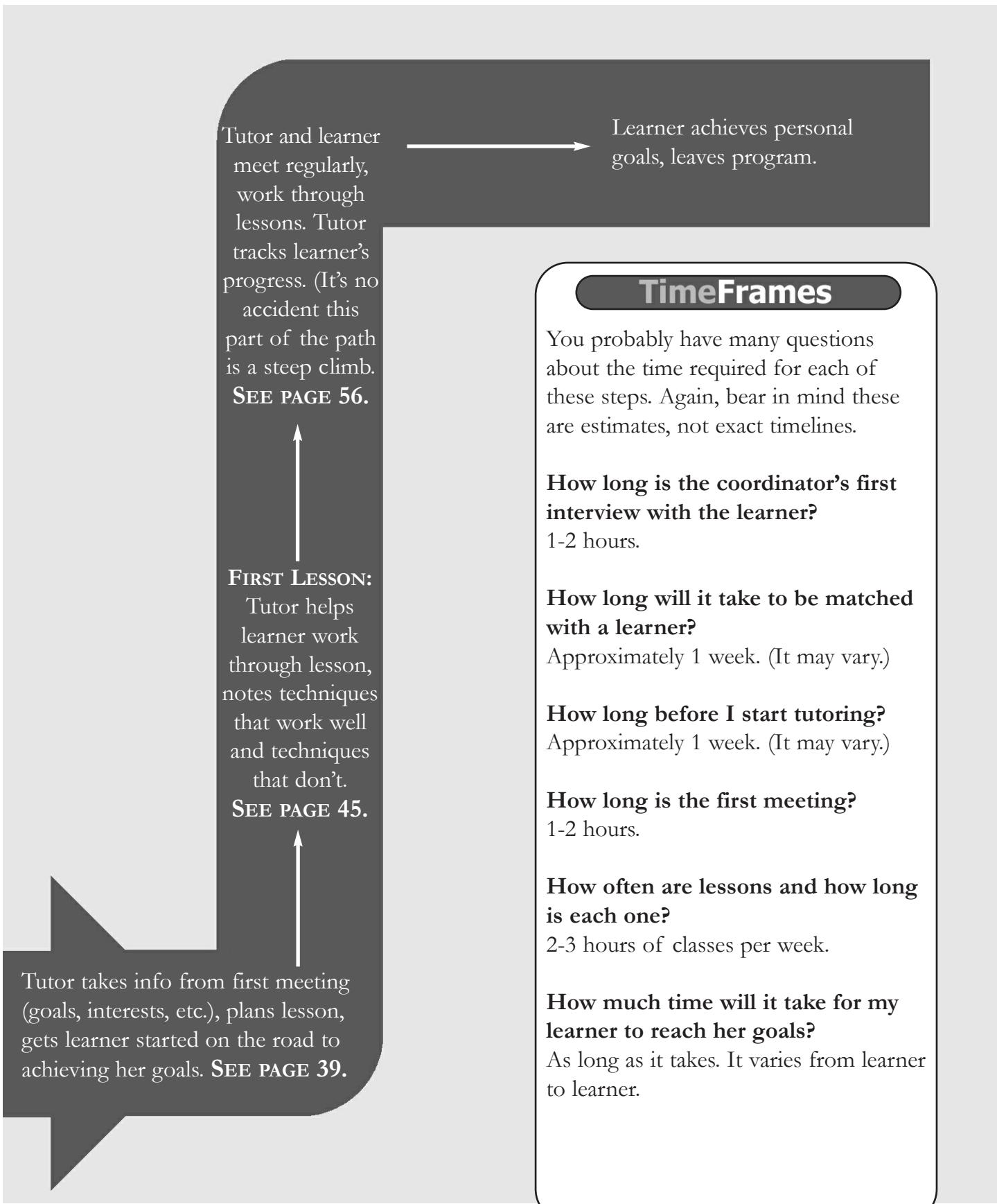
what's inside this section... Just where is everybody coming from?

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Just where is everybody coming from?





Getting started as a literacy tutor

Your decision to volunteer as a tutor says a lot about you as a person: you care about the people in your community, you have an earnest desire to help someone learn, you are enthusiastic to see another person succeed. You are a positive, sincere and committed individual who is willing to go the extra mile to help your learner reach her goals.

Your coordinator shares all of these traits and extends them to every learner and every tutor associated with your program. It's important to always keep this fact in mind.

Your coordinator is there for you

Your coordinator will go the distance for you, will be your greatest ally and is there to offer you support when you need it. Your coordinator also wears a number of other hats.

helping new learners and tutors get started

When a new learner approaches a literacy program and asks for help, your coordinator sits down and talks to her to make sure the program suits her needs and will allow her to reach her academic and personal goals. This conversation is usually quite involved and not just a short chat.

By the time it's over, the coordinator will have a solid understanding about the following:

- The learner's academic and employment background.
- What the learner hopes to achieve in the program.
- Whether or not these goals are possible in the program.
- Whether or not the learner is willing to commit to work hard.
- When and how often the learner is available to meet with a tutor.
- What skills (reading, writing, math) the learner wants to improve.
- Where the learner should be referred if the program doesn't suit her needs.

Assuming the learner is going to be attending your program, the coordinator compiles this information. Once the coordinator finds

A Success Story

BY LINDA OAKLEY

I remember being nervous when I met my first learner. Was I ready to tutor? Would he/she like me? My teaching experiences had prepared me to stand in front of a room full of active junior high students, but how would I do with an adult learner? I discovered that I had nothing to worry about; we got along fine and I thoroughly enjoyed the one-on-

one tutoring.

Now almost three years later, I have helped several adult learners reach their goals. Whether they want to write the GED or upgrade for personal reasons, I find all my tutoring experiences rewarding.

Linda Oakley has been a tutor with the Captain William Spry Library since March 2000.

a good tutor match for the learner, he/she talks to the tutor and passes along the information.

Does the coordinator *always* come away from his/her discussion with the learner with this information? No, not always; but most of the time, your coordinator will be able to provide you with the necessary background information about your learner. Sometimes a learner might not have much to say; in other cases, the learner may have been referred to the program from someone else.

GREAT. MY COORDINATOR WILL GIVE ME THE INFO.

SO WHY SHOULD I SIT DOWN AND TALK WITH MY LEARNER?

Even if your coordinator gives you plenty of info about your new learner, you should sit down and talk with the learner before you start planning and working through lessons together. It's one thing after all, to read a sheet of paper that lists a learner's personal goals and mentions her academic history, but it's another thing entirely to listen to a learner talk about what she wants to achieve in the short and long term, or what worked and what didn't when she was in school. Take your time and genuinely try to understand where your learner is coming from. Rest assured that the time you spend talking to your learner now will help you a lot later when you're planning lessons.



Why bother?

Getting started as a literacy tutor

matching tutors with learners

Tutors and learners are not thrown together willy-nilly. You won't be paired up with a learner who wants help with mid-level mathematics if you're not comfortable teaching math. Likewise, if you're, say, a lab technician who has a science background, you might excel with a learner who needs particular help with science and mathematics.

Your coordinator matches you with an adult learner only after a variety of factors are weighed. These factors are based on conversations your coordinator has with you and conversations your coordinator has with learners.

Matches are also based on personalities, commitment levels and whether or not you and a learner are available at the same time each week.



Keep in mind...

DO MATCHES ALWAYS WORK PERFECTLY?

Of course not. And rest assured that if yours doesn't work, it has absolutely nothing to do with your abilities as a tutor or your capacity to help another adult learn how to read, write and use numbers. Sometimes, a learner works erratic hours and can't adequately commit to the program. At other times, her commitment to meeting might waver, or circumstances in her life may change so she suddenly has less time for your program than she originally thought. Don't take it personally.

Matches evolve as your learner makes progress and as you become more comfortable with each other. Occasionally this happens pretty quickly; other times, it's a slower, more methodical process. Give it time.

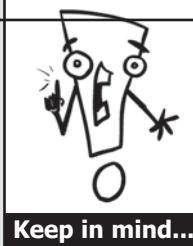
are coordinators the embodiment of human perfection?

No, but they will do their best to address your concerns and answer your questions as they arise. *Whether you're unsure of something with respect to your learner, interested in professional development opportunities, or need guidance or support, talking to your coordinator is never a bad decision.* If your coordinator can't help you, he/she can likely direct you to someone who can.

TUTORS CAN EXPECT THEIR COORDINATOR TO:

- Appreciate that a tutor's primary goal is to help an adult improve her basic literacy skills.
- Treat tutors and learners with the same respect given to employees.
- Recognize that volunteer tutors are a valuable and essential part of the program.
- Share the relevant details of a learner's background.
- Offer guidance and support to tutors and learners.
- Acclimatize and orient new tutors to the literacy program.
- Share learning resources and explain where others are available.
- Be accessible to tutors and learners who have questions.
- Never take a volunteer's time for granted.
- Offer feedback about their tutoring skills.
- Recognize that tutors and learners need flexibility in their schedules.
- Put learners who require help beyond tutoring in touch with appropriate community support programs.
- Invite tutors to attend professional development and other literacy events.
- Welcome feedback from tutors.

Getting started as a literacy tutor



REMEMBER, IF YOU EVER NEED HELP OR HAVE QUESTIONS...

...all you have to do is ask. You should never have any qualms about approaching your coordinator with your questions and concerns about tutoring, resources, your learner or any other program-related matter that is causing you consternation. Remember, you are not alone in this.

COORDINATORS CAN EXPECT A TUTOR TO:

- Meet with an assigned learner at an arranged time and location to tutor her in reading, writing, and/or math.
- Notify both the learner and the coordinator as early as possible if she cannot attend a tutoring session.
- Prepare lesson plans which are appropriate for the learner's level.
- Participate in community and literacy events organized by the literacy network.
- Respect the privacy of all those involved with the literacy network.
- Participate in professional development opportunities when possible.
- Report any issues that arise with her learner to the coordinator as soon as possible.
- Answer basic questions from new tutors starting with the program.
- Welcome feedback from the coordinator and the learner.

Your first meeting

After your program coordinator decides that you and your learner will be a good match, he/she will call you both and let you know.

Your program coordinator will most likely ask both you and your learner to meet at a specified time and place, which, more often than not, will be the same time and place the two of you will meet for your lessons. After your program coordinator decides that you and your learner will be a good match, he/she will call you both and let you know.

Your program coordinator will most likely ask both you and your learner to meet at a specified time and place, which, more often than not, will be the same time and place the two of you will meet each week thereafter. It's also a possibility that your first meeting will take place in another location or at a different time of the week than when you'll be meeting in the future. Either way, your coordinator makes sure that the time and place works for both you and your learner, leaving the two of you with the simple task of attending.

As a tutor, you can help make the first meeting with your learner go more smoothly by being somewhat prepared.

The goal of the first meeting is to relax, get to know each other a bit, find out what your learner hopes to achieve, and learn enough about her that you can plan a few lessons that you think she'll be interested in. From your standpoint, the things to consider are:

- **Dealing with initial jitters**
- **Creating a comfort zone**
- **Figuring out what to ask**

Dealing with initial jitters

Tutoring - especially the first session or two - can bring out the fiercest of anxieties. Popular anxiety generators include:

- *I have no idea what I'm supposed to be doing here...*
- *What happens if the person I'm helping thinks I'm no help at all?*
- *It's going to be my fault if my learner doesn't succeed.*
- *I can't teach someone... I've never taught anyone... How am I supposed to teach someone?*

CALMING YOUR NERVES, TACKLING THE JITTERS

Remember why you volunteered to tutor in the first place. You're here because *you can do it*, because *you want to help* and because *someone needs your help*. As long as you remember that, you'll be just fine.



Getting started as a literacy tutor

Different situations produce different emotions. Rather than worrying about how the whole tutoring experience is going to pan out, opt for relaxation and a genuine desire to start things out on the right foot. If you're nervous, use it as an ice-breaker and talk to your learner about it. You've likely forgotten that your learner is probably a lot more nervous and a lot more anxious than you are. If you admit that you're a little nervous, she'll begin to see you less as a teacher and more as a person who wants to help her.

This is a very important distinction: Tutoring an adult tends to work best when you communicate with each other as peers, not as A Person Who Knows Everything (i.e. You) delivering a series of expert monologues and lessons to A Person Who Knows Very Little (i.e. The Learner). Remember that your learner may have had some unpleasant experiences with formal education in the past and that they might colour her new experiences, including your initial sessions together. Helping your learner see you as a peer instead of a teacher helps to create a mutual comfort zone between the two of you.

Creating a comfort zone

You may find that you and your learner hit it off quickly and that a comfort zone is established almost immediately. Or, it may take more time than you expect. Either way, much of the success you have in your sessions will stem from how comfortable you eventually become with each other.

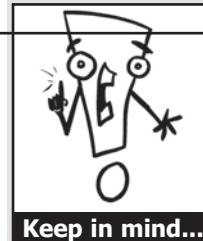
So how do I create a comfort zone with my learner?

Chat and listen. Ask her what she wants to accomplish with the program (see *The Importance of Setting Goals* on page 39). Ask her about herself in general: *Where does she work? What does she like about it? How big is her family? Any kids? Where does she live? How long has she been there? What does she do in her spare time?* (You'll find a list of sample questions below; feel free to mix and match, ignore and replace, reword and paraphrase as you see fit. Remember to respect your learner's privacy.)

OTHER POINTS THAT'LL HELP YOU GET IN THE ZONE...

Your learner knows a great deal. She's made it remarkably far considering she has low literacy skills. The coping skills she's developed to deal with (for example) complex reading materials might astound you. Ask her about them. Also, consider the courage it took for your learner to finally admit that:

- (a) she needed help improving her reading and writing skills, but also
- (b) that she has taken steps to do it.



You should also talk about yourself a little bit. You don't have to get particularly personal, but your learner needs to see you as a flesh-and-blood person in her community who has a life, rather than simply as an expert stranger who will help her improve her literacy skills. As stated above, the ideal approach is one where you and your learner are peers. (It's worth noting at this point that *peer* is not synonymous with *friend*. *A peer is a person who has an equal standing with another. A tutor should be friendLY, not necessarily a friend.*)

Approach the first meeting with your learner with the patience and intelligence it deserves. And remember that a positive first impression works long-term wonders for the tutoring experience.

Figuring out what to ask

Ultimately, it'll be up to you to decide what you should ask your learner and what you don't need to ask.

Below, you'll find some suggestions. Think of it as a handy inventory of things to keep in mind when you meet your learner for the first time. Also, in the spirit of the tutor being the final decision maker, rather than creating a list of Do's and Don'ts, we've opted to have a list of *Try To's* and *Try Not To's*...

Getting started as a literacy tutor

Try to...	Try not to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Show genuine interest in the things your learner has to say.▪ Ask your learner if she minds if you write down some notes (if you think notes would be helpful later...) If she minds, don't take notes.▪ Make sure you understand what your learner is talking about; if you don't, ask politely for clarification.▪ Exercise open-mindedness and patience.▪ Make it abundantly clear that mistakes are not a bad thing and that, actually, they're a fundamental part of learning.▪ Respect your learner's confidence by not telling others what you talk about during sessions. She might not want others to know she's enrolled in your program.▪ Remember that your learner has made it a long way with limited literacy skills.▪ Pause and reflect on what your learner says to you; hastily jumping to conclusions won't help anyone.▪ Demonstrate sincerity and empathy instead of simply telling the learner that you're sympathetic. Showing always means more than telling.▪ Keep in mind that your learner, like you, is a unique individual who has a unique set of goals, values and interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Interrupt your learner when she's speaking or trying to make a point.▪ Judge your learner's written ability by gauging her ability to communicate verbally; there can be quite a canyon between the two.▪ Yawn or look bored as you sit listening to your learner talk about herself. Be an active listener and remember that you communicate a great deal even when you aren't talking.▪ Ask close-ended questions like <i>Did you have a tough time at school?</i>, which usually result in compelling replies like <i>Yep</i> or <i>Nope</i>. Instead, try something more open-ended like <i>Tell me about your experiences when you were in school</i>.▪ Argue or react aggressively if your learner says something you disagree with. Rather, reflect on what she has to say.▪ Offer your two cents of advice about everything your learner mentions.▪ Feel it's necessary to praise your learner for everything she has ever done. A little praise goes along way, but too much will ultimately render it meaningless.▪ Forget that your learner, like you, is nervous too.

Weren't you going to suggest what I should ask?

Before you start thinking about what you want to ask, it's a good idea to ask your coordinator if they have interviewed the learner (almost always, your coordinator will have completed a thorough Q & A with the learner before you meet with her). Talk to your coordinator about what he/she learned during the interview. It may give you a bit of a heads-up, and it may suggest some areas in particular that you'd like to ask your learner about. It can only help. Your program coordinator can provide you with brief exercises to help break the ice.

A Success Story

TINA AND GRANT

by Erica Butler

In the past I've seen Grant get bogged down by his negative attitude. He is very sensitive to his own progress, and does not feel he has made much in his many years of working on reading and writing. Since he started working with Tina, I've noticed a great improvement in his attitude.

So what's her secret? Tina is very organized. She always has a lesson plan that they

work through together. I think Grant must draw some satisfaction from knowing that each week there are things to accomplish.

Also, Tina began by doing a reading assessment with Grant. This activity gave him a goal (to improve the reading level) and gave Sandra some good clues as to what Doug's reading weaknesses are.

*Erica Butler coordinates the adult upgrading program
at the Halifax North Public Library*

Getting started as a literacy tutor

Sample questions to ask your learner

Asking these questions will help you get to know your learner: her short- and long-term goals, her personal interests, what she does for a living. Use as many or as few of them as you see fit. Add, delete and reword however you like. And keep in mind that if you don't get to all of these questions, you can always ask some later on too.



For more info...

WOULDN'T IT BE HANDY IF...

You'll find a blank version of these questions in Appendix B on page 87. Feel free to photocopy these pages and use them to make notes when you meet with your learner for the first time.

Before you start, explain to your learner that you'll use this information to tailor lessons to her interests and goals. Make it clear you won't share what she tells you with anyone, that everything is between you and her. Ask if she minds if you write down what she tells you. If she says it's okay, don't just mechanically jot down her answers and move on to the next question. Remember: active listening skills!

the basic information

Getting the basics down is very important when you're starting out as a tutor. You may learn a lot by asking the simplest of questions.

- **Name** (Make sure you know the correct spelling and pronunciation)
- **Where do you live? How long have you lived there?**
- **Where else have you lived?**
- **Tell me about your family** (You might want to ask how supportive her family is of her decision to upgrade her skills).
- **Do you have a job? Tell me about it.**
- **What other jobs have you had? Why did you like/dislike them?**
- **Are there any considerations in your life that might conflict with our sessions together? (i.e. childcare, medical problem, job)**

- **When was the last time you had your eyes and ears tested?** (If she is on social assistance, funds are available to correct the problem.)
- **What kinds of things do you like to do in your spare time?**
- **What do you enjoy about them?**
- **How did you become interested in this program?**
- **What do you hope to get out of this program?** (These are your learner's long-term goals; more specific, short-term goals will likely come up when you ask some of the other questions below.)
- **What is the best way for us to get in touch with each other if one of us can't make a session?** (It's up to you and the learner; talk to your coordinator if you need some guidance.)
- **Is there anything you want to ask me?** (Ask this at the end of each section; it'll help your learner see you as a peer.)

past learning experiences

Your learner's replies to these questions may help you determine which techniques will work best when you start planning lessons. That said, it's possible that her replies will tell you very little; she may not remember or she just might not know. Either way, it doesn't hurt to ask and it definitely doesn't hurt to explain why you're asking.

- **What do you remember about school? What was positive/negative?**
- **What subjects did you like? What subjects did you dislike?**
- **Did you ever receive extra help? What kind of help was it? Did you find that it made a difference?**
- **Why do you think you might have had some trouble learning before?** (It's a good idea to acknowledge that it wasn't her fault if she had trouble in the past.)
- **How do you learn best? By looking at something? By listening?**
- **By doing something with your hands? A combination of learning styles?** (For more information about learning styles, see page 47.)
- **Have you attended any other literacy programs? Tell me about your experiences there. What worked and what didn't?**
- **Do you have any questions about my past learning experiences?**

Getting started as a literacy tutor

past learning experiences

Answers to these questions will tell you what level your learner thinks she's at, which materials she's currently comfortable working with and which materials pose problems for her. Ask her to be as specific as she can when she talks about reading and writing goals; reaching specific goals, however small, will help her feel like she's making steady progress.

- *What kinds of things do you like to read?*
- *What kinds of things don't you like to read?*
- *When do you find yourself wishing you could read better? What would you like to be able to read better?*
- *What do you think makes someone a good reader?*
- *Do you remember what you read?*
- *What kinds of things do you like to write?*
- *What kinds of things do you not like to write?*
- *When do you find yourself wishing you could write better? What would you like to be able to write better?*
- *What do you think makes someone a good writer?*

math goals

- *When do you use math right now?*
- *When do you find yourself wishing you were better at working with numbers?*
- *What kinds of things would you like to be able to do better?*



TWO THINGS TO DO AT THE END OF THE FIRST MEETING

- 1** At the end of the interview, ask your learner if she has any questions for you.
- 2** After the first meeting is over, take some time to reflect on what she's told you, how you can use her replies when you plan lessons for her, things you might need to clarify later, etc.

The Importance of setting goals

So far, this handbook has mentioned the need to set goals with your learner, but it hasn't really explained why this is so important or how you can help her.

When your learner identifies her goals, it's quite possible she'll say something quite general like *I want to read better* or something more long-term like *I want to go to college*. Therefore, it's important to differentiate between her short-term goals and her long-term goals.

One way you can do this is to simply ask her to be as specific as possible when she tells you what she wants to accomplish. Ask her about what motivated her to take the courageous initial step with your program. If she says she did because she wants *to read better*, then ask her *when* she wishes she could read better. She might say that she has trouble reading the bus schedule or that she finds it difficult when she has to pay her bills. A good short-term goal then, would be to help her learn how to read the bus schedule. It may take a few weeks to accomplish.

By helping your learner identify her short- and long-term goals...

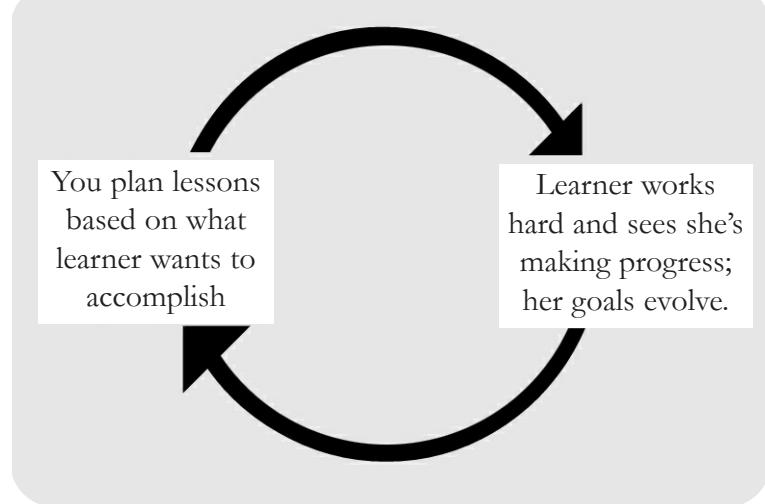
- 1** You'll be able to plan lessons and find reading materials that she finds valuable and relevant to her life, which will encourage her to work hard to succeed.
- 2** Your learner will be able to see that she's making frequent and genuine progress and she'll recognize that she's working toward her long-term goal (i.e. *to read better*).

Before long, you'll see that the two feed off of each other in a kind of positive tutoring cycle. Your lessons will become easier to plan and

Getting started as a literacy tutor

increasingly relevant for your learner. Your learner will see that her work is paying off and her existing goals will likely evolve and new goals may emerge.

the positive tutoring cycle



When you create lessons for your learner, think of her goals in terms of a ladder. Each rung represents a short-term goal, or a set of short-term goals. As she climbs the ladder and successfully reaches short-term goals, she'll become increasingly confident. This confidence will push her to new heights where she will take on more challenging material, make more educated guesses, risk being incorrect and perhaps most significantly, she'll realize that mistakes are an integral part of the learning process. Once she has achieved all of her short-term goals and climbed the ladder, she'll be able to reach the top, her long-term goal!



SETTING GOALS IS AN ONGOING PROCESS

As you get more and more comfortable with your learner, she'll become more and more likely to share her goals with you.

KEEPING THE POSITIVE TUTORING CYCLE ROLLING

Show your learner the progress she's making constantly. If her enthusiasm starts to wane (and it might), pull out something she's worked on that demonstrates how far she's come. (Remember, *showing* is always better than *telling*.)



A Bright Idea!

Pull it out of where? Where should I keep her work?

Consider keeping it in a binder that you bring to each lesson. The one in your hands is intended to fit the bill perfectly.

What excites a tutor in the beginning...

I'M GOING TO
TEACH SOMEONE
HOW TO READ!



What excites a tutor a few weeks later...

I MANAGED TO GET MY
LEARNER TO PAUSE WHEN
SHE COMES TO A PERIOD
AT THE END OF A SENTENCE!



Getting started as a literacy tutor

A Success Story

HAS WORKING WITH MY TUTOR HELPED ME?

BY MICHAEL J. STEPHEN

When I first started working with my tutor I had just come out of an experience in my life where I had to re-evaluate myself and where I was going. At first glance someone could say I was not in very good shape to embark on a new learning experience! One of the things I had come out of this experience with was a strong desire to learn. I knew I was not going to get anywhere in my life without my grade 12 education. I related all this to my tutor the first time we met and I left her with the permission, you could say, to push, prod, suggest and generally be hard on me when she felt I needed it. The fact that I took care of this right away had a positive outcome right from the start on how my experience went with her. She knew she could be honest with me because that is what I wanted. How else was she going to tutor me properly if I could not take some criticism here and there?

With that out of the way she was able to take my drive to learn and channel it into learning new study habits and she was a real Godsend in her encouragement of the fact that I like to write. She was not able to help me with math but she got her son involved and that went quite well. I need a lot of work in that

area and he was as patient as his mom which helped quite a bit.

I have come out of this whole experience with an even stronger desire to learn, not only in my preparation to write the GED. Life itself is an opportunity to discover new things about yourself. Some of it good, some of it not so good but you are a stronger person just by experiencing it. I have learned what skills I possess and how to make the most of them.

I have also come away from this with a strong desire to give something back. With that in mind I want to become a tutor myself when I achieve my grade 12. Teach someone to read and write and not only do you open up a whole new world for them but you give them the ability to express who they are and that opens up a whole new level of learning for them.

I honestly can say that I do not know where I would be today if the Literacy Network had not been there when I needed them.

Reasonable expectations for each other

It's up to you to decide whether or not you want to draw up a written agreement with your learner about your expectations for each other. But it's a good idea to go over the following and make additions and subtractions to suit your relationship.

YOUR LEARNER CAN EXPECT YOU TO:

- Plan lessons that the two of you will work through together.
- Show up prepared and on time.
- Meet with her regularly.
- Devote some personal time to prepare for lessons.
- Act as a tutor, not a therapist or a support worker.
- Communicate regularly with the coordinator on her progress.
- Tell her (and the coordinator) if you can't attend a session.
- Listen to her ideas and suggestions for future lesson plans.
- Keep what you discuss together confidential.
- Be patient, respectful and supportive.
- Design learning activities with her interests and goals in mind.

YOU CAN EXPECT YOUR LEARNER TO:

- Show up on time, prepared to work through lessons.
- Pay attention to the lessons during the class time.
- Recognize that you're there to help *her* learn, not to learn *for her*.
- Complete the homework you assign.
- Take responsibility for her own learning.
- Let you (and the coordinator) know if she's going to be late, absent or unable to do her homework.
- Stop you when she doesn't understand something or when you're moving through a lesson too fast.
- Recognize that you are a tutor, not a counsellor, support worker or friend.

Your coordinator may have a sample written agreement that says the learner will treat her tutor with respect and make every effort to do her homework and attend tutoring sessions. Ask if you're interested.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

What you should take away from your first meeting?

a checklist

- I explained why I was asking questions.
- My learner knows that what we talk about won't be discussed outside of our sessions.
- I can pronounce and spell my learner's name properly.
- My learner knows my name.
- I know a little about my learner's family.
- I know what my learner does for a living and whether or not she likes her job.
- I know a bit about my learner's educational background.
- I asked my learner which teaching techniques she thought worked best for her in the past.
- We worked out how we'll get in touch with each other.
- I know whether or not my learner has a medical problem that might affect her work with me.
- We identified my learner's long-term goal(s) and some of her short-term goals.
- I know some of my learner's hobbies and interests.
- I know when my learner uses math in her day-to-day life.
- I know how my learner became interested in this literacy program.
- We have both committed to our next meeting together.
- I have a good idea about what we can work on in our first few lessons together.

If you missed some, don't worry. You can always ask your learner the next time you see her.

Your first few lessons

Okay. You've met your learner for the first time and know a little bit about her. You've filled in the checklist on the previous page. You know what your learner wants to accomplish. You know what interests your learner. Every *t* has been crossed and every *i* dotted. You're almost ready for your first lesson!

By now, you've likely established (with both your learner and your coordinator) when, where and how often you and your learner will meet. If you haven't, don't lose sleep over it. Ask your coordinator for some help ironing out the logistical details before the first lesson.

Typically, learners and tutors meet once-a-week for two hours, though that's by no means a rule. You and your learner will have some flexibility in determining what works best for your sessions.

Tutoring locations will also vary depending on the literacy program. In some programs, you'll meet in a designated location where several other learners and tutors are also meeting and the two of you will work together in a quiet space. In other programs, you might meet in a public library, at a nearby school or in another place. Your coordinator will be happy to fill you in if you have questions.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

One more thing... how do I tutor?

This is the \$64,000 question, isn't it? Unfortunately there's not one all-encompassing answer. Adults learn in a wide variety of ways and there isn't a foolproof method for how to tutor an adult. You'll discover that some techniques work great with your learner and others don't work well at all. The key is to keep trying and to find out what works best *with your learner* because tutoring is hardly an exact science.

Successful tutoring is rooted in communicating effectively, in having reasonable expectations, in applying the right kind of motivation and in offering feedback. Perhaps most importantly, successful tutoring stems from the tutor's genuine desire to see the learner succeed. Therefore, if you and your learner trust and respect one another and develop a good rapport, you will have laid the foundation for a positive tutor-learner relationship.

And remember, in terms of creating that positive relationship, you're just getting started. As you work with and get to know your learner over the course of your first meeting and during your first few lessons, try to keep the following things in mind:

- Adults and children learn in different ways.
- Adults tend to learn better when they relate to what they're learning.
- Tutoring will occasionally be challenging and frustrating.

1

ADULTS AND CHILDREN LEARN IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

Adults – even adults with low literacy skills – know a great deal about a variety of subjects. You may be amazed by how well your learner has adapted and managed to get by with low literacy skills. Experienced tutors always keep this in mind and understand that adults and children learn in fundamentally different ways.

Think back to when you were in elementary school. Do you

Learning Styles

TAKE A LOOK! GATHER ROUND! ALL HANDS ON DECK!

Everyone is partial to a certain style of learning. Some people learn best when someone draws them a picture. Other people find it best to listen to someone explain a concept. Still others learn by rolling up their sleeves, using their hands and trying something to figure it out.



How do you identify your learner's learning style?

- Ask her how she learns best.
- Note which lessons work and which don't work. Then look for patterns.
- Ask your coordinator for a copy of a Learning Styles Inventory.
- Search the Net for Learning Style questionnaires and work through a few with your learner. (Make sure you tell your learner that these questionnaires are not tests and that you're only working through them to help her get as much as possible out of your sessions together.)

And don't shy away from using your imagination. Why not:

- Bring in roadmaps or posters to use in lessons?
- Record yourself on an audio cassette so your learner can read along at home?
- Fill a shoebox with sand and having your learner write with her fingertip?

remember how you learned new concepts? It probably went something like this...

You were taught a concept that built on another concept you learned previously. For example, you learned addition and subtraction. Then, you learned multiplication and division, which built on principles you learned in addition and subtraction.

It's similar to a pyramid. Start with something very basic, build a foundation and continue to add more complex ideas. There are a variety of reasons why this kind of approach isn't the best one to use when you're tutoring an adult.

For example, it doesn't take into account the fact that adults already know a great deal about some subjects, regardless of their reading and writing skills. As a result, to extend the pyramid analogy, an adult might have some blocks in mid-air, with no

Getting started as a literacy tutor

foundation at all. Or, they might have some foundation blocks, some blocks in the middle, but not others. Your learner may also have trouble making connections between the things she already understands. This can happen when you leave school and do your best to try to understand the issues, ideas and problems that you face on a daily basis.

As a tutor, you need to try to fill in these *gaps* in your learner's knowledge. The question is, how do you do this? Well, for starters, try to see yourself less as a teacher (in the traditional sense) and more as a coach who is trying to help someone succeed.

Good coaching is also about knowing your players: their strengths, limitations, motivations and what they *need* to learn and practice vs. what they *want* to learn and practice. A good coach knows how to maximize what she gets out of her players, how to create an environment where her players exceed their own expectations of themselves. She also accepts that each of her players is unique. She knows which players need to be challenged and how to challenge them. She knows who benefits from praise and feedback and she knows how to properly apply it. She knows how to create a good rapport with her players, how to create a relaxed atmosphere where questions can be asked and opinions can be shared. And perhaps most important of all, good coaches and players know that neither will go very far unless genuine and mutual respect and trust exist. Sound familiar to your role as a tutor?

As a tutor, it helps to be familiar with the Four Laws of Learning (adapted from Robert Derbyshire's *A Guide for Teachers and Teacher Trainers*, written in 1966).

the law of doing

Your learner won't learn from what you do. She will learn from what you are able to get her to do. This is why developing trust and applying the right kind of motivation and encouragement are so important.

the law of effect

Success breeds confidence. The more your learner feels like she's learning learning and progressing, the more she'll want to come back to continue week after week.

the law of exercise

Most people are familiar with the saying *Practice makes Perfect*, but ask yourself if it's really correct. Surely practice and repetition are important when you're trying to master a new skill, but what if you're practising incorrectly? If you repeat something over and over again, it will become permanent whether it's correct or not. A more appropriate saying might be *Practice makes Permanent*. As a tutor, you want to make sure that what your learner is practising (*and making permanent*) is actually correct.

the law of primacy

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Do your utmost to make it a good one. Always show up positive and prepared. If your first few lessons are relevant to her goals and her life and you're optimistic about your learner's progress, she'll reach her immediate goals quickly and she'll start to recognize her own progress.

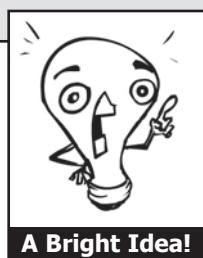
2

ADULTS TEND TO LEARN BETTER WHEN THEY RELATE TO WHAT THEY'RE LEARNING.

The question to ask yourself is *How do I make sure the lessons I prepare are relevant to my learner?* The answer is easier said than done. Your learner will relate to your lessons if you focus on her (the learner) rather than simply on what you're trying to teach her (the content).

WILL ONE EXAMPLE BE AMPLE?

Math lessons will make more sense to your learner if it involves something she's interested in, like cooking, or carpentry. Likewise, your learner will be more likely to be interested in reading if she's interested in the subject matter.



Getting started as a literacy tutor

Tutors who focus on content say...	Tutors who focus on learners say...
This is what you need to learn and this is the best way to learn it.	What do you want to learn? How can I help you reach your goals?
What I teach doesn't change based on who I'm teaching.	You'll learn best if I adapt the material so it's more relevant to who you are.
It's my way or the highway. I know the best way to work through this stuff so that's what we'll do.	You are a unique person so I need to figure out which approaches will best help you understand and relate to this material.
I'll talk; you'll listen and learn what I'm teaching.	Sometimes I'll talk; sometimes you'll talk; and we'll bring each other's life experiences into what we're working on to make it more meaningful.
I'm going to show you what reality looks like.	Tell me what reality looks like to you.

Concentrate on your learner and how what you're teaching relates to the learner, particularly in the first few lessons. Your learner will see the inherent value in learning the material and the progress she's making (i.e. *If I learn this, it will be easier for me to do that*); she'll also see that you're sincere in your desire to see her improve her skills. Finally, she'll be more likely to share more of her ideas and goals with you.

3

TUTORING WILL OCCASIONALLY BE CHALLENGING AND FRUSTRATING.

When some people decide to become volunteer tutors, they do so with an unrealistic sense of what they can accomplish. Tutoring is rewarding, but it requires a great deal of time, patience and enthusiasm on your part (sometimes you'll need to supply it for your learner). You will, on occasion, find it frustrating and challenging.

Expect your ideas about tutoring to be in a state of perpetual flux. Things won't always pan out like you hope. If a lesson isn't working, don't berate yourself. Simply cut it loose and try something else. No one will be looking over your shoulder and tabulating your lesson success rate. Remember, you're encouraging your learner to see that mistakes are part of any learning process so try not to get bogged down if you make a couple yourself. Learn from them and move on.

What should I do if...	You might want to try to...
My learner is very difficult to motivate	Focus on her short-term goals. The more frequently she reaches them, the more confident and motivated she'll become.
My learner gets a little hostile to authority	Remind her that you are a peer, not an authority figure who is judging her. Assure her that she already knows a great deal and that you're there because you want to help her achieve her goals.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

What should I do if...	You might want to try to...
My learner has personal or financial problems	<p>Draw a distinction in your mind between <i>being your learner's friend</i> and <i>being polite, helpful and friendly with your learner</i>.</p> <p>Direct her to a professional who can help her. If you offer her advice, she may decide she doesn't need help from someone who's been trained to help someone in her situation. Your coordinator can direct you to the appropriate services.</p>
My learner has trouble sitting at a table and working for a few hours	<p>Use a variety of teaching styles. Mix in some hands-on lessons with reading and writing exercises. Ask your learner what the two of you can do to make things better.</p> <p>Try to position yourself beside (rather than across from) your learner so she can follow what you're reading or writing.</p> <p>And try to work in a quiet, comfortable area away from ringing telephones, a constant parade of people walking by and the like. Also, feel free to take breaks as necessary.</p>
My learner has no confidence in herself	<p>Assure her that she can learn. Bring her attention to how far she's managed to get in her life with low literacy skills and how much courage it took to come to the program in the first place.</p>

What should I do if...	You might want to try to...
<p>Tutoring reminds my learner of bad experiences she had when she was in school</p>	<p>Be as welcoming and uncritical as possible and shy away from sarcasm. Emphasize that the two of you have the freedom to approach your tutoring sessions creatively and that there's no reason for them to be like her previous experiences.</p>
<p>The lessons I prepare for my learner seem to be too difficult for her</p>	<p>Step back and reconsider her literacy level. Ideally, try to challenge your learner without overwhelming her. If she's making a lot of errors, be patient and work on problems one at a time. Think of errors as opportunities for further learning. Look for patterns and plan future lessons to address specific problems.</p> <p>You may find page 62 of this handbook helps too. It shows you how you can determine your learner's reading level.</p>
<p>I find it hard to plan lessons because my learner comes from a different culture.</p>	<p>Learn about her culture, the country or region she comes from, etc. Use her culture and your lack of knowledge about it to plan lessons; she'll likely be enthusiastic to talk to someone about her background. Figure out how to say <i>Hello</i> and <i>Goodbye</i> in her native language. Use a map of her country in lessons. Familiarize yourself with the holidays she celebrates.</p>

Getting started as a literacy tutor

What should I do if...	You might want to try to...
Nothing seems to be working with my learner	<p>Chances are this is not the case. If you feel it is, then it's time to re-evaluate how you are measuring your learner's progress. The goals you have helped her set may be a bit too ambitious (Don't worry; it does happen!). Take a couple of steps back and try to figure out if you're working at the right level.</p>
My learner fails to show up for one or more of our sessions	<p>Deal with this right away. Call her and find out why she missed your session and ask if she'll have similar attendance problems in the future. Let her know that you're still interested in helping her. And you should definitely speak to your coordinator as soon as possible and explain what happened. The time you volunteer is very valuable and you shouldn't be preparing sessions for someone who doesn't show up.</p>
I can't find any resources for my learner	<p>Stay calm. The more you tutor, the more you'll develop a kind of Resource Radar and you'll start discovering worthwhile resources everywhere you look. In the mean time, see Appendix A of the handbook for all the help you'll need to get started (page 78). You can also help your learner produce her own reading material (see the lesson on page 65).</p>

A brief word about learning disabilities

The mere mention of learning disabilities can induce panic and anxiety in even the most self-assured new tutor. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia (LDANS), one in ten adults has a learning disability, so it's certainly possible that your learner may have one and it may or may not have been diagnosed.

If, as you work through lessons, you suspect your learner might have a learning disability, it does not mean that she cannot learn. It may mean that you may have to vary your approaches and find creative ways around these difficulties. You may find that repetition works best, which is fine. Likewise, you may find that repetition doesn't work at all, which is also fine. Just be prepared for the possibility that learning might occur at a different pace.

What else can you do? Talk to your coordinator. Your program's library likely contains some LD resources that can show you the best way to proceed. Also, if you have access to the Internet, check out the LDANS website at <http://ldans.nsnet.org>. The site has plenty of background information about learning disabilities and links to LD resources.

And if your learner has already been diagnosed with a learning disability, you may find it advantageous. Typically, people who have been diagnosed with a learning disability have a fairly good handle on which learning techniques work and which ones don't. Ask your learner what works and what doesn't and chances are she can tell you.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

Tips to enhance your relationship with your learner

communicate effectively

Any success you have in your tutoring relationship will stem from your ability to communicate effectively with your learner. Problems (in just about any relationship) typically arise when people fail to communicate properly.

Become an active listener. Don't interrupt your learner, or judge what she's saying. Just concentrate on understanding her point. If you aren't sure what she's saying, ask for clarification. Ask her *Do you mean...?* and listen to her reply. Also, be sure to ask follow-up questions to find out more. Do everything you can to stimulate and encourage discussion. It's in these conversations that you'll likely hear about your learner's interests, her short-term goals and the learning styles she prefers.

Speak clearly and slowly. Are you in a rush or something? No. So, take your time and say what you're trying to say. After you explain a lesson, make sure the learner understands it too.

There's such a thing as talking too much. Sure, talking is an integral part of teaching, but it's possible to talk too much. Try not to explain things that require no explanation. It may end up confusing your learner. Instead, find out what your learner needs to know about a problem and make sure she understands it. Aim to engage her in the kind of real discussion where you're genuinely listening and reacting to what she's saying. You should also try to avoid large words when small words will suffice.

Likewise, you need to make sure that you give your learner enough time to actually answer the questions you ask. If she's stumped, restate the question for her (but don't answer the question), or, better still, help her try to restate the problem herself.

You don't need to correct everything your learner does at once. If your learner makes a lot of mistakes, that's okay. Be patient. Rome was not built in a day. Try to look for patterns and keep track of them for future lessons that might address the specific problem. For some exercises in particular, you might want to set your learner's mind at ease by telling her that you're not concerned about correct spelling or grammar. For other exercises, you may want to correct some problems but not others. And as you'll see in the next section, which walks you through a few basic lessons, you can correct your learner in subtle but effective ways.

treat your learner as a peer

As a tutor working with an adult learner, you're in a bit of a precarious position. Ideally, you want to carve out a happy medium between being a friend and a teacher, but you don't want your learner to view you as either.

That might sound harsh, but you'll do well if you think of yourself as your learner's peer. A peer is a person of equal standing. Being your learner's peer means not involving yourself in the intricacies of your learner's life like a friend, and it also means not creating a hierarchy where you are an expert (who has knowledge) and your learner is a student (who does not have knowledge).

Boiled down to its essence... Be friendly without turning into your learner's close friend; help her learn without transforming yourself into a teacher. Communicate with your learner adult-to-adult, not friend-to-friend and not teacher-to-student.

praise your learner, but do so specifically

When offering praise to your learner, try to be as specific as possible. Praise the accomplishment, not the person. Similarly, be careful that you don't praise your learner every single time she does something or else your praise may start to feel a little worthless after a while.

(continued on page 60)

A Success Story

Below: First writing assignment by Don Hall, an adult learner with the Bedford-Sackville Literacy Network (BSLN)

my dog is chap he is 3 years old I am looking forward to learning the classes.

Below: Writing assignment by Don Hall, just five months later.

FAMILY FRIENDSHIP

by Don Hall

A couple of years ago, my brother-in-law Wayne came to visit me in the hospital where I had been for over a month waiting for heart surgery. Besides being relatives, we are also very good friends. My wife Betty, who is Wayne's sister, was also there, along with my daughter, Krista. Little did we know that the evening would turn out to be something more than a simple hospital visit.

While we were talking and laughing my phone rang and I answered it to find out that it was Wayne's daughter in law reporting that Mom had had an accident. She had fallen down the stairs and was in a great deal of pain. Wayne is a very emotional person and upon hearing the news he was very upset, thinking the accident had happened to his 100 year-old mother in law who lives with them. When he realized it was actually his wife Gloria who had the accident, he was so shaken up that we had to get a nurse and a wheelchair for him. He wanted to go home to be with her but we talked him out of it after we learned through my daughter calling his home that she was coming in an ambulance to the same hospital where we were. It was going to be a long night.

It's amazing that one phone call can change a relationship or a view on life. Gloria had broken her arm in five places and was operated on right away. Wayne came back from seeing her and he felt much better. We started talking about different things that we had never discussed before. I spoke to him about my problems, together we shared our and we helped each other out by talking. It helped both of us.

When Wayne left we hugged each other and I could see tears in his eyes. There were tears in my eyes too. That was a sign that we loved each other. I felt better when he left and I still feel good about all that we shared. It was a long night but a good night. We were able to laugh about the situation later on when Gloria teased me about her being special enough to get an operation while I was still waiting. Eventually I did have my heart surgery and today both of us are doing fine.

'Family Friendship' appeared as the National Adult Literacy Database's (NALD) Story of the Week on June 10, 2002

Getting started as a literacy tutor

show your learner how much progress she's made

Begin and end each session with a positive recap that reminds her what she learned during the previous session. When she sees the progress she's making, she'll become more confident and increasingly enthusiastic to continue.

encourage your learner to be independent

Your ultimate goal is to help your learner become an independent thinker who knows how to use reading, writing and numbers to solve problems. To this end, there are a variety of things you can try to do as a tutor.

Help your learner restate problems that stump her. It's natural to want to swoop in and show her the solution when your learner is stuck. But try to be patient and encourage her to try and figure out what the question is asking. This might frustrate your learner a little, but explain that you're trying to help her think through the problem. Ideally, you want her to discover the answer. Ask her what she knows and then ask if she can apply any of it to the question.

Help your learner see herself as a reader and a writer. Show her that reading is used everywhere - from books to birthday cards to cereal boxes to street signs.

Another good idea is to try to make sure your learner always has something to read in her home. If she doesn't, take her to your local branch of the public library, help her get a library card and show her how to find books (you can make a lesson out of it). Likewise, encourage her to jot down her thoughts in a journal. Even a few lines of writing every day makes an enormous difference.

And remember to show your learner the progress she's making as a reader and a writer! Feel free to punch holes in your learner's reading and writing lessons and add them to a section in this binder.

it's okay to ask for help

You're not the only tutor in your program. If you feel frustrated, confused or stumped for some good lesson ideas, why not get together with some of the other tutors in your program and chat over a cup of coffee. You'll be amazed that they're having the same frustrations, confusions and difficulties coming up with good lessons as you are. Share ideas, plans and experiences. Just remember not to betray your learner's confidence. Tutoring one-on-one can feel a little isolating at times; meeting with other tutors to talk can help alleviate those feelings.

Your coordinator is there for you. Don't ever be afraid to approach your coordinator. This really can't be emphasized enough. Your coordinator can help you in a number of ways, whether you're looking for advice, support or recommendations about where you can find some resources to use with your learner.

...but **WHAT** do I tutor ?

Generally, lessons involve a combination of reading, writing and basic math. More specifically, you'll be helping your learner reach some of her short-term goals and work towards her long-term goals. When you first met her, she told you what she hoped to accomplish and gave you an idea about when she finds herself wishing her skills were stronger. That's *what* you tutor.

If after meeting with her, you still have no idea about what you should be working on, don't panic. The section that follows can give you a few ideas. If you're still stumped after reading this section, your coordinator can steer you in the right direction. You can also check out the *Nova Scotia Tutor and Instructor Training and Certification Manual*, which this section refers to several times.

Getting started as a literacy tutor



For more info...

The Nova Scotia Tutor and Instructor Training and Certification Program manual

Try not to let the long name overwhelm you. This large white binder will likely be your best friend if and when you're craving guidance with lesson plans.

What you should know about the manual:

- It looks like this: 
- Herein, for sake of simplicity, the binder will be referred to as *The Tutor Training Manual*.
- Getting hung up on its size will keep you from accessing a lot of valuable information. Don't be afraid to use it.
- It's been cleverly organized. Each section (Writing, Reading, Math) includes some theory and plenty of practical information (lesson samples, ideas and assessments).
- Your coordinator has a copy and can answer questions about it.
- It's written by the Dept. of Ed. and it's given to volunteer tutors who enrol in the province's 30-hour Tutor Training course. If you'd like more information about how to take the course and what's involved, talk to your coordinator. Even if you haven't taken the course, you can access *The Tutor Training Manual* through your coordinator.

Reading & writing lessons

Before you can work on reading and writing lessons with your learner, you may need to determine what level your learner is at. *The Tutor Training Manual* is particularly valuable in this respect.

On pages 31 and 33 in section 9 of *The Tutor Training Manual*, you'll find *Graded Word Lists* that can help you determine the reading level of your learner. These word lists are split into eight columns, with each one representing a grade level (from pre-primary up to Grade 6).

Note: The page numbers referred to in this binder, refer to the 2000 edition of *The Tutor Training Manual*. If your edition is different, don't worry about it. It's so well-designed that you and/or your coordinator will have no trouble finding the *Graded Word Lists*.

Make a few copies of these two pages and bring them to either your first lesson (or even your first meeting) together. If she asks why you're doing this, or whether or not this is a test, assure her that it is not and explain that you simply want to make sure you're starting at the right level for her. Then, ask her to read each column of words aloud and (on your own copy) note the words she reads incorrectly. If she's having a lot of trouble with one of the columns (more than three errors in one column), let her finish it and let her know that she doesn't have to continue.

ASSESSING THE ASSESSMENT SITUATION...

Talk to your program coordinator to find out what kind of assessment(s) has already been done with your learner.



Keep in mind...

How will these lists tell me what level she's at?

When she's finished reading the lists, start at the lowest grade level and work your way up. Have a look at the number of words she read incorrectly in each column. If she made more than two mistakes in a column, that level is too difficult for her. If she makes two mistakes or fewer, then you've found the level the two of you start working at.

Now it's time to start looking for reading materials the two of you can use. You may have a hard time finding materials that are suitable for your learner's reading level. Take your time and remember, it won't always be this difficult to find resources to use. If you're completely stumped, ask your coordinator or your local librarian for some recommendations. Or, you and your learner can develop some of your own reading materials using the Language Experience lesson (see page 65).

At this point, you can start figuring out what lessons you want to try with your learner. The chart on the next page should get you off to a good start and direct you to the appropriate page in both *The Tutor Training Manual* as well as this handbook for more detailed information.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

	Reading Lessons	Writing Lessons
LESSONS YOU CAN TRY	LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE Why not help your learner write something that she finds interesting and relevant (writing lesson) and then use it in future lessons to help her improve her reading skills? Check out page 65 for information about Language Experience stories. You can also refer to section 3, page 41 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .	
	ASSISTED READING Assisted Reading helps your learner develop her comprehension skills. It also encourages her to take risks by making predictions about the story the two of you read. See page 66 for information. You can also check out section 2, page 28 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .	WRITTEN CONVERSATION Written Conversation can be a great way to get your learner over initial fears of writing. It can also help you gain insight into her interests and goals. Check out page 69 for information about this lesson. You can also refer to section 3, page 73 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .
	CLOZE Cloze lessons help your learner take risks and make predictions about what she's reading. For more information, see page 68. You can also have a look at section 3, page 34 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .	SENTENCE STARTERS It's not a lesson you'd spend a long time on, but having a list of sentence starters on hand is a good way to encourage your learner to write, and to take risks while she's writing. See page 71 for more.
	CHORAL READING When you and your learner read aloud together, it will help your learner get a sense of the proper rhythm of reading. This handbook doesn't cover Choral Reading, but you can find information about it in <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> in section 2 on page 32.	JOURNAL WRITING Having your learner write in a private journal every day will help her see that she can express herself in writing. Check out page 72 for more info. You can also have a look at section 3, page 27 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .
	READING AT HOME Regardless of her reading level, there are several things you can do to encourage your learner to read at home. Page 69 has a number of suggestions for you.	PERSONAL DICTIONARY Helping your learner keep a dictionary of problem-words can help improve her vocabulary. See page 73 for more. You can also look at page 11 of section 4 of <i>The Tutor Training Manual</i> .

Language Experience

As you plan reading and writing lessons for your learner, one of the challenges you'll run up against is finding reading material that matches your learner's reading level *and* that your learner finds interesting and important.

The Language Experience lesson lets you create your own reading material, which you help your learner write. It tends to work particularly well with learners who are at Level 1A and 1B.

what do I do?

1. For starters, ask your learner to choose a topic. Instead of just asking, *What should we write about?*, ask her about something you already know she's interested in (which will show her you've been listening to her). *Why don't we write something about... your dog? ...how you don't like your job? ...what your daughter just accomplished?* Another idea is to bring in a photo and ask your learner to make up a story about it.
2. Ask your learner to talk about the topic, what she knows about it, what she likes and dislikes about it and why. Here's where you want to give those active listening skills a workout and interject with open-ended follow-up questions that will get her to open up even more.
3. If your learner isn't comfortable writing herself, print what she says (exactly as she says it) as legibly as possible.
4. When she's finished, slowly read the piece together, pointing at each word as you read it. After you've read it once, ask your learner to try reading it on her own.

Getting started as a literacy tutor



GETTING THE FULL EXPERIENCE...

It's entirely possible that the Language Experience story will bounce from one aspect of a topic to another. One thing to consider for a future lesson might be to organize her ideas about a topic and write other Language Experience stories about different aspects of the same topic. Or, you might ask your learner to copy the story out for homework. You could also type up passages from the story and use them in a Cloze lesson (see page 68).

*For more information about Language Experience stories, have a look at page 39 of section 3 in *The Tutor Training Manual*.*

Assisted Reading

In Assisted Reading lessons, you take turns reading sections of a text with your learner. You'll find that this lesson works well with learners who have low reading skills. In addition to helping your learner develop her reading strategies, it will encourage your learner to make predictions, take risks and see that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

what do I do?

1. Bring a few suitable books in and ask your learner to choose one.
2. Look at the title, any pictures or photos on the cover and ask your learner what she thinks the story might be about. Jot down her answers on a piece of paper.
3. Alternate reading passages from the book. If your learner has trouble reading the text aloud, let her read it to herself first and then try reading aloud.
4. Every so often, stop and talk about the story so far. Ask her to tell you what's happening in the story and what she thinks might happen next. Ask her whether or not her predictions are coming true. Are

there any other pictures in the story to discuss? Does she want to revise any of her predictions? What makes her think her new predictions are likely to occur?

5. Return to the story and again, ask her to compare them with her predictions. Stop reading whenever you think it's time to stop. (Don't worry if you don't finish the entire text; you can go back to it later.)

THE RIGHT KIND OF ASSISTANCE

Help your learner out when she has trouble reading, but try to do so by asking questions rather than simply correcting her pronunciation time after time. By asking *Does that make sense to you?* or *Does that sound right?* you may help her solve the problem herself. That said, if she's having trouble sounding out a word, give her a moment to try (four or five *Mississippis* is usually good) before you help her out. It's also a good idea to keep an eye out for patterns in the errors she's making. Then, you can plan a lesson that will help her address those problems.



A Bright Idea!

For more information about Assisted Reading lessons, have a look at page 28 of section 2 in *The Tutor Training Manual*.

A Success Story

Shannon

BY KELLY MACADAM

Shannon is the most patient tutor I have. She understands me. She helps me with my spelling words and how to write reports in my workplace. When I make mistakes in my homework, she never gets mad. She sits down beside me and says, "Kelly, you did

very good. Just sit down and we will work together. I am here to help you."

Kelly MacAdam is an adult learner working with the upgrading program offered by the Halifax North Branch Library.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

Cloze

The word *Cloze* (rhymes with *nose*) means the ability to fill in missing parts. It comes from the word closure. Cloze lessons then are designed to get your learner to fill in the missing parts of sentences and paragraphs.

This lesson encourages risk-taking and predicting. And if your learner tends to read things very quickly and skip or mispronounce words, you'll find that Cloze lessons can help slow her down so she can make sure a sentence makes sense.

what do I do?

1. Find a reading passage that's not too difficult for your learner. If she's at a lower reading level, feel free to use a passage that she's already familiar with, like a Language Experience story the two of you have written together.
2. Retype the passage on a computer, or photocopy it and leave some blanks throughout the passage.
3. Ask the learner to try to fill in the blanks with appropriate words. Ask her if she can come up with more than one word for each blank so she'll see that there is more than one correct answer.

For more information about Cloze lessons, have a look at page 34 of section 2 in *The Tutor Training Manual*.

Reading at home

Suggestions to encourage your learner to read at home:

- Before you give your learner a book to read at home, record yourself reading it on an audio tape. Then, give her the book and tape together so she can follow along at home. Just make sure you ask your learner whether or not she has a cassette player at home first.
- Encourage your learner to bring in reading materials from her home that she's having trouble understanding.
- If your learner is keeping a writing journal, suggest that she jot down her thoughts about what she's reading.
- Help your learner get a library card. You can even make a lesson of it by showing her all of the great things she can borrow (books, CDs, videos, audio books), how to find them and who to ask if she needs more help. See page 81 for more information.
- Encourage your learner to bring in materials that she has trouble reading. (Give her a highlighter and ask her to highlight words and phrases she doesn't understand; then, go through the highlighted words in a lesson.) *This will help your learner see that the world is one giant classroom and that asking question is an incredibly important part of the learning process.*
- Help your learner see that reading materials are everywhere. Show her that being able to read the information on a bag of potato chips is just as important as being able to read a postcard from a friend. You can do this by bringing in all kinds of reading materials, not just books.
- Always keep your learner's goals in mind when you're planning reading lessons and remind her when she's making progress toward those goals.

Written Conversation

A written conversation is just like a regular conversation except that it takes place on paper. Remember passing notes back and forth in high school? It's a great ice-breaker to begin each session which gets your learner more comfortable with writing and perhaps more importantly, helps create a comfort zone between the two of you.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

what do I do?

1. Pull out a sheet of paper and print a question for your learner. If you can, ask her about something you learned about her from your first meeting or from an earlier session.
2. When you're done printing the question, read the question aloud to your learner. If your learner's reading skills are low, you might want to point at each word as you say it.
3. Ask your learner to write a reply. Tell her you're not concerned about perfect spelling, flawless grammar or expert penmanship. When she's finished writing her reply, ask her to read it aloud. If she's not comfortable writing, let her know that you can write down what she says.
4. Carry on the conversation, asking follow-up questions.



IDEAS FOR WRITTEN CONVERSATION LESSONS

- Ask follow-up questions, and try to rephrase part of her sentence into the question. For example, if she writes *I am good but my neck is sore*, rather than simply asking *Why?* try asking *Why is your neck sore?* It will help your learner see the question and she may start to structure her replies using your question as a guide (i.e. *My neck is sore because...*).
- Don't worry about correcting spelling mistakes your learner makes when she's writing her part of the conversation. Instead, if she writes *I am not felling to good today*, fix the errors when you write your next question: *Why aren't you feeling too good?* This will keep the dialogue moving along, and she'll start to correct spelling errors herself.
- Avoid asking close-ended questions that your learner can answer in one or two words.
- Keep an eye out for patterns in her errors. If you find one, you can plan a short lesson to help her correct a specific problem.
- Incorporate an interesting Written Conversation into a longer lesson, like a Language Experience story.

*For more ideas, techniques and samples of Written Conversations, see page 73 of section 3 in *The Tutor Training Manual*.*

Sentence Starters

Like Cloze lessons, Sentence Starters are a great way to introduce your learner to the infinite possibilities of writing and to help her conquer the fear of the blank page. They'll also get you and your learner talking about each other's interests, which can always be applied to future lessons.

Give your learner the beginning of a sentence and ask her to write a finish for the sentence and to elaborate a little if she likes.

A few examples...

When I was a little girl, I used to _____.

My favourite movie is _____.

In the summer, I like to _____.

When she's finished writing, ask her to read the sentence in its entirety. If she's not comfortable writing herself, ask her if she'd like you to print the sentence endings for her.

Getting started as a literacy tutor

Journal Writing

Encouraging your learner to write in a journal will help her in a number of ways. It will give her a chance (often the first chance in her life) to express her thoughts freely by writing. She'll also see first-hand that the most important part of writing is in the ideas expressed, not in perfect spelling or beautiful penmanship.

Explain to your learner that her journal can be private or she can share it with you, and that you'd be happy to read and respond to what she writes in it. Let her choose.

If she does want you to read it and respond each week, then do so sincerely. Your response should show her that you've read her thoughts and have considered them carefully. It's equally important that you respond in a timely manner. If you show up for a session and your learner is expecting a response to her journals and you haven't read it yet, she'll likely be quite disappointed. Think of the exercise as a more elaborate, more thoughtful version of a written conversation.

If your learner wants to keep the thoughts in her journal private, that's fine; just keep encouraging her to express her thoughts in writing.

And by all means, try to incorporate journal writing into each of your sessions together.

The Tutor Training Manual has a lot of information about journal writing including strategies, handling problems and tips for learners at different levels. You can find them starting on page 27 of section 3.

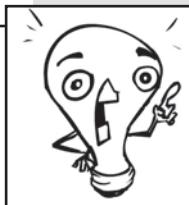
Personal Dictionary

By encouraging your learner to add difficult words, grammatical rules, etc. to a personal dictionary, you'll help her accomplish a number of important things. It will help her get a handle on words that she finds difficult to spell and define and help her better understand some of the rules of grammar that she finds difficult.

Indirectly though, the personal dictionary will help her become more independent. When she runs into trouble while reading and writing, she knows she'll always be able to turn to her personal dictionary for help. This in turn, will increase the confidence with which she approaches reading and writing. And finally, she won't have to look in a phonebook-sized dictionary every time she needs help. Keeping a personal dictionary allows your learner to work up to this.

TIPS FOR USING A PERSONAL DICTIONARY

- Consider using address books, available at most dollar stores, for a personal dictionary.
- Urge your learner to add to her dictionary during sessions.
- Revisit the dictionary from time-to-time to show your learner where she's making progress.



A Bright Idea!

Math lessons

$$X + Y = \text{Nooooooooooooo!!!!}$$

When some volunteers find out that they might be helping their learner with math, they pause to consider running from the building, screaming louder with each step. If you are such a tutor, please take off your jacket and DO NOT SKIP THIS SECTION. There's a fair bit to keep in mind before you decide to make a break for it.



Don't stress out!

Getting started as a literacy tutor

First of all, learners in your program who need help with math need help with very, very basic math: addition, subtraction, multiplication, keeping track of time, balancing a cheque book, that kind of thing.

Secondly, put yourself in your learner's shoes. The language of math is quite different from the learner's everyday language. Words like *times*, *difference*, *product*, *odd*, and *even* have totally different meanings in math than they do in everyday English. Sometimes learners need help overcoming language barriers in math too.

And finally, if your discomfort level with math extends to these concepts, talk to your coordinator and arrangements will be made to accommodate you.

what to work on...

Think practically and try and stay as close to your learner's goals as possible. Ideally, you should try to start with a concept that your learner already understands and then build on that knowledge.

For example, if your learner likes to cook, you could show her how to double a recipe. If your learner likes to paint, try a lesson on area. If your learner wants help figuring out the bus schedules, you could get one and try planning different routes and comparing how long each one would take. If your learner wants to balance her finances, bring in some Monopoly money and try a lesson on budgeting. Build on what she already knows and show her that what she's learning will make her life easier and allow her to be more independent.



WHERE CAN I FIND SOME MATH LESSONS?

If planning math lessons really has you stumped, try some of these resources:

- *The Tutor Training Manual*, page 1 of section 6.
- *National Adult Literacy Database* - The NALD Math Resources page offers several links to lesson plans, tutor/teacher resources and learner resources. You can access it <http://www.nald.ca/netlinks/math/math.htm>

Lesson plans: Do I **HAVE** to write them up ?

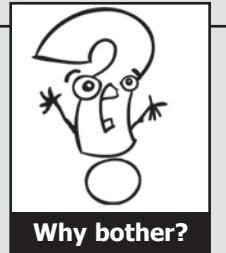
Technically, no. Nobody will show up at one of your sessions and ask to see one. But it's a good idea to write one up, however simple.

To PLAN or NOT To PLAN – IS THERE REALLY ANY QUESTION?

Having a written lesson plan helps you:

- Remember any materials you might need to bring for a lesson.
- Show your learner what she's accomplishing each session.
- Link lessons together from one session to the next.

And remember, when planning lessons, too much is always better than too little. Rather than running out of material 45 minutes early, plan an extra 45 minutes of lessons. That way, if you don't use the extra lessons, you can use them during your next session together.



What does a lesson plan look like?

It's up to you. *The Tutor Training Manual* suggests a 2-hour lesson plan look something like this:

10 minutes: Review strategies from previous session.

15 minutes: Warm-up activity (i.e. Written Conversation)

30 minutes: Main activity (i.e. a project, maybe Language Experience)

15 minutes: Mini-lesson (i.e. short lesson addressing a specific problem)

10 minutes: Break

20 minutes: Math work

10 minutes: Assisted Reading

10 minutes: Wrap-up - Review what was learned, plan next session.

The Tutor Training Manual also includes sample lessons for very hesitant learners, as well as learners who prefer to learn predominantly from a traditional workbook. You can find these on pages 4-6 in section 10.

Again, don't feel bound to a particular lesson plan. It's up to you and your learner to figure out what works best. You'll need to be flexible. If your learner suggests an interesting topic, strike while the iron is hot and come back to your lesson plan later. The next page has a lesson plan that you can photocopy and use to plan your lessons.

Lesson Plan

DATE: _____

section 4

Appendices, Bonus Material and Other Worthwhile Tutoring Paraphernalia

This section contains information that will help you plan and work through your tutoring sessions. It is divided into five appendices:

Appendix A offers an extensive resource list and shows you how to help your learner get her own library card.

Appendix B is a blank version of the interview questions discussed at length starting on page 36 of this handbook. Feel free to use this sheet during your first meeting.

Appendix C walks you through the basics of how you can assess the progress of your learner. You'll also find a form that you can use to track her progress.

Appendix D is a chart that compares and contrasts earning the GED (General Educational Development) with earning the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults. Your learner might not know which one is best for her; the chart might help you steer her in the right direction.

Appendix E lists what your learner needs to be able to do in order to demonstrate that she is ready to proceed to the next adult learning level in each subject.

You'll also find an index at the very back of the handbook on page 105.

what's inside this section...

Appendix A: Where can I find materials to use with my learner?	Page 78
Appendix B: Your first meeting... Questions worth asking	86
Appendix C: Assessing the progress of your learner	91
Appendix D: Comparing the High School Diploma and the GED	93
Appendix E: Curriculum Outcomes	95

Appendices and bonus material

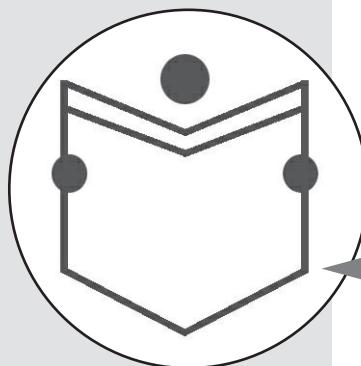
Appendix A - Where can I find materials to use with my learner?

If you're having trouble finding reading materials to use with your learner, you might want to:

1. Visit the Halifax Public Library branch(es) in your area.
2. Search the Internet.
3. Talk to your coordinator.
4. Think outside the box - What have you read today?

The Halifax Public Library branch(es) in your area

The Halifax Public Library system is an excellent place to find materials you can use with your learner. In each branch, you'll find a Literacy Collection comprised of books of exclusive interest to adult learners and volunteer tutors. There is a logo on the spine of each resource in the collection that looks like this:



Literacy Collections typically include several shelves of fiction, non-fiction, language workbooks and math and science texts designed specifically for adult learners. Most library branches also have books on audiotapes and some have videotapes that might be of use to you in your tutoring sessions.

While each branch's Literacy Collection has plenty of materials you can borrow, don't ignore the other sections of the library. Talk to the person at the Information Desk and ask if she can recommend any other resources. You may find some worthwhile resources in the Children's and Young Adults' sections (be careful they aren't too juvenile for your learner). You might also find that a picture dictionary will be helpful for your learner.

Also helpful is *The Halifax Public Library Guide*, which is available at all library branches and from your program coordinator. The *Guide*, in addition to showing you how to place holds on books at libraries and search the libraries online catalogue, also lists the events going on at the various branches. Finally, if you have a computer, visit the Halifax Regional Public website at <http://www.halifax.library.ns.ca>.

What you can find at the library branches in your area

It's important to keep in mind that there are 14 different Halifax Regional Library branches and that materials can be borrowed from and returned to any branch.

This section only lists the library branches near your literacy program. To find out what resources are available at other libraries in the Halifax Public Municipality, ask for assistance at the Information Desk of your nearest branch.

Captain William Spry Public Library

10 Kidston Road (Captain William Spry Community Centre)
490-5715

You'll find the Captain William Spry Library's Literacy Collection upstairs in a small alcove on the right-hand wall (just past the Information Desk). The collection has a decent number of fiction and non-fiction and plenty of math and employment-related textbooks with lessons you can work through with your learner. In particular, the dozen or so stories in the *Smart Reader* series (fiction and non-fiction), which include both a book and an audiotape are excellent.

Halifax North Memorial Public Library

2285 Gottigen Street (next door to the YMCA)
490-5779

The Halifax North Public Library has an extensive Literacy Collection. Ask for directions at the Information Desk and someone will show you exactly where it is. There are plenty of

Appendices and bonus material

fiction and non-fiction materials for learners at all levels. You should have little trouble finding books that interest your learner. You can also find a variety of activity books in subjects like math and geography that contain lessons you can work through during your sessions.

Keshen Goodman Public Library

330 Lacewood Drive (in Clayton Park)
490-6410

To access the Keshen Goodman Public Library's Literacy Collection, walk to the first aisle past Meeting Room C and turn right. You'll see it on your right-hand side. The collection has a number of textbooks in a variety of subject areas, which include plenty of ideas, lessons and worksheets. *The Voyager Series - Reading and Writing for Today's Adults* workbooks are particularly good. Each book in the series is full of short reading passages and accompanying exercises. There are also several books in the *Literacy Celebration* series, which are short stories for low-level learners that are written by other adult learners.

Spring Garden Road Public Library

5381 Spring Garden Road
490-5990

The Spring Garden Road Public Library's Literacy Collection is located on the main level. You'll want to ask for directions at the Information Desk since the library is a bit of a maze. The collection contains several shelves of fiction and non-fiction, including several books that were written by other adult learners. *The Voyager* series and the *Challenger* series are excellent reading and writing resources; you'll find an incredible number of exercises and lesson ideas in them. There are also books on audiotape and resources that you can read to enhance your tutoring abilities.

Helping your learner get a library card

As soon as you start tutoring, ask your learner if she has a library card. If she doesn't (or if she does, but doesn't visit the library often), take her to her local branch of the library and help her get a card. Show her how to find books. Show her where she can find books on audiotape. Show her where she can find videotapes. Show her who to ask for help. Help her see that being surrounded by books is a good thing. Make a lesson out of it.

Library cards are issued free-of-charge, though you might want to make sure your learner understands that she'll have to pay fines if she's late returning what she borrows.

What she'll need:

In order to get a library card, your learner will need to bring two pieces of identification, one of which has her address on it.

An alternative (which won't get your learner as comfortable with the library) is to help your learner sign up for a library card via the Internet. Simply fill out the form on the following web page:
<http://www.halifax.library.ns.ca/getacard.html>

Talk to your coordinator

You've read it time and time again in this handbook, but don't hesitate to ask your coordinator where you can look for tutoring resources. Your coordinator likely has a small library of materials in his/her office and can also recommend other good places to look.

Your coordinator will definitely have a copy of the Nova Scotia Department of Education's *Tutor Training Manual*, which has an incredible number of sample lessons. It's a large binder, but it's full of useful information that will enhance your sessions with your learner and your abilities as a tutor. For more about the *Tutor Training Manual*, see page 62.

Appendices and bonus material

The Internet

If you're comfortable using the Internet and have access to a computer, there is a seemingly infinite number of tutoring resources at your disposal. The following is a small selection of what you can find on the web.



A Bright Idea!

NETWORKING AND USING YOUR CONNECTIONS

If you don't have an Internet connection at home or at work, why not visit your local branch of the Halifax Regional Library. Each branch has free access to the Internet. Simply talk to someone at the Information Desk to find out how to get started.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) - Story of the Week

<http://www.nald.ca/STORY/archive/archive.htm>

If you're stuck for reading materials to use with your learner, look no further than the NALD Story of the Week archive. There are hundreds of stories written by other adult learners. And keep the website in mind if your learner writes something that makes her particularly proud. Your coordinator can show you how to make a submission.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) - Links to Internet Resources

<http://www.nald.ca/netlinks/resource.htm>

A great place to start! NALD has links to hundreds of educational resource pages. You'll find information about adult education, math, lesson plans, as well as puzzles and brain teasers you can use with your learner. There's so much here in fact that you'll want to set aside a good block of time to have a good look at it all.

Key News - A newspaper for new readers

<http://www.keynews.org>

The Key, published out of Wisconsin, is a newspaper written specifically for adults with limited reading skills. It is eight pages long and published online every month. Its goal is to provide people who are working to improve their reading skills with access to the main flow of information. As a tutor, it can be an invaluable resource.

Software for Teachers of Basic Skills

<http://www.northcoast.com/~hope/software.htm>

This site offers free downloads of software that you can use with your learner. There is a section devoted to Community Signs, which can be useful with low-level learners. You'll also find free talking software available for download.

Englishwebguide.com

<http://www.englishwebguide.com>

This site is a nice jumping-off point for other reading and writing resources available on the Internet. It's conveniently separated into categories for you too (i.e. grammar, pronunciation, business English).

DiscoverySchool.com

<http://school.discovery.com/teachers/index.html>

Part of the Discovery Channel's website, this site offers lesson plan ideas as well as a neat Puzzlemaker feature that lets you create (among other things) word searches for your learner. You'll need to register, but there is no cost.

PBS Teacher Source

<http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/>

Though many of them are designed for use with children, the PBS website bills itself as a clearinghouse of over 3,500 lesson plans. If you're stumped for ideas, you'll likely find something you can tinker with and tailor specifically to your learner's needs.

Appendices and bonus material

Spelling It Right

<http://www.spelling.hemscott.net/index.html>

This website is operated by an English teacher in the UK. It is designed for adults who find spelling difficult and who want to learn how to spell correctly. There are a number of puzzles, short lessons and worksheets that you can use with your learner.

Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia (LDANS)

<http://ldans.nsnet.org>

The 'General Information' section provides an excellent overview of learning disabilities - What are they? Who is affected by them? What are the signs? How are they diagnosed? You'll also find information about the LDANS resource library and contact info.

The Worksheet Factory

<http://www.schoolhousetech.com>

Talk about handy software! The Worksheet Factory offers software that lets you easily create just about any math, vocabulary and word search worksheet you can imagine. Download a trial version of the software for free and see just how simple it is to use with your learner.

Math in Daily Life

<http://www.learner.org/exhibits/dailymath/>

This website looks at how numbers affect everyday decisions and offers some excellent ideas for lessons about cooking, home renovation/decorating and personal finances. It may also help you see the world through the eyes of someone who is coping with low numeracy skills.

Arithmetic: Exercises and Problems

<http://www.syrum.com/squizzes/arithmetic/>

Math, math and more math! This site covers just about everything; decimals, fractions, algebra, square roots, per cent and ratio. Whatever level your learner is at, chances are you'll find something useful on this site.

Other websites you've found:

As you surf the Internet, you'll likely discover other web pages that you like. Use this section to jot down the addresses of other interesting websites that you discover. And by all means, share them with your fellow tutors!

Appendices and bonus material

What have you read today?

Having trouble finding some reading materials? Consider all of the things you might have read today...

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Address books | Movie times |
| Advertised prices | Music lyrics |
| Assembly instructions | Newspaper - jobs section |
| Billboards | Newspaper - movie start times |
| Biographies | Newspaper - rental section |
| Building plans | Newspaper - Sports boxscores |
| Bus schedules | Novels |
| Calendars | Novels |
| Cheques | Pamphlets |
| Comic books | Parking tickets |
| Comic strips | Phone bills |
| Community announcements | Phone book - white pages |
| Contracts and agreements | Phone book - yellow pages |
| Credit card applications | Phone messages |
| Credit card bills | Playbills |
| Crossword puzzles | Poems |
| Dictionaries | Postcards |
| Dry cleaning tickets | Posters |
| Electricity bills | Prescriptions |
| Email messages | Receipts |
| Events calendars | Recipes |
| Expiry dates | Religious books |
| Flyers | Road signs |
| Food labels | Short stories |
| Grocery lists | Store flyers |
| Insurance applications | Store hours |
| Job applications | Street maps |
| Junk mail | Thesauri |
| Legal documents | To-do lists |
| Letters | TV guides |
| Licence renewals | VCR programming instructions |
| Magazines | Warnings (i.e. poison, etc) |
| Medicine labels | Websites |
| Menus | Word search puzzles |
| Movie reviews | Written directions |

Appendix B - Your first meeting... Questions worth asking

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Where do you live? How long have you lived there? Where else have you lived?

Tell me all about your family. Are they supportive of your decision to upgrade your skills?

Do you have a job? Tell me about it. What do you like and dislike about it? What other jobs have you had? What did you think of them?

**Are there any considerations in your life that might conflict with our sessions together?
(i.e. childcare, medical problem, job)?**

When was the last time you had your eyes and ears tested? _____

What kinds of things do you like to do in your spare time? What do you enjoy about them?

How did you get interested in this program? What do you hope to accomplish here?

What is the best way for us to get in touch with each other if one of us can't make a session?

Is there anything you want to ask me?

What do you remember about school? Was it positive or negative? What subjects did you like/dislike? Did you ever receive extra help? What kind of help? Did you find that it made a difference? Why do you think you had trouble learning before?

How do you learn best? By looking at something? By using your hands? By listening?

Have you ever attended any other literacy programs before? Tell me about them. What worked and what didn't?

Do you have any questions about my past learning experiences?

What kinds of things do you like to read?

**What don't you like to read? When do you find yourself wishing you could read better?
What would you like to be able to read better?**

What makes someone a good reader?

What kinds of things do you like to write?

What kinds of things do you not like to write?

When do you find yourself wishing you could write better? What would you like to be able to write?

How do you feel about working with numbers and doing math?

When do you use math now?

When do you find yourself wishing you were better at working with numbers? What kinds of things would you like to be able to do better?

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Appendix C - Assessing the progress of your learner

You've read a lot about starting to work with your learner, but you may have questions about how exactly you measure and assess her progress.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education decides what skills learners need to demonstrate in order to move to the next Adult Learning Program level (These are listed in *Appendix E* of this handbook). Assessment can get a little bit confusing since there are a number of ways that your learner can demonstrate her knowledge.

While the Department of Education suggests a number of ways a learner can demonstrate her knowledge, your program may use other assessment tools. Your coordinator may, for example, ask you to fill out assessment and/or progress forms on a regular basis. It's also possible that your coordinator will ask you to assess your learner's progress in a different way. A generic version of a progress form appears on the next page. Feel free to photocopy it and use it to track your learner's progress.

YET ANOTHER REMINDER ABOUT THE BINDER

A simple way to assess your learner's progress is to use the back of this handbook as a binder of your learner's writing samples. That way, you have an ever-evolving history of your learner's progress.



Ultimately, the best thing to do is ask your coordinator how tutors with your program assess learners. Make sure you know how to perform the assessment before you begin and find out from your coordinator how often you should use it to assess your learner.

Student Progress

DATE: _____

NAME OF STUDENT: _____

NAME OF TUTOR: _____

SUBJECT: _____

ALP LEVEL (CIRCLE) 1A 1B 2

ATTENDANCE:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

MEETING PLACE: _____

TIME: _____

Please write a brief description of the goals set by the learner

EFFORT:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Achievements: _____

Other comments: _____

Appendix D- Comparing the High School Diploma and the GED

The chart on the next page compares the High School Diploma for Adults with the GED. If your learner isn't sure which is right for her, use this chart to help steer her in the right direction. Her goals will almost certainly dictate the best path for her take. For more information, talk to your coordinator or visit the Department of Education's Options for Adults page at <ftp://ftp.ednet.ns.ca/pub/educ/nssal/gedvsdiploma.pdf>

The Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults is simply an adult-focused version of the regular Nova Scotia high school diploma.

It is a good option for an adult who wants to:

- Continue on to college or university.
- Upgrade her education level to advance her career.
- Improve her academic, research and computer skills.

The GED is not a high school diploma. Instead, it is a series of five tests that adults take. If passed, an adult will earn a Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.

The GED is a good option for an adult who wants to:

- Earn a high school equivalency in a short period of time.
- Get a promotion from her current employer (you'd want your learner to talk to her employer).
- Qualify for a better job.

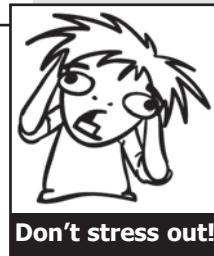
Appendices and bonus material

	The Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults	The Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate (successful completion of GED)
What is it?	This Diploma is just like a high school diploma, except it's designed especially for adults.	The GED is a high school equivalency testing program for adults. It consists of a series of five tests.
How does an adult earn it?	You must complete 12 credits from Grades 11 and 12 (FLECs) or from ALP Level 4 (NSCC). Refer to pages 18 and 19 in this binder for a more detailed explanation.	There are no courses that you have to take, but you must pass a series of five tests, which cover Language Arts: Reading, Language Arts: Writing, Social Studies, Math and Science.
Will it allow an adult to go to college or university?	Yes.	It depends. An adult wanting to attend college or a university should contact the institution first to make sure the GED meets minimum requirements.
How much does it cost?	Tuition is free for adults who qualify but there may be some registration and textbook fees.	The five GED tests cost \$35 to write each time. Keep in mind that GED-prep classes (which aren't mandatory) may carry an additional cost.

Appendix E - Curriculum Outcomes

The Nova Scotia Department of Education creates curriculum outcomes as a way to determine how an adult learner can demonstrate that she has progressed from one Adult Learning Program (ALP) level to another (i.e. from Level 1A to Level 1B or from Level 1B to Level 2).

DO NOT PANIC WHILE YOU LOOK AT THE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES!
Do not think of them as a checklist you must work through session to session. Remember, you want to help your learner work toward her goals, both short-term and long-term. Focus on those goals, not on getting your learner to demonstrate every last outcome.



Use the outcomes table as a guide; use them to show your learner the progress she's making; know that these outcomes exist and that if your learner hopes to earn her high school diploma, she'll need to demonstrate these skills at some point. (The Nova Scotia Department of Education suggests a number of ways learners can demonstrate each skill; ask your coordinator if you can look at them.)



For more info...

CAN TUTORS ACCESS THE ENTIRE CURRICULUM?

Absolutely. If you're interested in taking a look, the entire curriculum (which has a variety of activities you can use with your learner) is available from your program coordinator. Level 1 and Level 2 are also available online at <http://nssal.ednet.ns.ca/download.shtml>

Appendices and bonus material

Level 1A Outcomes

READING

- Recognize and pronounce sight words in a variety of reading activities.
- Construct meaning from print and non-print materials using a variety of strategies.
- Use context to determine the meaning of words.
- Use phonetic strategy to decode words.
- Value reading as a source of information and enjoyment.

WRITING

- Begin to communicate effectively in writing.
- Build words and change the meaning and structure of sentences.
- Begin to incorporate the mechanics of grammar and spelling into her writing.
- Have an understanding of how to use writing in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes.
- Begin to evaluate the effectiveness of her writing and the writing of others.

MATH

- Add and subtract whole numbers as a foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts.
- Apply addition and subtraction of whole numbers to real-life problems.
- Recognize basic two-dimensional shapes.
- Use common measuring tools to perform basic linear measurement.
- Compare basic liquid and solid measurements.

HUMAN RELATIONS

- Identify her strengths, talents and weaknesses.
- Set realistic goals.
- Communicate ideas and feelings.
- Exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors in a variety of situations.
- Build and maintain relationships.
- Make decisions and solve problems.
- Value a healthy, balanced lifestyle.
- Live independently.

Level 1B Outcomes

READING

- Recognize and pronounce sight words in a variety of reading activities.
- Construct meaning from print and non-print materials using a variety of strategies.
- Use context to determine the meaning of words.
- Use phonetic strategic to decode words.
- Value reading as a source of information and enjoyment.

WRITING

- Begin to communicate effectively in writing.
- Build words and change the meaning and structure of sentences.
- Begin to incorporate the mechanics of grammar and spelling into her writing.
- Have an understanding of how to use writing in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes.
- Begin to evaluate the effectiveness of her writing and the writing of others.

MATH

- Multiply and divide whole numbers as a foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts.
- Apply multiplication and division of whole numbers to real-life problems.
- Use a calculator to check basic operations.
- Recognize basic three-dimensional shapes.

HUMAN RELATIONS

- Identify her strengths, talents and weaknesses.
- Set realistic goals.
- Communicate ideas and feelings.
- Exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors in a variety of situations.
- Build and maintain relationships.
- Make decisions and solve problems.
- Value a healthy, balanced lifestyle.
- Live independently.

Appendices and bonus material

Level 2 Outcomes

COMMUNICATIONS

Research, Test-taking and Study Skills

- Identify, locate and use the parts of a book.
- Identify and use a variety of general reference books and materials.
- Identify and use a variety of research tools and strategies.
- Use a variety of test-taking skills.
- Use a variety of study skills.

Listening and Speaking Skills

- Use active listening strategies.
- Effectively express ideas and opinions orally.

Reading Skills

- Read a variety of print materials for different purposes.
- Analyze and appreciate the various forms of literature.
- Use critical thinking skills to understand a variety of print materials.
- Increase their reading vocabulary.

Writing Skills

- Effectively express her ideas in writing.
- Incorporate the mechanics of spelling into her writing.
- Incorporate the mechanics of grammar into her writing.
- Understand and practice the steps in the process of writing.
- Use writing in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of her own writing and the writing of others.

HUMAN RELATIONS

- Identify her own strengths, talents and abilities.
- Set realistic goals.
- Explain and use a systematic problem-solving process.
- Work out conflict in a personal and professional relationship.
- Value a healthy balanced lifestyle.
- Exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours in a variety of situations.

Level 2 Outcomes

MATH

- Use whole numbers as a foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts.
- Use a calculator to solve problems and check calculations.
- Use fractional numbers as a foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts.
- Use decimal numbers as a foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts.
- Use percentages to solve practical problems.
- Use ratio and proportion to solve practical problems.
- Understand the difference between metric and standard measure and use metric measurement.
- Find the perimeter and area of triangles, squares, rectangles, and circles.
- Find the volume of rectangular solids, cubes and cylinders.
- Interpret tables, graphs and charts.
- Carry out money transactions found in everyday life.

SCIENCE

- Explain how science affects almost every aspect of their lives.
- Use the scientific method to solve problems.
- Describe the basic unit of life and explain its importance.
- Explain how green plants contribute to the world.
- Explain how animals contribute to the world.
- Describe how matter makes up our world.
- Describe how simple machines can be used to make work easier.
- Identify and describe the uses of energy in their world.
- Identify the different types and uses of electricity.
- Describe the make-up of the Earth and the Earth's atmosphere.
- Describe the environmental concerns in the world.

Appendices and bonus material

Level 3 Outcomes

I THOUGHT WE WERE ONLY DEALING WITH LEVELS 1A, 1B AND 2?

You're absolutely right. Levels 3 and 4 are offered at the Community College (or PSP Grades 11 and 12 are offered through FLECs), but it always helps to know what you're preparing your learner for.



COMMUNICATIONS

- Locate and use information from a variety of reference resources.
- Use a variety of research tools and strategies.
- Use a variety of study strategies and skills.
- Use strategies for preparing for tests.
- Use information obtained through a wide variety of media.
- Use critical thinking skills to understand a variety of media.
- Select appropriate reading strategies for various learning settings.
- Read, identify, and describe the major literary forms - prose, drama and poetry.
- Analyse and classify commonly used literary techniques and devices which are specific to prose and drama.
- Use active listening skills.
- Effectively express ideas and opinions.
- Make informal and short formal presentations.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Use various geographical tools to extract, interpret and infer geographic information.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of the planet and the forces that shape it.
- Develop an awareness of the ways in which individuals can bring about change through examination of the interaction between people and their natural environment.
- Define and explain the meaning of history through the study of such topics as the role of historical evidence, the relationship between the past and the present, and the importance of historical causation.
- Recognize and explain some of the important issues in Canadian history.
- Apply research skills to their study of history.
- Explain how Canada's history and geography has determined its current economic status.
- Demonstrate an appreciation of arts and culture in the Atlantic provinces and Canada.
- Examine the role that basic economic principles play in daily life, exploring local, regional and global patterns and their implications to the economy of Atlantic Canada.

Level 3 Outcomes

MATH

- Use whole numbers as a foundation for more advanced math concepts.
- Use a systematic approach to solving word problems.
- Use 'order of operations,' 'exponential notation,' 'scientific notation,' and square roots in calculations.
- Identify and factor prime and composite numbers.
- Use fractional notation as a foundation for more advanced math concepts.
- Use decimal notation as a foundation for more advanced math concepts.
- Use percent notation, rates and ratio and proportion to solve math problems.
- Find the mean, median, mode and range in a data set.
- Interpret and construct graphs.
- Use statistical methods to solve word problems.
- Use the Metric and English systems of measurements.
- Identify, classify and use a variety of geometric figures.
- Construct geometric figures using instruments.
- Calculate the perimeter, area and volume of various geometric figures.
- Use the characteristics of symmetry, congruency and similarity in geometric figures to calculate unknowns.
- Perform the four mathematical operations on real numbers.
- Evaluate and simplify algebraic expressions.
- Solve equations with one unknown and solve word problems using equations.
- Solve problems related to income and deductions from income.
- Solve problems related to consumer spending and money management.

SCIENCE

- Solve scientific problems and perform laboratory activities, understanding the impact science has on their life.
- Explain the classification and life processes of living things, and the structure and function of the cells of which they are made.
- Explain the function nutrients perform in the maintenance of a healthy body, and the requirements of a balanced diet.
- Describe how simple organisms cause disease, and how the body is equipped to fight off these germs.

Appendices and bonus material

Level 3 Outcomes

SCIENCE (CONT'D)

- Classify matter according to its characteristics.
- Explain the classical structure of the atom.
- Describe the physical and chemical properties of water and their relation to the environment.
- Describe the methods and the steps used in the treatment and purification of water.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze properties of waves and sound.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze properties of light and colour.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze properties of the reflection and refraction of light.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and discuss the features of our solar system.
- Explain some of the critical environmental issues facing the world today.
- Discuss topics associated with the Earth's structure.
- Define the role of weather and associated phenomena.

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