

**Rabbittown
Learners
Program**

**Guide to
Writing**

**By the
Staff of
The Rabbittown
Learners Program**

**"The Right to Read is
A Basic Human Right"**

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Introduction

In May 1988, responding to a community need, the Rabbittown Learners Program opened its doors as an Adult Basic Literacy Program. In 1999, the Department of Education certified the initiative as Level I, ABE. Today, the program provides basic literacy and the Level I curriculum. Included are English, reading, writing, math, science, social studies, basic computer training and a wide range of critical skills.

The program is the only full-time, structured basic literacy/Level I program in the St. John's area. Adding to its uniqueness is the program's high level of interaction with other community agencies. This provides a unique and innovative approach to literacy. The Rabbittown Learners' Program serves adults of all ages and backgrounds. It provides a safe, nonthreatening environment that is aware of people with special needs.

The program has a continual support system where learners continue to receive help after they finish. The Rabbittown Learners' Program extends its support and assist in any area needed, including resume writing, income tax, applications, referrals to other entities, and intervention with other agencies. It also recruits volunteer tutors to help with any academic needs learners may have.

To the Rabbittown Learners, literacy embodies much more than academics. Many issues centre around being literate. The program works with the whole person, including his/her barriers, strengths, weaknesses, hopes, aspirations and goals. Literacy is more than reading, writing, and employability. It reflects almost everything in a person's life. Interaction with family, the ability to communicate and the capacity to function in society all have ties to literacy. Success is measured not only through academic testing, but also through personal growth and development.

Mission Statement

To provide literacy or level I (ARE) training so adults can upgrade reading and writing skills in a relaxed atmosphere geared to individual needs. It also reinforces critical skills reflective of working conditions and supporting family living. It provides support and motivation to the adult learner with the purpose of helping them achieve personal goals.

Writing

Writing is an important part of everyday life. It is a communication skill used in the home, community, and workplace.



Some examples are:

HOME

grocery list
telephone messages
dates and appointments
diaries or journals
permission / absent notes
personal letters/
envelopes
invitations
cheques, money
orders banking
procedures
personal budget
planning
recipes

COMMUNITY

resume writing
letters
application forms
surveys/petitions
advertisements
story writing
song writing
poetry writing
newsletters
calendar of events

WORKPLACE

business letters
memos
telephone messages
scheduling
agendas
advertisements and
flyers publicity
banking
evaluations
accounting
procedures
reports/proposals

Penmanship

For a learner to communicate ideas through writing, he or she needs to print legibly, which begins by practicing the printed alphabet. This gives the learner a chance to practice printing in a readable style. Cursive writing is the next step for those who never learned it. For learners who are parents, this practice will enable them to help their children in the primary grades where manuscript writing is a topic. The Rabbittown Learners approach writing as a pleasant activity, not a source of anxiety. As you stress the need for constant writing practice, provide reasonable and respectful explanations for exercises, and make sure they are about the adult learners' needs.

Example:

Michael practiced his penmanship for a few days. He continually wrote his name, address and telephone number, but became frustrated. He did not understand the importance of this exercise. Upon discovering Michael's problem, the tutor explained to him that writing personal information is important in everyday living. Whether completing forms or buying a ticket, he must write this information clearly for others to understand.



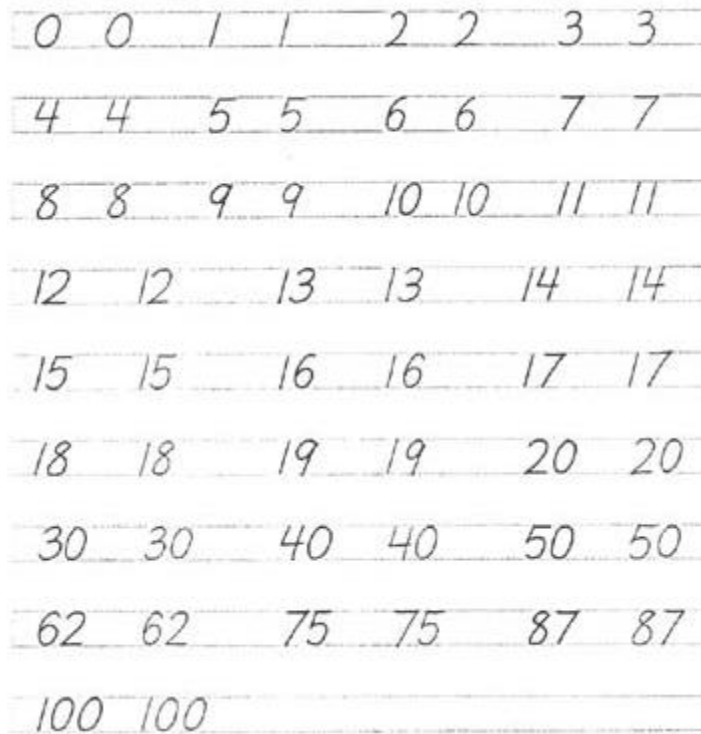
Penmanship -- Printed Alphabet

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

Penmanship -- Written Alphabet

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

Penmanship -- Numbers



Sentences

The first step in learning sentence structure is to work with letters, words, and phrases. The next step is to learn how these components give meaning. The learner should know the four kinds of sentences. Here are examples and explanations of each:

Telling: ***Mary is going shopping today.***

- A telling sentence is a statement that tells you something.
- This sentence ends with a period.

Asking: ***What is Mary shopping for today?***

- An asking sentence asks a question.
- This sentence ends with a question mark.
- Common beginning words for asking sentences are:
who, what, where, when, why, how, do, and are.

Command: *Do not use paper towels or napkins.*

- A command sentence tells someone to do something although the subject is not written in the sentence.
- This sentence also ends in a period.

Exclamation: *What an exciting day I had today!*

- An exclamation sentence shows strong feelings.
- This sentence ends with an exclamation mark.

The learner will practice ways to improve sentences by changing, adding or eliminating words. As the learner becomes more skillful in sentence writing, he/she should express ideas and thoughts more clearly.

Lists

By encouraging learners to write grocery lists, tutors incorporate the aspects of planning and measurement in a written format. It also helps the learners know that writing must be clear and specific. They can practice writing different kinds of lists for themselves. This helps the learner to organize his/her ideas and prepares them for longer passages. The grocery list can also remind learners how they use math in their daily lives. By realizing how often they use math without even knowing, they become less afraid of it as a subject and are better able to solve word problems.



Telephone Messages

Taking telephone messages is not always easy. The person taking the message needs to listen attentively and then accurately record the appropriate information. Tutors need to discuss the problems that can occur if people do not take a telephone message correctly.

Example:



MESSAGE

Date March 30 '01 Time 1:30 pm

To Mary

WHILE YOU WERE OUT

From Elaine

TELEPHONE 937-2902

Telephoned	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Placed call	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Called to see you	<input type="checkbox"/>	Will call again	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wants to see you	<input type="checkbox"/>	Returned your call	<input type="checkbox"/>

MESSAGE Please call as soon as possible

Operator Debbie URGENT

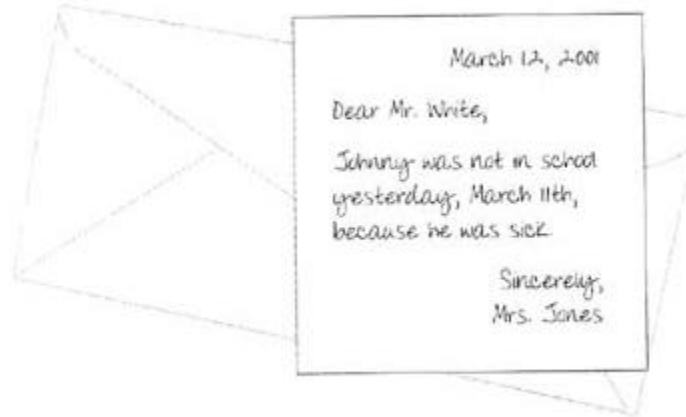
Notes

Notes also require that information be written accurately. Learners can practice by writing notes to each other. It is important not to stress grammar and spelling until the learner is more comfortable with it.

Absent Notes

People need these forms of writing at some point in their lives. Notes are especially appropriate for the learners who have children in school. When a child is absent from school, the teacher should be notified.

Absent notes need to have the following information: date, greeting, child's name, date of absence, reason for absence, closing, and parent's signature.



Dates and Appointments

Scheduling is a skill used personally or in a job-related situation. Our lives are generally busy. Marking a calendar can help us keep track of what we must do. Teaching the learner to do this helps him/her pay attention to time, place, and date when writing.



A calendar for the month of March. The word "MARCH" is written in large, bold, grey letters at the top. Below it is a grid of dates from 1 to 31. Handwritten appointments are written in the date boxes:

				1	2	3	
						Bowling 5:30 p.m.	
4	5	6	Dr.'s Appt 3:40 p.m.	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
	School Concert 7:30 p.m.				Appt for cat 8:30 p.m.		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
			School Meeting 7:30 p.m.				
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Paragraphs

After practicing sentences, the learner should be ready to organize and structure a paragraph. Many learners believe writers produce the final copy whenever they write. Here, they learn that rewriting and editing is a very important part of the writing process. At this point, encourage the learner to share drafts with others and to revise their writing based on the comments of these people. This is the proper place to incorporate the ideas of the word web brainstorming and daily journal writing.

Word Web Brainstorming

Word webs are great tools for helping the learner brainstorm for ideas to write about in paragraphs or stories. Brainstorming helps the learners focus on a topic. It allows the writer to put all his/her thoughts on paper in any order. Then, he/she can review and organize these ideas and begin the first draft. The steps are below.

- A learner must decide a topic. It can be general or specific.
- Place the topic in the centre of word web.
- Write the words that come to mind in the spaces provided.
- Each word goes into a sentence
- Rearrange sentences into a paragraph or story.

Invitations

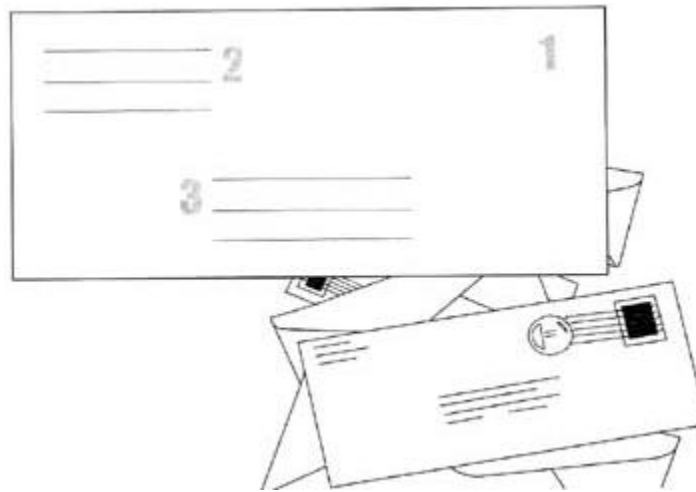
The invitation is another form of everyday writing that requires clear communication. It is also a means of organizing information and practicing handwriting. If someone was planning a party or special function, they would need to send out invitations. The invitation needs vital details, including the who, what, when, where and why of the event.



Envelopes

Before a person can mail a letter, greeting card, or form, they need to know the correct way to address envelopes. Learners will practice filling out envelopes to get the format correct. There are three things to reinforce with the learner.

- 1 Stamps always go in the right-hand corner.
- 2 Return addresses go in the left-hand corner. This is the home address in case the letter gets returned to the sender. It includes name, street address or post office box number, city and province, and postal code.
- 3 The recipient's full name and address go in the centre of the envelope.



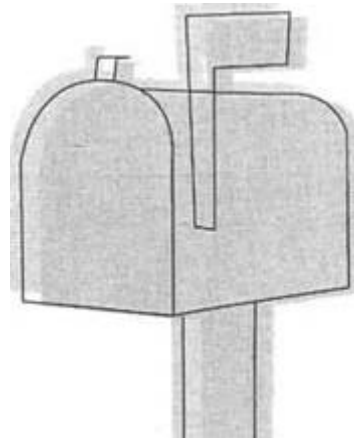


Personal Letters

As the learner gains the tools to meet writing needs, personal letters can help them use sentence-writing and organizational skills. A tutor can encourage the learner to write friends, family and other learners. Personal letters are informal writings usually written to a friend. They are fun for the person writing the letter and for the recipient.

All letters, whether personal or formal, should contain at least the following information:

- date
- greetings
- body (what the writer wants to say)
- closing
- signature.



Personal Letter

DATE

Since a personal letter is not formal, many people do not write the year.

GREETINGS

The standard form is "Dear _____".
Skip a line between the greeting and the body.
Both the greeting and the closing are followed by commas.

BODY You should indent the paragraph in a personal letter.

CLOSING

This can also vary. You could write "Your Friend" or "So Long" or "Love", depending on who you're writing.
Skip a line between the body and the closing.
The closing should be to the right in line with the date at the top of the page

SIGNATURE

In a business letter you must sign your full name, but for a personal letter you can write only your first name.

Free Writing

Free writing means freely writing thoughts, feelings, opinions, or ideas without worrying about grammar, spelling, punctuation, or organization. Free Writing is a way of talking to oneself. If comfortable 'talking on paper,' a writer's words can come alive to others who read it. Most good writing comes from experiences, whether real or imagined. Free writing is also a way of expressing an opinion. When free writing, the learner is the judge of his/her mistakes - a stroke of the pen can change words, sentences or paragraphs.

To encourage the free-writing process, we use several aids to stimulate the learner. One such aid is *Using Historical Photographs to Stimulate Writing in Adult Literacy and ABE Programs*. This resource kit is from ABE Writing Network, 18 Leslie Street, St. John's, NF. Phone (709) 753-8815.

This kit contains 70 images from Newfoundland and Labrador. Free writing is perhaps the easiest way to approach using photographs, and it often produces the most imaginative results.

Steps to follow when using photographs



- Use photographs as a stimulus for the learner. This serves as a source of new content for anyone facing writers' block.
- The tutor can preselect the photo or the learner can choose an image that appeals to them.
- The learners will not begin until the tutor lists the free-writing guidelines and then tells them to go ahead.
- The tutor will tell learners whether they have five or ten minutes.

Free Writing Guidelines

- Exercises should have a set time limit, ask the learners to write for five or ten minutes.
- The tutor will say something to the effect of, "when I say, 'Begin,' put your pen on paper, write whatever comes to mind, and keep going. Keep your pencil moving, always forward, never look back and never stop to correct anything. Tell your inner critic to get lost. If you are stuck, write 'I'm stuck,' or anything - even nonsense words - until a new idea comes. Keep writing whatever comes to mind, and let it take you wherever it wants to go. I'll let you know when time's up. Any questions? Now begin."
- The tutor will time the exercise and let the learners know when time expires.

This free-writing technique is a very effective tool often used to stimulate learners who have difficulty writing. Other avenues to explore include using photographs from magazines, calendars, and newspapers. Blank cartoon strips are good too.



Objects

(stimulus to Writing)

Objects can prompt or stimulate the learner to write.

Follow these steps:

- The tutor will place small objects into a bag (try paper clips, ornaments, balls, glue sticks, money, tape, or a small picture.)
- Each learner puts their hand in and selects an item.
- The learner places the item in front of them.
- The tutor lists the free-writing guidelines and encourages the learner to use them.
- The tutor tells the learner whether they have five or ten minutes, or whatever period decided.
- The learner begins writing.

Another alternative way of using this writing method is to have the learners choose the object in a darkened room. Here, the learner selects an object, holds it in his/her hand and visualizes what it may be. After a couple of minutes, the object goes back in the bag and the lights go on again. The learner then writes whatever thoughts he or she may have on the object.

Wrap-up: When time is up, the tutor will ask for volunteers to share their writings with the group.

Free Writing Techniques

Continued

There are other methods used to encourage free writing. Some of these techniques are very effective with the beginner. As with any learning situation, the overall needs of the learner are taken into consideration. Positive feedback also requires great emphasis. The Rabbittown Learners use the techniques detailed below.

Conversation/Discussion

Before a learner begins writing, the tutor sits with the individual and discusses areas of interest. This allows the learner to find writing topics. Generally, the learner finds it easier to talk about real life. Most draw from a wealth of information when conversing

about life experiences. As well, this kind of discussion gives a feeling of control over the writing experience.

Boss/Secretary

This technique works well with the very basic learner who does not have the writing skills to do a passage. The learner tells a story without having to write it down by himself/herself. Most learners like drawing from life experiences and find it makes the learning process more meaningful. The tutor sits with the learner. The learner tells his/her story and the tutor writes it down. After the learner finishes, the tutor reads it back and asks for additions or changes. The learner maintains a feeling of control because he/she can change things if desired.



Daily Journal

The daily journal encourages the learner to 'free write.' He/she can write anything that comes to mind, while not worrying about sentence structure, punctuation, or spelling. This is not always an easy task because many learners are anxious about spelling mistakes. Old habits die hard. If someone came from an educational system focused on perfect spelling, getting past that thinking can be difficult. With encouragement and practice, it is possible though and can be a great confidence booster. The daily journal can evolve into a wonderful tool for the learner to let ideas and thoughts flow. This can also establish a dialogue between the tutor and the learners while providing a non-threatening writing activity.

MY DAILY JOURNAL

Ballistanna Learners Program
31 Pitts Street Monday
Shannon Stone April 9, 2007
P.O. Box 1030
Manuelo IV, F
31W 4N5

Today is Monday and it is the
beginning of a new week. We had
ten centimeters of snow over the
weekend. We had had just
all time record of snow fall
this year. Snow is - ok but
when there is alot of snow
it has no value at all. Because
it creates a mess and adds
extra hours of work.

MY DAILY JOURNAL

Ballistanna Home Monday, April 9, 2007
Deanna Chipman
31 Pitt Street
Manuelo IV

I'm excited to have today get to say
over the weekend. I went with my children
to the mall. we went shopping ^{for} clothes
we also went and had something to eat.

It was nice. they enjoyed it very much
after we were finished eating I asked them
if they would like to go and see a movie.
and they said yes. After the movie
was over we went and got the
kids home. I had a nice day at the
mall with the kids.

Cartoon Strips

A cartoon strip is a great tool for stretching the imagination. It allows the learner to write their own story and be creative. The tutor will give them a book or sheet of cartoon strips. The learner will write an interpretation of what is happening in the pictures. If no resource book is available, copy cartoons from a newspaper and cover the dialogue. Once completed, have each learner share their cartoons with the group. This is a very enjoyable writing activity.



Newspapers

The local newspaper is ideal to help teach reading and writing. It is more suitable for adults because its target audience is the adult reader. Because the reports and articles are usually short, newspapers give the learner an advantage. Headlines provide short easy-to-read lead-ins, which are a help to the more basic reader. The newspaper provides something of interest to everyone. It gives a picture of the community and provides an avenue for further discussion about the views on the community. The newspaper is also readily available, timely, inexpensive, and relevant in the lives of the people involved.

Newspapers also provide ample opportunity for group work, where co-operation and discussion of ideas are very important factors. Because of its relevancy to the learner, it also sustains interest, making for more enjoyable activities.

Some newspapers the Rabbittown Learners use are: First Time Readers, published by the Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland & Labrador; The Express, a weekly publication by Robinson-Blackmore; The Telegram, the local daily paper; and The English Express, published by Alberta Learning Centre.

The latter is for adults who are improving their English, reading, and writing skills. There are three levels of articles in each issue: literacy, level I, and level II. Although the English Express is not a local newspaper, it is an excellent source of information. Some of the activities include:

- [What's in a Newspaper](#)
- [Scavenger Hunts](#)
- [Who, What, Where, When, and Why](#)
- [Newspaper Crosswords and Puzzles](#)
- [Newspaper Detective](#)
- [Newspaper Collage](#)



What's in a Newspaper?

- OBJECTIVE:** To use the INDEX to find out what's in a newspaper.
- DIRECTIONS:** Use the INDEX to find the following information in your newspaper. Write the page where you find the information and the answer to the question,
- 1. WEATHER** Find the high temperature in your city or town today.
Page _____ High temperature _____
 - 2. TELEVISION** Find a show that will be on TV at 7 p.m. tonight.
Page _____ Channel _____ Show _____
 - 3. MOVIES** Find a movie that your family might want to see.
Movie _____
Page _____ Theatre _____
 - 4. FAMILY LIVING** Find the name of a club or community event (meeting, speech, art show, craft fair, dance etc.) in the news.
Page _____ Club or event _____
 - 5. BUSINESS** Find the names of a company in the news.
Page _____ Company Name _____
 - 6. SPORTS** Find the name of an athlete in the news. In what sport does the athlete play?
Page _____ Athlete's name _____
Sport _____
 - 7. ADVERTISEMENTS** Find something that a parent would buy. Name the store.
Page _____ Item _____
 - 8. EDITORIAL (Opinion page)** Find an editorial and tell what it is about.
Page _____ What is it about? _____

 - 9. COMICS** Find a comic strip that appeals to you.
Page _____ Title of comic _____

Scavenger Hunt - General

Locate the following in today's paper:

1. The name, date and price of The Evening Telegram.
2. The name of the program on Channel 11 at 8:00 p.m. tonight.
3. Any item you'd like to buy.
4. A prediction in your horoscope.
5. The time of sunset today.
6. The creator of your favourite comic strip.
7. The name of someone who wrote a letter to the editor.
8. A news story from another country.
9. The topic of the Lifestyles section.
10. Something you could do in your spare time.

NEWSPAPER CHALLENGE!

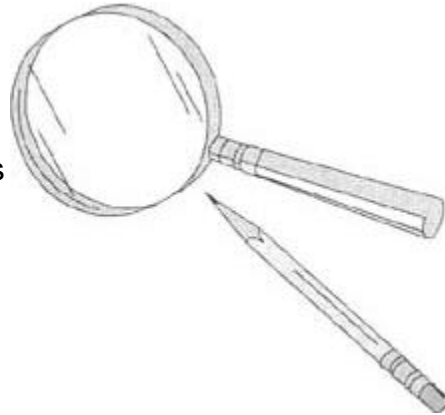
Select a newspaper from that the one of these categories: news, opinion, features, sports or ads. Read it carefully and fill out the 5 W and the H questions and the most important...the "So What?" question.

If possible, share the 5 W and your answer with someone else and discuss your ideas. After you've finished one category, try another. Can you finish all five?

	NEWS	OPINION	FEATURES	SPORTS	ADS
WHO Who is the most important in this item?					
WHAT In a sentence or two, what is this item about?					
WHERE Where does this take place?					
WHEN When does this occur or when does a decision need to be made?					
WHY Why is it important or of interest?					
HOW How did this develop or how did it happen now?					
SO WHAT NEWS READER CHALLENGE Why does this matter to you?					

Newspaper Wordsearch

Find the newspaper related words
in the puzzle. Words are across,
up and down.



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

lead
dummy
yellow
editors
source
banner
publish
display
ad

typo
obit
circulation
libel
logo
type
byline
feature

subhead
editorial
body
copy
cutline
deadline
column
carriers



Newspaper Detective

Find and clip one article about each of these topics:

1. funny news
2. happy news
3. sad news
4. children in the news
5. sports news
6. science news
7. music in the news
8. health in the news
9. art in the news
10. famous personality



Newspaper Collage

This is an activity where pictures are first cut from the newspaper. The learners are arranged in groups of three or four participants. Each participant gets approximately four to six pictures cut out of a newspaper. The pictures are then pooled together and the learners decide which pictures they will use for the activity. They glue the pictures on a sheet of bristle board in the sequence they want and write a caption under each one. A story emerges as one idea leads into the next. It is then decided by the group who will read out the story to rest of the class.

Activities

The Rabbittown Express

This is a paper the learners put together once or twice a year. They include their stories, poems, jokes, recipes, etc.

Letters to the Editor

On International Literacy Day, three learners wrote letters to the editor expressing their thoughts on illiteracy. See [Letters to the Editor](#).

First Time Readers

This is a newspaper the Literacy Council of Newfoundland & Labrador publishes and distributes to all literacy organizations in the province. Our learners read this paper and complete the written exercises. Several learners also write pieces about themselves in the 'meet and greet' column. See [Meet and Greet](#).

Story Writing

The learners write paragraphs and short stories. The Rabbittown Learners publish books such as *Roses I've Read*, *Faces of Literacy*, *Memory Lane*, *Coming Out of my Shell* and *From my Heart and Soul*. Many of these books are personal anthologies by learners.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

Learners sometimes have stories posted on-line in the NALD database's Story of the Week. Viewers can not only read the stories, but also hear them read by the authors. See [NALD Story of the Week](#).

Poetry Writing

The learners use poetry as a means of self expression, sometimes with the help of poetry starters. See [Poetry Starters](#).

Letters to The Editor

This exercise coincided with International Literacy Day, September 8, 2000. The learners put their thoughts on paper and sent the letters to *The Telegram*, our daily newspaper. The learners wanted to raise awareness of illiteracy in our province.

Three stories of literacy

Literacy to me is like a person who looks in a mirror in the morning and has no face. Also when I look at a story book this is what a page with words on it is to me, a plain white face. Imagine facing every day without being able to read - it's like having no purpose in life. International Literacy Day is the eighth of September: But for me, it's every day of the year, and many more thousands and thousands of people have to face their day without the skill to read and write. So imagine if you looked in a mirror and you had no face - how would you have a purpose to go on living?

*Derrick Tizzara
St. John's*

What is it like to have an education? I am a 37-year-old man and for over 20 years I've asked myself that question. Because of personal reasons and setbacks in my past, I never had the opportunity to find the answer to this question.

Getting an education felt like a dream for me that would never come true. On Jan. 31, 2000 my dream came true. I started classes at the Rabbittown Learners Program. This program has been of great benefit to me. I am currently at Level I and hopefully will go on to Level II and Level III and eventually receive my high school diploma. Then I hope to pursue a career in carpentry, which has always been another dream of mine. I would like to thank the teachers and volunteers of the Rabbittown Learners Program who have helped make my dream become a reality. Remember, encouragement from others and confidence in yourself can go a long way

*Terry Mercer
St. John's*

I started at the Rabbittown Learners Program May 2, 2000. It was the biggest step of my life.

I am a wife and a mother of two teenage boys, 16 and 15. I decided to go back to school over a year ago. It has changed my life in so many ways. I have confidence in myself to do what I couldn't do when I was a young girl. It also had an impact on my family's life, as well. My boys are very supportive and proud of their mother going back to school. I have been reading books and newspapers, learning how to spell and doing a lot of vocabulary development in the last couple of months. I have learned more than I had when I was going to school as a young girl. My goal is to get my Grade 12. and I'm going to do it. I'll soon be moving on from Level I and going to Level II, so I've accomplished part of my goal and look forward to the future. Sept. 8 is International Literacy Day and certainly it is a time of looking back as well as looking forward into the future.

*Barbara Stevenson
St. John's*

Meet and Greet

The students you meet in this issue of *First-Time Readers* attend the Rabbittown Learners' Program in St. John's. If you would like to introduce yourself in a future issue of our newspaper, please send us a recent picture and a short message about yourself. You may also send us information about the program you are attending.

Our mailing address is:



**The Literacy
Development Council
Box 8174, Station A
St. John's, NF A1B 3M9**



Hello, my name is Diane Chipman. I am a mother of four, and I have been out of school for the past ten years or more. I came to the Rabbittown Learners' program because I didn't finish school. I just want to get my grade twelve.

Hi, my name is Elizabeth Martin. I started the Rabbittown Learners' Program on November 27, 2000. I came back to school because I want to help my two daughters with their school work.



Hi, my name is Amanda Peddle. I live in St. John's. I started the Rabbittown Learners' Program in July 2000. I would like to get my grade twelve education.



Hi, my name is Barry Sullivan. I started evening classes at the Rabbittown Learners' Program. I am attending full days now. I would like to get my automotive papers and work in a garage. I think I would like being a mechanic.



Hi, my name is Terry Mercer. I am thirty-eight years old. I am looking forward to succeeding in my education. I hope to pursue a career as a carpenter, this is my goal in life. I enjoy working with my hands.

My name is Derrick Tizzard and I like to write poems and stories. Right now, I am writing different pieces for a book. I have other plans too, my dreams will come true thanks to the Rabbittown Learners' Program.



National Adult Literacy Database

Story of the Week

My Achievements at Rabbittown

I have been a learner at the Rabbittown Learners Program since May 26, 1997. In that time, I have improved in my reading and writing skills. First I'm going to tell about the people I've met since being there. They are very nice, they accept me for who I am. You don't have to be someone you're not. We feel like a big family down here, you get used to all the different learners.

I know I am getting something from the Rabbittown Learners Program, because people have been telling me I'm doing much better because I read so good, and that proves I am learning what the tutors teach me. I think I'm doing pretty good.

My family is so supportive of me. Sometimes I can't explain what I feel, but it's a good feeling.

I would tell anyone who wants to learn to read about this program, and that it's a good place to learn. But it's not all work, we have fun too. We have dress up days, outings, barbeques, etc., which are great times for all of us to get together for a good time.

This program has taught me a lot about myself. When I started here there was one book that I couldn't understand and that is the Bible. But I learned how to read it, when I read in church now, the people can't believe what I have done with my life.

I really enjoy it here, it is something to look forward to every day. There are four of us sitting at the table and we help each other as well.

When I started here I only had grade five, but I've learned a lot since coming here. I'm looking forward to the future now.



Poetry

During the past few years, society realized literacy was more than the capacity to read and write. It is a catalyst for personal growth. The key is to link learning to experience, in a way that allows the learner to explore the social, cultural, economic, and political realities of life.

Therefore, the Rabbittown Learners use poetry as a language experience that can encourage personal writing. The learner is at the centre of the experience.

It does not matter if a person is male or female, or what their background is, poetry is a means of expressing personal feelings and thoughts. Poetry can be a free-writing technique that expresses disappointments and triumphs, personal difficulties, dreams, aspirations or goals. As with many types of writing, it is open to the interpretation of the reader.

For the very basic learner, poetry starters are a wonderful way to encourage him/her to get thoughts on paper. Included are a couple of poetry starters to give tutors an idea how they work.

We encourage our learners to write what they feel and not to worry about grammar, spelling, etc. By doing this, poetry is often a very uplifting experience that brings out creativity. This can lead to increase confidence and self-esteem, which are ultimate goals in writing.

Poetry Starters

Something You Should Know About Me

I was born _____

I am from a family _____

My parents _____

I left home when _____

My friends _____

My favourite food is _____

My favourite holiday is _____

because _____

My best friend is _____

I am _____

I Like Me

I am _____

I like _____

I have _____

When I am home I _____

and _____

I like to read _____

and sometimes _____

My friends _____

I am _____



WriteAway

The Rabbittown Learners use the WriteAway software package to encourage writing. This software is an all-in-one kit designed for anyone with difficulty in written and oral communication. It offers a multi-sensory approach to learning through a range of special features integrated into one flexible, easy-to-use package.

WriteAway combines standard word-processing features with proven communication strategies for those with learning or physical disabilities. Anyone who can generate the first letter of a word can easily start with WriteAway.

The program eliminates the drudgery and potential confusion of writing. It gives the writer an "uncluttered" writing pallet, allowing concentration on the creative process. That gives tutors the ability to start full inclusion in the classroom and, at the same time, meet the needs of the individual.

Using the word prediction features, the learner can select words they use frequently and import lists they can augment to suit themselves.

The program also gives auditory opinion via sound cards and speech synthesizers. These options provide verbal reinforcement of written text.

The WriteAway software is an excellent writing tool for any learner. It is especially useful for those who do not like to write because they cannot spell all the words. Misspelled words may discourage the adult learner distracted by mistakes.

The word prediction list looks like the following:

Most

- | | |
|--------|------------------|
| 1. and | 6. was |
| 2. is | 7. you |
| 3. of | 8. <i>next</i> |
| 4. the | 9. <i>return</i> |
| 5.to | |

These are some frequent words people use. If the writer does not see the word they want, they can choose next or type the first letter. If they see their word, they can type it or press the number by the word and it will appear on their page. For example, if the learner typed 4, the word the appears.

Examples of WriteAway

If the learner wanted to write the word **there**, he/she would type the letter t and the following word prediction list would appear:

- | | |
|----------|------------------|
| 1. take | 6. thing |
| 2. that | 7. to |
| 3. the | 8. <i>next</i> |
| 4. there | 9. <i>return</i> |
| 5.they | |

The learner would then type the number **4** and the word **there** would appear on the page. The 'read back' option is a built-in feature that enables learners to have the computer read their work to them. That will aid in the editing stages of their writing.



Spelling

As stated earlier, emphasis should not be on perfect grammar or spelling, even though the final draft of a learner's paragraph, journal or story should contain proper spelling. This lets the learner get the true value of a written piece. Therefore, several techniques and tools can help the learners achieve this.

How people spell

Many people have difficulty spelling. Spelling in English is not easy because words often sound different than the lettering. Also, the spelling rules often have exceptions. Learning to spell takes a lot of practice. In order to help the adult learner with spelling, the program utilizes a number of techniques and tools.

Spelling Techniques/Applications

1. People spell by reading and writing:

A learner can practice spelling through reading and writing, not necessarily through memorizing lists of words or spelling orally as in spelling bees. Encourage the learner to start with words he/she needs to know. You can also encourage the learner to use words from his/her personal dictionary. The learner can then look for these words when he/she is reading. Tools we have found particularly useful here include:

Phonics: Teaches the learner the sounds of the alphabet, consonants and vowels, and the many combinations. This encourages the learner to 'sound out' words he/she does not recognize.

Phonics Wheel: Used as an aid in writing and spelling, it suits regular class work in a group or on an individual basis. It contains over 800 word combinations. One objective of the Phonics Wheel is to reinforce the phonetic value of letters whether single or in combination. It also helps develop word recognition and formation, and aids in learning phonetic essentials and basic vocabulary.

2. Teach identification of their own mistakes:

Help the learner identify his/her mistakes and then help find the correct spelling with whatever method works best for the individual. Do not correct their mistakes, but help them correct their work. When the learner finishes writing, help him/her look for misspelled words. Ask the learner to underline these words and look them up in a dictionary or other spelling aid. This should become a regular part of the writing process and will improve his/her spelling skills more rapidly.

3. Teach how to separate Spelling from Composing:

Many adults cannot separate spelling from writing. Unfortunately, they cannot spell because they do not write. You can help correct this by encouraging the learner to write first and check spelling later. You can also help the learner with difficulty spelling by saying, "write it as best you can," or "write it the way you think it looks," and then come back to it later. This encourages the learner to take more risks in writing, and not to only write words they can spell.

4. Teach spelling patterns:

Teach the learner to recognize word pattern relationships between groups of letters and the sounds they represent. These patterns can include prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Also work on word families such as at, cat and rat or it, sit and bit.

5. Spelling through visualization:

People spell some words in English as they sound and others through memorization. Help the learner get a picture of a word in their mind. This gives a visual image of the word. Flash cards can help the learner visualize words he/she may find difficult. Cards prepared by the tutor are appropriate because they have more meaning and relevance to the individual learner.

6. Using the dictionary and other aids:

It is important to teach learners how to use a dictionary and other spelling aids. Before using any aid, the learner should develop a personal dictionary of relevant words. Once the learner can use it, teach him/her to use a regular dictionary and aids such as the instant speller, and a thesaurus.

7. Applying spelling rules:

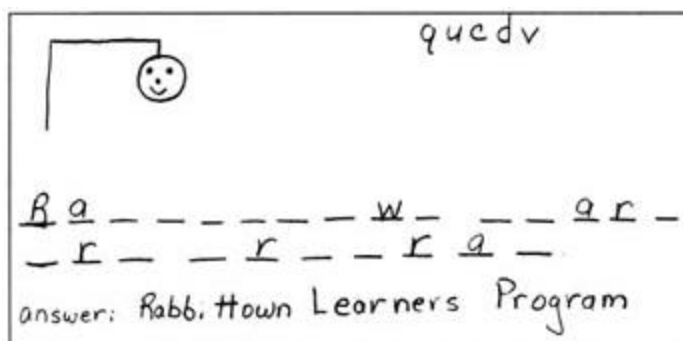
This is another way in which the learner can improve spelling skills. Help the learner to isolate spelling difficulties such as the 'i before e except after c rule.' Other areas, such as forming plurals and homonyms, also cause spelling mistakes.

Other informal techniques include:

Word Bingo: In this particular game, replace the numbers on the bingo card with words, usually ones the learners find difficult.

B	I	N	G	O
two	Monday	got	the	yellow
April	Doris	reading	book	where
pencil	spring	Free	journal	Friday
Tuesday	blue	date	happy	came
sixteen	cents	money	five	writing

Hangman: In this game, the learner will choose a word or group of words that he/she can already spell. Then the learner will write blanks for the word he/she has in mind. The object of the game is for the other learners to guess the correct letters and name the word or words before the hangman is completely drawn.



We also use such things as word scrabble, crossword puzzles, word searches, and various other puzzles. Sometimes the more informal methods have worked just as well, if not better, than other traditional techniques.

8. The four-step method

The following technique is useful when the learner has difficulty spelling words.



1

STEP 1
Look at the word.
Say it.
Hear the sounds.
Watch the letters.

2

STEP 2
Look at the word.

Look Away.

Spell the word.

3

STEP 3
Look at the word.
Check your answer.
Were you right?
If not, study it again.

4

STEP 4
Write the word.
Check your answer.
Were you right?
If not, do steps 1, 2 and 4 again.



Spelling Exercise

- Take a large word with three or four syllables.
- Encourage the learner to make as many small words as possible from this larger word.
- This can be group work or individual work.
- When completed total the number of words and compare with the rest of the learners.



<u>n e w</u>	_____	_____
<u>l a n d</u>	_____	_____
<u>a n d</u>	_____	_____
<u>a n</u>	_____	_____
<u>o n</u>	_____	_____
<u>d o</u>	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Other Resources

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