

# Chapter Four

## When screening and assessment merge!



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## Learning objectives

- Identify whether an adult's learning barriers are due to a lack of knowledge and skills or a potential learning disability
- Understand the importance of practitioner and learner observations during the learning approach and process
- Identify components of the observation process and learn how to integrate them into current screening/assessment procedures
- Increase knowledge of tools that provide a more in-depth picture of potential learning disabilities
- Learn how to apply the Cooper Screening Tool and how to interpret the results
- Understand and apply the tools to gain a better understanding of a learner's strengths and weaknesses in communication, math and organization skills

## Welcome to Chapter Four

Although this is the final look into the “*World of Screening Tools*”, it is not the final journey with our learners. In fact, the title of this chapter best captures the goal of this chapter; screening is really the beginning of the assessment journey. Learners are encouraged to be active travelers on this journey of discovery.

Chapter Four addresses ways to make more in-depth discoveries during the journey. The clues, hunches and initial insights that were gathered through the initial screening and informal conversations with learners will be investigated further to achieve clarity and a greater depth of knowledge of potential learning barriers. The tools highlighted in this chapter represent the ‘bridge’ that practitioners and learners cross to go from the initial screening to a more in-depth investigation of the assessment process. Crossing the ‘bridge’ facilitates the merging of screening and assessment.

### Helpful tips as we continue our journey



**Keep in the mind the following tips to determine the difference between potential learning disabilities, general lack of knowledge and/or intellectual challenges:**

- Has the adult’s problem persisted over time? If the adult is learning or improving language skills (for example an ESL student), errors in his/her oral language skills will improve over a period of time. If the adult has a potential learning disability, his/her skills will not improve without appropriate strategies.
- Has the problem resisted normal instruction? If the adult has received explicit instruction in the problem area and still does not improve, a learning disability is the likely cause.
- Does the problem interfere with the adult’s learning progress? Can he/she write sentences, but has difficulty organizing his or her thoughts into a paragraph? The process of producing a product is often the biggest challenge. In this case, a learning disability is the likely cause.
- Does the adult show a clear pattern of strengths and weaknesses? Does the adult have good oral skills but poor written skills? If there is a discrepancy between skill areas, a learning disability is most likely evident.

- Is there an irregular pattern of success? Does the adult seem to “get it” one day and not the next? If yes, a short-term memory disability may be present. In most cases, with the integration of various mnemonic strategies, the adult can help manage his or her learning disability.

If you have found that you are answering YES to the above questions, then the adult’s learning challenges are most likely a result of a learning disability.

## Assessment

The practitioner’s role is to understand the learner’s strengths and weaknesses to build an effective training plan, not to diagnose or label a learning disability

### Enhancing our journey through the merging of screening and assessment

The information gathered through the screening process is the foundation for both the practitioner and learner to build upon during the assessment process. Based on the findings gathered through the screening tool, you may both make decisions about what areas require further assessment and which types of assessment tools to use. In Chapter Two, we pointed out that the screening process should not be treated in isolation, as it is really the beginning stage of the assessment process. It helps the practitioner to determine what areas need to be addressed further.



With the help of informal assessment tools, our journey of discovery can become more in-depth, allowing us to investigate clues that may lead us to the eventual destination: “the training plan.” Together, through this information gathering process, the practitioner and learner can feel confident that the training plan truly reflects the learner’s strengths and addresses the appropriate learning barriers. Asking the learner to join you on the journey and be active in the process of discovery helps to foster the learner’s personal accountability for his/her learning success. This discovery process also helps learners to understand themselves and build self-esteem and pride.

## The observation screening process

The screening process alone cannot be used to understand the learner's situation. Gathering relevant information can be accomplished by using a variety of approaches such as observation, interviews, self-reports, and screening tools.

Heading the list of the Tennessee Literacy Resource Center's recommendations for screening incoming literacy participants is "Informal Observation and Work Samples." The research group comprised of Tennessee practitioners found that careful observation was so valuable to the assessment process that it recommended training to sharpen the practitioner's observation skills."<sup>1</sup>



### Role of the practitioner

Informally observing an adult's learning process, work samples and overall behaviour is an ongoing process. The practitioner is in a position to contribute valuable input. Practitioner observations provide further insights into the areas identified through the screening tools. Practitioners can observe any identified areas under a variety of circumstances to see if consistencies or differences exist. This helps to confirm or question potential learning disability indicators that may have been flagged during an intake interview and / or during the screening process.

**Through observation, the practitioner can talk with the learner and gain further knowledge of his or her:**

- Way of learning
- Learning strategies (what they have tried or what they would like to try)
- Preferences for materials, strategies and learning approaches

<sup>1</sup> National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (1995). *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities; the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*. Washington, DC. Obtained from the OTAN Database, reference ID: 1620.

Observing how the adult interacts with practitioners, his or her work and other learners in the program can help the practitioner to determine the individual learner's pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Observing patterns may help us to confirm our suspicions about possible barriers to learning. In particular, observations are helpful in "noticing discrepant abilities and behaviours, an important signal of learning problems."<sup>2</sup>

### Four components of observational screening

The University of Tennessee, Center for Literacy Studies (2002) *Keys to Effective LD Teaching Practice* identified the following four components of observational screening:

1. **Practitioner observations** (over a two week period as the practitioner and learner begin to work together)
2. **Learner input** (learner gives input on his or her own learning strengths and struggles)
3. **Practitioner-learner conference** (both compare observations and begin planning the learner's instruction and adaptations)
4. **Interpretation of Checklists**

There is really no right or wrong way to do observational screening. But remember: the more information gathered, the more reliable it is. It is also key for the learner to be an active contributor to the observation process.

There are a number of approaches to observational screening. Many variations can be used. Some practitioners may use checklists as part of the initial screening and then use this information as a reference point for the observations (refer to Chapter Two). The learners may also use a checklist (refer to Chapter Four Appendix A) as a guide for their observations of themselves. Learner input can also be gathered at an initial meeting. The practitioner may comment on the learner's input after observing his or her learning over a period of time.

### Discussion question



How would you incorporate the four components of observational screening?  
What variables impacted your decision?

<sup>2</sup> State of Tennessee for the State Literacy Resource Center (1997). *Assessment: Seeds of Innovation*. Tennessee, US: Center for Literacy Studies.

## A closer look at the different components of observational screening

### Practitioner observations

As you and your learner move through the journey of discovery, together you will begin to gain insight into potential learning barriers (emotional, cognitive, affective and skills and knowledge) and ways of learning that work best for the learner. As you review your documentation, observations and screening results, look for areas that both of you have noted on several occasions. Generally you want to observe academic performance, attention, organization, social and emotional strengths and weaknesses.

The following checklist is an excellent tool to help guide the observation process. The checklist was taken from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: The Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process* (1995), produced by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center accessed at the OTAN Data Bank at (OTAN Doc. Code: DP0024 | OTAN Ref. ID: 1620)

### Practitioner observations and academic performance

#### Reading



#### The learner:

- Shows marked difficulty in oral and silent reading
- Has slow and deliberate reading patterns
- Appears to be re-reading or reading very slowly when reading silently (skips words, re-reads lines in oral reading)
- May substitute, delete, add or transpose letters and syllables
- Cannot use basic phonics to sound out words
- Loses place on page
- Reads with an overdependence on guessing and, as such, comprehension is compromised, evidenced in errors in answering questions related to the text
- Avoids reading out loud
- Reads words or syllables backwards; e.g., *was* for *saw*, *net* for *ten*
- Has a halting and jerky reading style

**Expressive Language** (writing, spelling, including handwriting skills)



**The learner:**

- Experiences problems with grammar and syntax
- Reverses letters in spelling, e.g., *Friday* becomes *Firday*, *girl* becomes *gril*
- Writes letters or numbers backwards or upside down, e.g., *b* for *d*, *p* for *q*, *u* for *n*, *m* for *w*
- Mixes capital and lower case letters inappropriately, e.g., *SunDay*, *MoNey*
- Spells words differently in the same document
- Has poor handwriting and inconsistent letter formation
- Has weak visual memory for spelling
- Commonly makes punctuation errors
- Spells phonetically, cannot remember spelling patterns, e.g., *Munday*, *Toosday*, *Winsday*, *Thirsday*
- Continuously whispers to self while writing
- Has inconsistent memory for sentence mechanics
- Has poorly organized writing

**Math:**



**The learner:**

- Has trouble remembering math facts and procedures
- Cannot remember in which direction to work in carrying out simple math
- Demonstrates inconsistent mastery of math facts (addition/subtraction, multiplication/division) due to problems with long-term memory
- Confuses similar numbers or transposes numbers
- Reads numbers backwards, e.g., 18 for 81, 21 for 12
- Has difficulty copying numbers and working with numbers in columns
- Has trouble following sequential procedures and directions with multiple steps
- Has trouble with left/right orientation

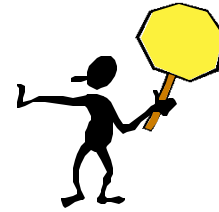


**The pattern of errors is the key to determining the difference between a person who has potential learning disabilities and a person whose low achievement is a result of other factors.**



## Practitioner observations and self-management skills and behaviours

**Only** when the **behaviour is consistent and observed over a considerable period of time** should you acknowledge that the behaviour(s) may indicate the possibility of a learning disability.



### Attention

#### The learner:

- Has difficulty concentrating/focusing (needs to be brought back to task)
- Is easily distracted, has difficulty sitting still and is restless
- Displays off-task behavior
- Lacks productivity and seems confused at times
- Fidgets and is impatient
- Talks excessively
- Acts impulsive (for example, acts without thinking and without seeming concern for the consequences, says one thing and means another, blurts out answers and interrupts)
- Appears not to listen to what is being said
- Displays memory problems

### Organization:

#### The learner:

- Has poor organizational skills for his or her physical environment, time and tasks
- Experiences difficulty sequencing, prioritizing, grouping or categorizing
- Experiences difficulty grasping similarities between items and relating parts to the whole
- Experiences orientation problems and difficulty with directionality: left/right, up/down, and north/south/east/west

### Social:

#### The learner:

- May find social situations difficult

- May be noticeably out of place in a group setting
- Can misinterpret what others say, tones of voice, facial expressions and the subtleties in social situations
- Lacks awareness of one's personal space
- Has difficulty establishing friendships

**Other general behaviors :**

**The learner:**

- Has variable or unpredictable performance
- Experiences difficulty absorbing major ideas from oral presentations (instructions, lectures, discussions)
- Needs information to be repeated and reviewed before understanding is achieved
- Has problems with following directions
- Has difficulty retaining information without excessive rehearsal and practice
- Cannot recall familiar facts on command, yet can do so at other times
- Has poor decision-making skills
- Has difficulty drawing conclusions, making inferences, dealing with abstractions
- Has poor motivation and/or extreme drive to complete a task
- Gives up easily or is afraid to make mistakes in answering
- Is most comfortable with familiar, unchanging settings
- Can exhibit rigid behaviour and may insist on using a strategy despite its ineffectiveness

## Discussion question



What observations are indicative of auditory processing and memory? Of visual processing and memory?

### Helpful hints!

**Visual processing** refers to the learner's ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes.

**Visual memory** is concerned with the individual's ability to retain a full mental image of what s/he has seen.



In both instances, the central nervous system is not processing symbols correctly.

**Auditory processing** involves the ability to analyze and make sense of information taken in through the ears.

**Auditory memory** refers to the learner's ability to store, process and recall what has been heard. One example of the result of an auditory deficit is that the individual fails to hear vowel or soft consonant sounds in spoken words.

## **Learner input**

For many learners, being asked to participate in the screening/assessment process may be very new for him or her and most likely is the first time that anyone has asked how he/she learns. Although a learner may be very foreign to this type of involvement, most learners have plenty to offer when asked the right questions to help them become more self-reflective. The role of the practitioner is to provide an encouraging, non-threatening environment and the tools to help the learner to provide input. When a learner can recognize a change in his or her skills, then he or she is doing self-assessment.

Encouraging learner input not only provides additional information to help build an effective training plan but it also encourages the learner to persist with learning and increases his/her ownership of the learning process.

### **We know from adult learning theory that adults learn when:**

- They are involved
- They are asked about their preference in the form of learning (learning style)
- They connect new information with existing information
- They contrast information with their own experiences

There are a multitude of benefits to be gained from ongoing learner input throughout the journey of discovery. Because this may be a very new experience for some learners, providing them with a list of questions or a statement checklist may help facilitate this process. Although there are many self-assessment tools/checklists available and programs may already be using some, we have included the “Analyzing My Learning: Strengths and Struggles” in Chapter Four Appendix A because it focuses on learning disability characteristics, is written in the first person and is fairly simplified. This tool is an information checklist for learners to assess their strengths and challenges. The “Analyzing my Learning: Strengths and Struggles” is an 'adapted-for-learner-use' version of the Adult Learning Disability Screening Tool (ALDS) that we addressed in Chapter

Three. Its primary purpose is to build self-understanding and advocacy on the learner's part.

To access this checklist, go to [http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/text\\_only/screening.html](http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/text_only/screening.html) and click on “Tools and Instruments” to access “The Screening Process”. Then scroll down a bit further to find “*Analyzing My Learning; Strengths and Struggles*” and / or refer to Chapter Four Appendix A (at the end of this chapter).

## Screening tools that merge with informal assessment

### The Cooper Screening Tool

Available on line at <http://www.learningdifferences.com/>  
<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-Index.htm>



#### Introduction

The Cooper Screening of Information Processing (C-SIP) was developed by Dr. Richard Cooper in 1992. It was field tested in two states by a total of 353 programs. It is not meant to be a standardized test but rather a diagnostic teaching instrument. The screening tool is not designed to enable teachers to diagnose learning disabilities. It provides practitioners and other professionals with a way to determine if a person manifests any of the common characteristics of learning disabilities. A practitioner over time would obtain much of the same information if he or she got to know the learner and observed the way that the adult learned and the errors that he or she commonly made.

The Cooper Screening Tool is designed so that it can be used without extensive training. Some information about the learner will be obtained when the practitioner administers the screening for the first time, but much more information will be obtained after the practitioner has administered the screening tool to many different learners. Each time the practitioner administers the screening tool, the similarities and differences among learners will become clearer.

Ideally, the Cooper Screening Tool is administered individually, but parts of it can be administered to a group. However, the amount of information gained from group administration will be less than when completed individually.

The Cooper Screening Tool usually takes about 45 to 50 minutes to administer, but the time may vary depending on the individual and his or her comfort level with providing detailed responses. In response to many requests for a short form of the screening tool, Dr. Cooper has restructured it to provide a short form within the original Cooper Screening Tool. When you access the tool online, the short form is highlighted in red.

## **Areas covered in the Cooper Screening Tool**

**On the website, each of these headings is a hyperlink that leads to further details.**

[Introduction](#)

[Personal Information](#)

[Educational History](#)

[Attention](#)

[Motor Skills](#)

[Auditory](#)

[Right/Left Discrimination](#)

[Employment](#)

[Emotional](#)

[Social and Family](#)

[Oral Communication](#)

[Writing](#)

[Handwriting](#)

[Basic Math](#)

[Math Skills](#)

[Math Vocabulary](#)

[Reading](#)

[Reading Comprehension](#)

[Vocabulary](#)

[Avoidance](#)

[Goals](#)

[Progressive Reading List](#)

[Handwriting Sample Page](#)

[Observations, Notes](#)

[Screening Summary](#)

[Educational/Employment Plan](#)

[Adaptations / Modifications / Assistive Devices](#)

**In the administration manual for the Cooper Screening Tool, you will find for each section covered in the tool:**

- the purpose for each area of questioning
- what to look for in the learners' responses (how they respond, verbal and non verbal communication)
- special considerations ( adaptations that can be made and/or responses you will expect to see regarding particular questions that provide significant evidence for potential learning disabilities)

There is no training required to use the Cooper Screening Tool, however since it is quite comprehensive it may take some practice before a practitioner is fully comfortable with administering the tool.

<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-ManualIndex.htm>

## A closer look at some of the areas covered in the Cooper Screening Tool



### Case Study – Brian

22 years old

Completed a modified Grade 12; best subject was computers

Was tested for LD and ADD

### **Auditory:**

The purpose of the Auditory Section is to determine if the person has difficulty with auditory perception and racing thoughts that limit auditory perception.

### **What to look for?**

First pay attention to any words that the person might miss or misinterpret. Individuals with auditory cognitive disabilities have difficulty processing language sounds. The

difficulties can impact how he or she “takes in,” retains, recalls, and/or expresses information. This can lead to incorrect interpretations of what they hear. Dr. Cooper refers to this as individuals with a racing mind. He states they will often exhibit triggering when rhyming e.g. *slow -- fast, quick -- fix*. Triggering is the term used to describe the phenomenon of a person’s thoughts jumping past the correct response to the next logical response or to the opposite response. The triggering may be the result of a breakdown of the auditory processing and/or attention deficits.

### **Special considerations :**

The first question is usually answered with a definite “yes” or a questioning look. Those individuals who have this problem know it because it usually has caused the person difficulty in social situations. The person who does not have this problem wonders why you would ask such a question.

### **Auditory – Brian’s responses are bold**

- Do you find yourself listening to more than one conversation at a time? **Yes**
- *Rhyme the word:*  
**CAT \_\_\_\_\_MAT**  
**SLOW \_\_\_\_\_FAST**  
**QUICK \_\_\_\_\_SLOW**  
 Person has difficulty rhyming? **Yes**
- Do you often mishear words that are said to you?
- Do you misinterpret what is said to you?
- Do you take things that are said too literally or miss double meaning or jokes?
- Do you have difficulty paying attention to long conversations or lectures? **Yes**
- Do you have difficulty hearing what one person is saying when there are a lot of people talking?
- Does your mind race ahead thinking about the first thing that was said to you so you do not hear or pay attention to the rest of what was said?
- Do you have difficulty with spelling? **Yes**
- Do you have difficulty reading (decoding or sounding out) unfamiliar words? **Yes**

Summary of Auditory Problems Yes Total # **\_5\_**

Impaired auditory perception means that the person will not hear everything said or will hear it incorrectly. For example, they may have difficulty with syllables that are not accented: “seven” and “seventy” may sound the same. Similarly, they cannot distinguish between words that sound somewhat alike: for example, “how” and “who”.

Poor auditory memory results in a person having difficulty remembering what has been said. Short term and/or long term memory may be affected, they may remember things said in the past, but not recall their own words from just a moment ago. Or they may have no long term memory for things they have heard.

Poor auditory sequencing skills interfere with a person's ability to follow instructions. This is an extreme form of poor auditory memory. It can cause significant difficulties on the job or in social situations.

Poor listening skills mean that the person has difficulty selecting the sounds to listen to. He may hear a confusing jumble of unsorted sounds, rather like having the television, radio and vacuum cleaner all running at the same time.

## **Basic Math Skills**

### **What is the purpose of this section?**

The Basic Math Skills Section is designed to determine how a person processes math facts and to gain a sample of their skill level. Rather than a paper and pencil test, this assessment of basic math skills is oral so that the administrator can observe and question the person about how he or she arrives at the answers.

### **What to look for?**

Watch for counting and guessing. Any hesitation indicates that the person does not know the number facts by automatic recall. Having persistent trouble "memorizing" basic number facts in all four operations despite adequate understanding and instruction is a common challenge for individuals with learning disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Special considerations:**

If the person responds without hesitation, mark the A \_\_\_ for Automatic Recall. Otherwise ask the person how he or she arrived at the answer and mark the appropriate category:

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<sup>3</sup> Garnett, Kate Ph.D. (1988). Math Learning Disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Journal*. LD Online. <[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/math\\_skills/garnett.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/math_skills/garnett.html)> and Geary, David. *Mathematics Disability: What we know and Don't Know*. LD Online. <[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/math\\_skills/geary\\_math\\_dis.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/math_skills/geary_math_dis.html)>



- D\_\_ Delay in Automatic Recall
- LD\_\_ Long Delay
- NR\_\_ Number Relationship
- G\_\_ Guessing
- CF\_\_ Counting on Fingers
- CH\_\_ Counting in Head.

For those individuals who are suspected of not knowing the number facts listed in this section, young children or individuals with significant disabilities, ask a different set of number facts. For example, instead of  $9 + 7$ , ask  $5 + 5$  and instead of  $8 \times 7$ , ask  $2 \times 8$ . If the person knows these number facts, ask others which are more difficult.

**Basic Math Skills** - Brian's responses are **bold** and the letter indicates how he arrived at his answer

(**A** Automatic Recall, **D** Delay in Automatic Recall, **LD** Long Delay, **NR** Number Relationship, **G** Guessing, **CF** Counting on Fingers, **CH** Counting in Head)

Do you often count on your fingers or in your head? **Yes**

Does the person have difficulty with the addition facts? **Yes (although one answer is correct he counted using his fingers)**

Check:  $9 + 7$  **15** **CF**  
 $8 + 6$  **14** **CF**

Does the person have difficulty with subtraction facts? **Yes (although answer is correct he counted using his fingers)**

Check:  $17 - 9$  **8** **CF**  
 $12 - 5$  **7** **CF**

Did you have difficulty learning the multiplication tables? **Yes**

Does the person have difficulty with multiplication facts? **Yes (Brian did use automatic recall but 2 out of 3 answers were incorrect)**

Check:  $8 \times 7$  **64** **A**  
 $7 \times 6$  **42** **A**  
 $9 \times 6$  **62** **A**

Summary of Basic Math Skills Yes Total # **5**

## **Math Skills**

**What is the purpose of this section?**

This section is designed to assess the person's knowledge of arithmetic and higher math skills. Like the Basic Math Skills, this section is done orally rather than in writing. Keep in mind that research on how learning disabilities impact a person's math ability is limited. Many adults may not have practiced certain math applications for some time and with a quick review they are able to complete the questions successfully. Although this section involves oral questions, Dr. Cooper encourages further investigation and actual practice if the practitioner suspects the person is unable to do a math application despite the fact they have responded otherwise.

### **What to look for?**

Watch for the person stating that he or she does not have difficulty with various math operations. For example, if you suspect that the person does not know how to complete fraction operations, but he or she has stated that fractions are no problem, you can write an addition problem with mixed denominators and ask the person to complete the problem. This will show whether the person indeed knows how to complete such operations or just did not know what was meant by that math skill.

### **Special considerations:**

If the person has difficulty with basic math skills, you can skip this section and mark the questions "yes". If the person has not taken algebra and other higher level math, mark these questions with "yes".

### **Math Skills - Brian's responses are bold**

Was it difficult for you to learn long division? **Yes**  
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**  
 Was it difficult for you to learn fractions? **Yes**  
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**  
 Was it difficult for you to learn decimals? **Yes**  
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**  
 Was it difficult for you to learn percentages? **Yes**  
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**  
 Was it difficult for you to learn positive and negative numbers? **Yes**  
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**  
 Were word problems difficult? **Yes**  
 Have you taken algebra? If yes, did you have difficulty with algebra? **Yes**  
 Have you taken geometry? If yes, did you have difficulty with geometry? **Yes**  
 Have you taken other math? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, did you have difficulty with it? **Yes**  
 Summary of Math Skills Yes Total # **9**

### **Vocabulary**

**What is the purpose of this section?**

The Vocabulary Section is designed to determine a learner's understanding of the meaning of words and his/her ability to explain or define the words.

**What to look for?**

Watch for the learner who appears to know the meaning of the word but is not able to give a definition. Ask the individual to use the word in a sentence or give an example of the concept. This will help determine if the person understands the meaning but has difficulty expressing it. Mark "S" if the learner can use the word in a sentence but is not able to define it. If the learner is able to give an example of the concept associated with the word, make a note of it.

**Special considerations:**

When administering the Vocabulary Section, the practitioner makes an educated guess, based on the information gathered so far, about which level of words to ask the person being screened. The Cooper Screening Tool divides the vocabulary section into three levels of difficulty. Although the screening summary is designed for assessing only one of the three levels, more than one level can be administered to a person for various reasons. The most common reason for doing this would be when assessing a person with an unexpectedly weak vocabulary (for example, a college student who is unable to define many of the words in Level III). To understand his problem with vocabulary, the administrator might also ask the learner about the definitions in Level II and maybe Level I as well. If the person had difficulty with words in the other levels, the practitioner would place a mark in the right hand column on the Screening Summary.

**Vocabulary – Responses for Brian are bold****Does the person have difficulty defining the following words?**

(There are three sets of words. They are for different age or ability groups or to provide the administrator with many words to check a person who evidences particular difficulty with vocabulary. If the person cannot define the word but can use it in a sentence, mark "S" instead of Yes.)

**Level I**

LAKE _____ <b>water</b> _____	S	<b>Yes</b>
SLOW _____ <b>fast</b> _____	S	<b>Yes</b>
CAPTURE _____ <b>prison</b> _____	S	Yes
SMOKE _____ <b>smoking</b> _____	S	<b>Yes</b>
REVERSE _____ <b>forward</b> _____	S	<b>Yes</b>
BEAUTIFUL _____ <b>lovely</b> _____	S	Yes
DEVELOP _____ <b>learning</b> _____	S	Yes

BIOLOGY	__ lab testing _____	S	Yes
CAUTION	__ danger _____	S	Yes
NECESSARY	__ helping _____	S	Yes
<b>LEVEL II</b>			
SECTION	__ ? _____	S	Yes
PASSIVE	__ fast _____	S	Yes
DEDICATE	__ learning _____	S	Yes
MOTIVE	__ moving _____	S	Yes
FOREIGN	__ exchange _____	S	Yes
ARTIFICIAL	__ fake _____	S	Yes
DEVISE	__ continue _____	S	Yes
PHILOSOPHY	__ physical _____	S	Yes
INNOVATION	__ strengthening _____	S	Yes
PRECISE	__ correct _____	S	Yes
<b>LEVEL III</b>			
THEORY	__ thinking _____	S	Yes
RELUCTANT	__ ? _____	S	Yes
TRANQUILIZE	__ drug _____	S	Yes
DILEMMA	__ excited _____	S	Yes
UNANIMOUS	__ uniting _____	S	Yes
EXTENSIVE	__ late _____	S	Yes
CONTEMPLATE	__ sorry _____	S	Yes
ANTHROPOLOGY	__ ? _____	S	Yes
RENAISSANCE	__ explore _____	S	Yes
COLLECTIVE	__ collecting _____	S	Yes
Is the person's vocabulary underdeveloped? <b>Yes</b>			
Is the person's vocabulary ambiguous?			
Does the person define with another part of speech? (e.g. tranquilize - pill) <b>Yes</b>			
Summary of Vocabulary Yes Total # <b>25</b>			

### How to understand the results of the areas that we reviewed

Once the learner has completed the Cooper Screening Tool, the summary of the results should be recorded in the Screening Summary. The purpose of this page is to obtain a profile of the person's thoughts and basic skills. The summary does not provide a numerical score but rather a visual profile of the number of marks in the columns.

To score the Cooper Screening of Information Processing, add up the 'yes' answers in each section and place a mark in the appropriate column (see below). **Individuals with severe or significant learning problems will have many marks in the right hand column. Individuals with less significant problems or learning disabilities will have more marks in the left hand or middle column. Individuals who have few marks on**

**the screening summary probably do not have a learning difference, problem or disability.**

Since the screening is not a diagnostic instrument for learning disabilities but rather a first step in a process that may lead to a diagnosis of a disability, individuals who have many marks in the third column should be considered for further testing.

**Brian's results of the areas that we viewed:**

	<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
Auditory	2 - 3 _____	<b>4 - 6</b> <u><b>X</b></u>	7 - 10 _____
Basic Math Skills		1 - 2 _____	<b>3 - 5</b> <u><b>X</b></u>
Math Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 6 _____	<b>7 - 14</b> <u><b>X</b></u>
Vocabulary	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	<b>7 - 13</b> <u><b>X</b></u> (25)

**Note:** Our intention with this case study is not to do a full interpretation of his results but to highlight sections of the tool.

## How to interpret the Cooper Screening Tool results



### Case study – Tina

- 24 years old, Grade 12 education; worst subject: math
- was in a special education class

**Tina was screened using the complete Cooper Screening Tool. The results are summarized in the following table.**

### Tina's screening summary

	<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
Educational History	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 9 _____
Attention	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	<b>7 - 10</b> <u><b>X</b></u>
Motor Skills	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	7 - 8 _____
Auditory	2 - 3 _____	<b>4 - 6</b> <u><b>X</b></u>	7 - 10 _____
Right/Left Discrimination	3 - 5 _____	<b>6 - 8</b> <u><b>X</b></u>	9 - 13 _____
Organizational Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 4 _____	<b>5 - 8</b> <u><b>X</b></u>

Employment	1 _____	2 - 3 <u>  X  </u>	4 - 5 _____
Emotional	2 - 3 _____	4 - 5 _____	6 - 10 _____
Social and Family	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 9 _____
Oral Communication	1 - 2 _____	3 - 4 <u>  X  </u>	5 - 6 _____
Writing Skills	2 - 4 _____	5 - 7 <u>  X  </u>	8 - 12 _____
Handwriting	2 - 3 <u>  X  </u>	4 - 6 _____	7 - 10 _____
Basic Math Skills		1 - 2 _____	3 - 5 <u>  X  </u>
Math Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 6 _____	7 - 14 <u>  X  </u>
Math Vocabulary	1 <u>  X  </u>	2 - 3 _____	4 - 5 _____
Reading Skills	3 - 7 <u>  X  </u>	8 - 12 _____	13 - 20 _____
Reading Comprehension	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 10 _____
Vocabulary	2 - 3 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 13 <u>  X  </u>
Avoidance of tasks/subjects	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 <u>  X  </u>	7 - 9 _____
Reading List	100 - 126 _____	21 - 99 _____	1 - 20 <u>  X  </u>

(Number correct or with little hesitation)

**Based on the above screening summary, the following appear to be Tina's learning needs** (since these items appear in column three of the above chart):

- Attention
- Organizational skills
- Basic math skills (+, -, /, x,)
- Math skills (% , fractions, decimals)
- Potential auditory processing disability (memory and ability to distinguish between sounds)
- Weak writing skills (spelling, punctuation and ability to put thoughts on paper)
- Limited vocabulary
- Reading list

### **Now what do we do?**

Dr. Cooper responds to this question by providing the following guidance. He has included possible strategies for each learning area that is covered in the screening tool.

<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/InterpretationAUG2002a.htm>

**Based on above potential learning needs, Dr. Cooper provides the following strategies and guidance to consider:**

**Auditory**

Blurred hearing: The student does not hear words clearly. This limits oral communication, vocabulary development, spelling, reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. Helping a person to understand that he or she does not hear words clearly is the first step. Teaching the student phonic awareness and/or the structure of language can provide alternatives. Learners should practice the correct pronunciation of words.

**Attention**

**Help the person to become aware of how his or her racing mind is both an asset and a deficit.** It can be helpful for brainstorming and creative thinking but when the learner needs to listen to or watch for specific details, he or she needs to learn how to slow his or her thoughts and attend to the task. For example, if the learner is also disorganized, employ structured learning techniques.

**Get to know what causes a person to become distracted.** Help the learner to be aware of the causes and learn how to monitor or check for mistakes caused by identified distraction.

**Teach checking techniques** especially for common errors caused by the racing mind: triggering, omissions, and tangential thinking (the ability to generate ideas).

**Teach the person to become an active reader** (encourage them to highlight words they don't understand, to look for the *who*, *what*, *why*, *when* and *where* throughout the reading process).

**Organization**

The person who reports poor organizational skills needs structure. This structure should be taught and practiced. This can be accomplished with organization exercises and structured approaches to learning. For example: daily "to do" lists, steps to write a paragraph or report preparation.

When the learner has difficulty with managing time, they may not meet deadlines and may have a poor (or virtually absent) sense of elapsed time. Such people may be late or very early for appointments. This may be because they do not know how much time to allocate for tasks.

A learner that has difficulty organizing tasks may not understand the logical sequence of steps required to carry out a specific task. There may be difficulty with simple tasks like getting dressed, or cooking a meal so that the meat, vegetable and potatoes are all ready

at the same time. There may also be difficulty with complex tasks such as planning a party or a move or dealing with the demands of the workplace.

A learner with difficulty organizing space – e.g., closets, desks, kitchen cabinets -- may live and function in a state of disorder or may never be able to find things quickly and efficiently.

### **Writing**

If the person exhibits poor sentence structure, Dr. Cooper suggests trying: the five three-word sentences; word part exploration; and expanding drafts.

Five three-word sentences: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults with low literacy skills
- teaches simple sentence structure and parts of speech
- allows the person who writes only a little to write in a manageable and measurable way while enabling him/her to learn the structure of simple sentences

Word part exploration: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults who are working on expanding their vocabularies
- teaches prefixes, suffixes and parts of speech
- enables the person to explore using the same root word with different prefixes and suffixes, noting changes in the words' functions

Expanding drafts: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults who only write short sentences
- teaches how to write sentences with more details
- provides adults with a technique for increasing details in their writing

Another suggestion is to teach learners to systematically question themselves regarding capitalization, appearance, punctuation, and spelling errors in their written products, as well as correct them, before completing the product. Each basic subskill should be taught independently and practiced a great deal prior to expecting students to use and incorporate it within their writing.

Mnemonics can be very useful in helping learners remember the steps they need to focus on during the editing process. Use of an acronym will also remind the students to check for each step independently. A common example is COPS: Capitals, Organization, Punctuation and Spelling.



When the person exhibits spelling problems, it is best to determine what types of problems are the most challenging to understand what strategies to use and to increase the learners self-awareness. Encourage the learner to write every day and use mnemonic clues, letter stacking, and word part patterns.

### Basic Math Skills

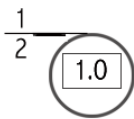
If the person struggles with his or her multiplication tables, incorporate a number of techniques that the learner may find helpful such as the use of counting exercises, Tic Tac Toe Math (<http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/math/tictac/>) and mnemonic clues.

If the learner knows the multiplication tables but counts or guesses addition and subtraction facts, Dr. Cooper suggests that you remediate the addition facts by identifying the facts that the person knows and have the person study the others until mastered.

### Math Skills

If fractions are a challenge, incorporate pattern of the halves, pattern of the eighths and sixteenths and the mnemonic of the swimming pool.

**The swimming pool:** By visualizing or actually drawing a swimming pool next to a fraction, the person can easily remember which number to divide into which.



The number on the diving board dives into the pool that becomes a division problem. This simple mnemonic eliminates the confusion.

[http://www.learningdifferences.com/weekly\\_mnemonics/2002%20Tips/MnemonicOct13-02.htm](http://www.learningdifferences.com/weekly_mnemonics/2002%20Tips/MnemonicOct13-02.htm)

### Vocabulary

Assist the student in establishing a systematic and regular study of words.

Use mnemonic clues and associations to help students remember the meanings of words. For example, pair pictures with words you need to learn. Studies have shown that this is an effective and efficient way to memorize vocabulary. Or, instead of using real pictures, visualize a word you need to remember. This is much more effective than merely repeating the word. Another method often used is Semantic mapping. Arrange the words into a diagram with the key word at the top and related words as branches linked to the key word and to each other. You can practice this technique in a group.



## Evaluation of the Cooper Screening Tool

### Practitioner perspective:

- The tool was easy to score and interpret, the results gave me a better understanding of learner needs
- It was not easy to administer with the learners due to the length
- I plan to use the whole tool as part of the initial assessment and may use parts of the tool for ongoing assessment (reading list, math skills and vocabulary)

### Learners' perspective:

- Many of the questions were difficult to understand and the time to complete the screening tool was too long
- The results my instructor shared with me were easy to understand and they will help me understand how to learn better

# Writing and reading samples: what they can tell us

## Writing Samples

### Involvement of the learner

Reviewing writing samples to help understand a learner's strengths and weaknesses and patterns of errors **must** be a joint process involving both the learner and practitioner. In addition, a number of writing samples in different contexts should be assessed to identify any patterns and consistency of strengths and weaknesses.

Stephen L. Isaacson in "*Simple Ways to Assess the Writing Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities*" (1996) states that having learners assess their own writing is important for two reasons:

1. Self-assessment allows learners an opportunity to observe and reflect on their own approach to writing, drawing attention to important steps that may be overlooked.

2. Self-assessment can follow learning strategy models such as using acronyms to remember the steps for organizing and editing (i.e. POWER; plan, organize, write, edit and revise & COPS; edit capitalization, overall organization, punctuation and spelling). This helps the learner to internalize the strategy, allowing opportunities for the learner to mentally rehearse the strategy steps for more effective writing.

### **Areas to explore: process and product**

To make the most effective use of writing samples, both process and product should be assessed. How did the learner go about writing the sample (process) and what does the actual writing sample show us (product)? Involving the learner in the assessment process gives the opportunity for the learner and practitioner to discuss how the learner thinks through the act of writing and planning as well as organization and strategies to use.

The following are some **helpful interview questions** that have been taken from *Screening for Success* (2001) produced by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada:

- When you are asked to write a paragraph on a topic of interest, how do you start?
- Now that you have some ideas on the topic, how do you know you have enough information? How do you know what to include and how do you arrange the ideas?
- What do you do once you have written and organized your sentences?
- Let's look over your writing sample; after reading it, what suggestions would you make?
- How did you know what changes to make?
- How do you know when you are finished?

Keep in mind, each learner's knowledge of the process will vary and will determine how many questions you can cover. By using the above inquiry questions you can gain a better understanding of the process or lack of process that the learner uses when composing a writing piece.

**Together you want to determine:**

- If the learner is able to balance the mechanics of the text with the meaning of the text
- If the learner understands the relevance and importance of the stages in the process of writing; in particular the planning, organizing and editing phases
- If the learner has or is aware of his or her use of strategies for monitoring the writing process

The actual writing sample should be assessed in the areas of content, conventions, syntax and vocabulary.

- **Content:** is there a beginning, middle and end, and is the content connected to the topic?
- **Conventions:** spelling, punctuation, grammar, use of capitals
- **Syntax:** sentence formats
- **Vocabulary:** is it written at the appropriate level? Is it varied and unique?

**Indicators of potential learning disabilities**

Overall you are observing for any discrepancy in skills and/or patterns of errors. For example, a person who has potential visual processing challenges may often show a difference between his/her oral and writing communication, with the former being stronger.

**What to look for in writing samples:**

- Letter reversals
- Spelling a word in several different ways on the same page
- Persistent problems with spelling, even with easy and common words
- Good days and bad days with spelling
- Difficulty getting ideas down on paper despite strong verbal communication and ability to spell
- Persistent problems with sentence structure (run on sentences and incomplete sentences), punctuation and/or organization of written work, not due to a lack of instruction or previous experiences
- Writes slowly, letter sizes vary, limited space between words
- Difficulty in seeing his/her own errors

**Remember:** you want to see a pattern of these errors inherent in several writing samples and make sure they are not a result of a lack of knowledge of general spelling rules

## Possible reasons behind the spelling errors

The following list was taken from *Screening for Success* (2001) produced by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.

### Auditory processing challenges

- Mispronunciations
- Omission of sounded letters
- Wrong, extra or missing syllables, prefixes or suffixes
- Inverted words

### Visual memory challenges

- Reversals
- Omission of silent letters
- Phonetic substitutions
- Homonym confusions
- Errors may be related to lack of memory for spelling rules

### Visual-spatial abilities

- Difficulty discriminating visually similar letters/words
- Difficulty discriminating correct spelling and misspellings
- Can spell orally but not in writing
- Poor letter formation
- Poor letter spacing
- Poor word spacing
- Slow speed of writing

## Sample spelling list results

It is helpful to conduct an analysis of a learner's spelling to see if there is a consistent pattern in the types of errors. This helps the learner to become more conscious of the kinds of errors they tend to make and helps to focus energy on developing spelling strategies to help manage the difficulties.

Correct word	Learner' spelling	Analysis of errors
favorite	faviorit	add letter
ride	rid	lack of silent "e"
book	bok	phonetic spelling
dinner	dinr	phonetic spelling

doctor	doktr	phonetic spelling
funny	funee	phonetic spelling
bed	bedt	add letter
company	cumpnee	missed syllable
rake	rak	lack of silent "e"
kite	kit	lack of silent "e"
forgetful	getfull	missed syllable & prefix

## Writing sample

### What did you do on the weekend?

Dave was asked to write a paragraph that described what he did on the weekend.

Remember to use a variety of writing samples to determine if there is a consistency in the learner's errors and strengths.

me and mi sun watcet fot boll supr boll on sunda on the wekend. he want to haf sno ball fihts. And we ~~go~~ wentd shoping instead. And he ~~astet~~ assted to rod his bik I sed no cuse ~~th~~ the sno plough dint cum yet so he got madt at me and I got mad to so he throu a sno ball at me and i lafted and he laufted to.

## Discussion Question



### Your turn to assess: Do you see any consistent patterns in errors?

Here is some initial analysis of Dave's writing sample:

- Improper use of capitals and punctuation
- Phonetic spelling only ( i.e. sno instead of snow); but Dave is recognizing that words don't appear to be spelled correctly
- Inconsistent spelling of the common words (the, thu)
- Dave did search through to find the correct spelling when he thought a mistake was being made ( i.e. the word "the")

- Inappropriate use of past, present and future tense (rode instead of ride)
- Adding an extra letter because he hears it (i.e. wentd, madt)
- The learner is using conjunction words such as “and” but needs help to use them appropriately to avoid run on sentences and inappropriate capitalization

### **What does this mean?**

By reviewing writing samples we hope to determine two things:

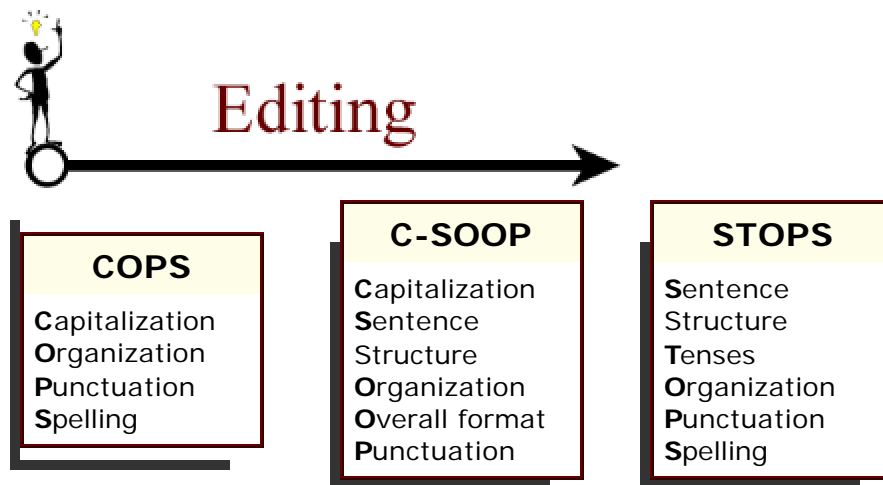
- Are errors consistent? This will help develop focus for instruction.
- Are the areas a result of a potential learning disability or a general lack of knowledge of the actual skill?

In order to effectively answer the two questions posed above, we need to review a variety of writing samples and integrate teaching of the related skills. If you find that after integrating the teaching strategies, Dave’s writing samples still exhibit some consistent errors, then it is more likely that a learning disability is present. The first step towards increasing Dave’s self-awareness of his writing difficulties and strengths has occurred through the practice of reviewing his various writing samples. Together, Dave and the practitioner need to begin exploring various teaching and learning strategies to help him manage his errors and improve his writing skills.

### **Possible strategies that may help Dave:**

The following ideas were taken from “Strategies for the Reluctant Writer”

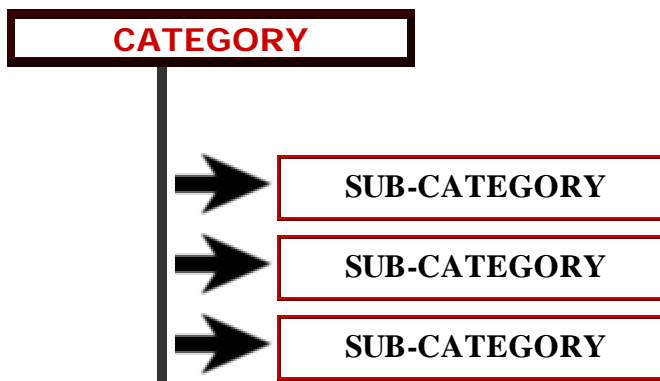
By Regina G. Richards, MA Educational Therapist, Riverside CA February 2002  
[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/writing/reluctant\\_writer.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/reluctant_writer.html). **Remember** that at each level, learners need substantial explicit instruction and modeling, followed by a great deal of practice before the step will become automatic. For some students, it is helpful to divide the preplanning and organizing step into two different activities.



### Use an acronym for remembering the writing process

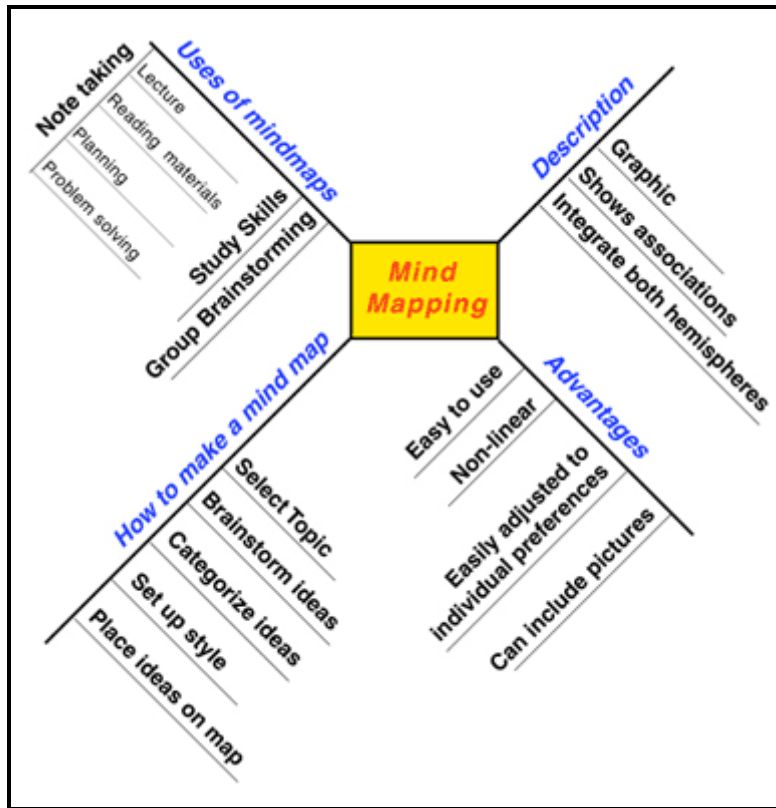
- P** - plan the paper
- O** - organize the ideas and elaborations
- W** - write the draft
- E** - edit the draft and look for errors
- R** - revise the paper and enhance

### Visual organizer for preplanning and organizing



### Managing the writing process using a mapping process





## Reading samples

For some adults, reading can sometimes be compared to experiencing a bad storm during a journey. Just like a bad storm can cause turbulence for airplanes, it can cause turbulence for the learner. To help ease his or her fears, explain to the learner that it is okay to make mistakes. In fact, observing what the learner does with the words that he or she does not know will help give a better understanding of the potential blocks to their reading success. Observing the errors will help us understand the reading challenges the learner faces.

Watch for frustration and try to reduce it by assuring the person that you need to observe the reading errors in order to understand the reading problem.

## Observing reading

**Together during your journey you are looking at the learner's:**

- Speed

- Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Word attack skills (decoding, predicting, blending and breaking words into components)

(You may want to review the reading checklist under Practitioner Observations on page 240/290 of this document.)

During casual conversation with the learner you may want to integrate the following questions developed by Dr. Cooper's Information Processing Screening Tool. The questions help to gain a better understanding of the learner's perspective and approach to his or her reading:

- ⇒ Do you have difficulty paraphrasing, or summarizing in your own words, what you read?
- ⇒ Do you find yourself reading whole pages without knowing what you read? Are you distracted by some of the words on the page (words move, certain fonts bother you)
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty identifying the main idea when you read?
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty finding details when you read?
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty going back and finding something that you read?
- ⇒ Are you easily distracted when you read?
- ⇒ Do you find reading textbooks difficult?
- ⇒ Do you find that there are many words you don't know the meaning of when you read?
- ⇒ Do you need to read things more than once?

If you find that the learner has responded "yes" to most of the questions you have discussed, then a potential learning disability may be present. At this point it would be advisable to encourage the learner to read a variety of reading samples so that you both can investigate further what specific challenges are impacting the learner.

## Indicators of potential learning disabilities



**As the learner reads a variety of materials, you may want to use this list to record your observations. Depending on the learner, you may want to record his or her reading and use the checklist together to record the indicators that are observed.**

- Do they exhibit any pre-reading activities such as looking at the title, viewing pictures, and skimming the page?
- Is there any hesitation to begin?
- What is the level of comfort/frustration?
- Do they have difficulty tracking or do they use a pencil or finger to track (skip lines)?
- Do they ignore punctuation?
- Do they have poor word attack skills (sight vocabulary, decoding skills)?
- Do they often leave off endings or add endings, leave off or change prefixes (handling of endings, prefixes, suffixes)?
- How do they deal with syllabication (add or leave out syllables)?
- How do they deal with unknown words? Substitute? Skip them? Sound them out?
- Do they leave out or change words?
- Do they read for meaning? (i.e. if they substitute a word, does it make sense or does it look similar but have a different meaning?)
- Do they demonstrate self-correcting without prompting?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Burrows, Iris, Scholten, Teeya & Theunissen, Denise (1992). *Asking the Right Questions; Assessment and Program Planning for Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Calgary, Alberta: The Learning Centre & Alberta Vocational College and Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2001). *Screening for Success*.

# Initial journey of discovery comes to an end



## What did we see and learn during our journey?

### Let us recap our journey:

- Both the learner and the practitioner have a better understanding of potential learning barriers.
- They both have a better understanding of the impact the identified learning barriers have on the learner's ability to learn.
- Together the practitioner and learner can develop a training plan based on the discoveries made during the journey. They can address the areas of need, build on the learner's strengths and implement existing or new learning/teaching strategies tailored to the individual learner.

### Where do we go from here?



Together, we have gathered sufficient information on the learner's strengths and weaknesses. We have a good perspective on the potential barriers that can impinge on the learner's ability to learn. Based on our initial journey, we are ready to develop the learner's training plan. We recognize we will continue to venture on our journey of discovery as the learner progresses in his or her training.

### Our new focus: Day trips

- During the training process, you will test any assumptions and identified needs. If barriers persist, it may require the learner and practitioner to venture on a day trip to gain a clearer understanding of the learning barriers and /or to discover new barriers.

Learners will bring a unique set of learning barriers; in particular, different types of cognitive processing barriers. They could have a number of combinations of cognitive processing challenges as visual, auditory, memory and/or organizational.

- Assessment is an ongoing process that ends when learners reach their goals. As the training progresses, together the learner and practitioner will go through a trial and error process as they try out new learning strategies.
- Each learner will determine which combination of teaching and learning strategies work best for him or her.

## Summary of key points

- The main goal for the practitioner is to understand as much as possible about the learner's potential learning barriers and not to diagnose or label the learner with a learning disability.
- Through the journey of discovery, the initial hunches, clues and potential indicators are substantiated and expanded upon by using methods and tools that merge screening with more in-depth assessment. This in-depth approach helps both the learner and practitioner to verify the learning difficulties and discover why the barriers to learning remain.
- The merging of screening and assessment is facilitated through the use of observational screening, the review of numerous work samples and incorporation of more in-depth screening tools such as the Cooper Screening Tool.
- Observational screening can include a number of combinations of the following components:
  - Practitioner observations
  - Learner observations
  - Practitioner and learner conferences
  - Checklists (use as a guide for observing or verifying the observations)
- When a number of samples are reviewed under a variety of contexts, work samples can provide valuable insights into the adult's learning barriers and

strengths. When the process of reviewing a number of samples is followed, a greater confidence in the reliability of the strengths and barriers will result. In addition, a stronger pattern of errors will emerge.

- What are we looking for when we look at samples of work?
  - The “process”: how the learner approaches reading, writing and math tasks
  - The product: patterns of errors and strengths to build upon
  
- The journey should result in an understanding of the learner’s strengths and weaknesses that is sufficient to form a foundation for the training plan. By exploring the world of screening tools, the final destination: “the development of the training plan” can be reached. Although the initial journey draws to a close, the practitioner and learner will continue to take “day trips” to gain a better understanding of the types of teaching, learning and management strategies that best suit the learner. As the training plan is developed and the training progresses, the learner and practitioner will continue to venture down roads of discovery as they come across new or unidentified barriers, strengths and strategies.

## Chapter Four Appendix A

### Analyzing My Learning Strengths and Struggles

#### Strengths / Abilities

What am I good at doing?

Relating to people	Relating to animals
Organizing	Budgeting
Music	Reading and writing
Art / Drawing	Sports / gymnastics
Cooking	Math
Science / Nature	Understanding myself
Building or repairing things	Woodworking
Solving problems	Sewing / Crafts / Decorating
Teaching someone to do something	Using a computer
Dancing	Other ?

#### Health / Medical / Family Factors that might affect how I learn:

I have had

- \_\_\_ Hearing problems / ear infections
- \_\_\_ Vision problems
- \_\_\_ Speech or language difficulties
- \_\_\_ Allergies
- \_\_\_ Coordinating problems
- \_\_\_ Trouble sitting still or sticking to a task
- \_\_\_ Depression
- \_\_\_ Anxiety
- \_\_\_ Drug or alcohol problems
- \_\_\_ Other serious health problems \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Others in my family have difficulties reading or doing math

## Vision / Hearing

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- \_\_\_ My eyes water and / or become red after a short time of work.
- \_\_\_ My eyes get tired easily. I rub my eyes a lot.
- \_\_\_ I put my head on the desk or table to read.
- \_\_\_ When I read out loud, I skip or repeat words. I leave off endings.
- \_\_\_ I lose my place when I read.
- \_\_\_ I get headaches after just a short time reading.
- \_\_\_ I squint and have to look up from the page often when I read.
- \_\_\_ I close one eye when I read or write.
- \_\_\_ People say I talk loudly.
- \_\_\_ I have to ask people to repeat what they said.
- \_\_\_ Sometimes I misunderstand or miss what people say.
- \_\_\_ I turn one ear toward the person speaking so I hear better.

## I also notice

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This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.



## Reading

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- \_\_\_ I read slowly.
- \_\_\_ When I read aloud, I skip words and/or re-read lines.
- \_\_\_ I substitute, leave out, add, or mix up letters or parts of words.
- \_\_\_ I lose my place on a page.
- \_\_\_ I avoid reading out loud if I can.
- \_\_\_ I read words or parts of words backwards, e.g., *was* for *saw*, *net* for *ten*.
- \_\_\_ When I read silently, I re-read or read very slowly.
- \_\_\_ I have a hard time “sounding out” words.
- \_\_\_ I guess a lot when I read.
- \_\_\_ I read in a kind of jerky, uneven way.
- \_\_\_ I find it hard to draw conclusions or “read between the lines.”

## I also notice

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## Writing and Spelling

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- \_\_\_ I have problems with grammar.
- \_\_\_ I write numbers or letters backwards or upside down, e.g., b for d, p for q, u for n, M for W.
- \_\_\_ I spell words different ways in the same piece of writing.
- \_\_\_ It's hard to spell because I can't remember how words look.
- \_\_\_ I spell words the way they sound.
- \_\_\_ Sometimes I remember to put a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence and a period or question at the end. Sometimes I don't.
- \_\_\_ I reverse letters in spelling, e.g., Firday for Friday, gril for girl.
- \_\_\_ I write capital and lower case letters in the same word, e.g., SunDay, MoNey.
- \_\_\_ Handwriting is hard. When I'm writing, it's hard to make my letters all the same size or control the way I write them.
- \_\_\_ I make a lot of mistakes with punctuation: periods, commas.
- \_\_\_ I whisper to myself when I write.
- \_\_\_ It's hard for me to organize my thoughts when I write.
- \_\_\_ It's hard for me to organize my thoughts enough to take notes when I'm listening to a speaker.

### I also notice

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## Math

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- \_\_\_ I have trouble remembering math facts and procedures.
- \_\_\_ I can remember math facts (adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing) one day, but I may not remember them the next day.
- \_\_\_ I find it hard to copy numbers and work with numbers in columns.
- \_\_\_ I get left and right mixed up.
- \_\_\_ When I'm working on a math problem, I can't remember which direction to go.
- \_\_\_ I confuse similar numbers, e.g., 6 and 9, 2 and 5,  
or  
I turn numbers around when I write them, e.g. 691-8512 for 961-8215
- \_\_\_ I read numbers backwards, e.g., 18 for 81, 21 for 12
- \_\_\_ It's hard to remember the steps in math problems: e.g., in renaming (carrying and borrowing) or in long division.

## I also notice

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## Other factors that can affect learning

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### Attention

- \_\_\_ I have trouble concentrating / focusing.
- \_\_\_ I'm easily distracted.
- \_\_\_ I'm restless. It's hard to sit still.
- \_\_\_ I'm impulsive. I don't think before I act or say something.

### Organization

- \_\_\_ I have trouble organizing my time.
- \_\_\_ I have trouble organizing things, e.g., house / car / business papers.
- \_\_\_ I have trouble judging how long it will take to do something.
- \_\_\_ When I have many things to do, I have trouble deciding which is most important to do.

### Social

- \_\_\_ I tend to feel out of place in a group.
- \_\_\_ It's hard for me to make friends.
- \_\_\_ I often feel that I misunderstand other people's words or actions or that they misunderstand mine.

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**General**

\_\_\_ **It's hard for me to judge distances.**

\_\_\_ **I have trouble finishing a project or a program.**

\_\_\_ **I find it hard to change from one activity to another.**

\_\_\_ **I have problems remembering.**

\_\_\_ **I have trouble with directions: right-left, east-west, north-south.**

\_\_\_ **I find it hard to motivate myself.**

**This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.**

## Chapter Four Appendix B

With permission, the following three strategies were taken from *Improving Writing Skills for Individuals Who Learn Differently* by Richard Cooper, Ph.D.

### Write Three Five-Word Sentences

This is a simple writing exercise which helps students in a number of ways. Writing three five-word sentences emphasizes the structure of language rather than imitating speech. It is a manageable and measurable task. Manageable because the sentences are small and the exercise can be modified for students with different levels of writing skills. The task is measurable because the number of words is easily counted. Students with low skills can be asked to write three sentences with at least five words. Pronouns are allowed. The sentences do not have to be related. A student with higher level writing skills is asked to write three sentences with exactly five words, including articles and without pronouns. Another level of difficulty is added when the person is asked to make the three, five word sentences related to one idea, making a small paragraph. Requiring no pronouns makes it more difficult.

**These sentences can be used in the next exercise: expanding drafts.**

Sample: Unrelated, at least five words with pronouns

*The boy hit the ball.*  
*He went to the store.*  
*The girls played with their dolls.*

Sample: three, five word sentences unrelated without pronouns

*The cat eats the food.*  
*The man went to work.*  
*John saw a good movie.*

Sample: Related, at least five words with pronouns

*The man saw the dog.*  
*It wagged its silky tail.*  
*The man petted the dog.*

Sample: Related, at least five words without pronouns

*The bank approved the loan.*  
*The carpenter constructed the house.*  
*The new owners were happy.*



## **Expanding Drafts**

Expanding Drafts can be used by students at any level. For writers with low level skills, it can involve adding a few simple words while individuals with higher level skills can add many modifiers, phrases and clauses.

Many individuals with learning differences struggle with writing. Problems with handwriting are called dysgraphia, the inability to write legibly caused by fine motor control problems. This is different than the difficulty that many have with written expression. Of course individuals who have dysgraphia can and often do have difficulty with written expression. But there are many children and adults who have significant difficulty expressing their ideas in writing even when using a computer or word processor. Some individuals who have difficulty with written expression have good oral skills. They can speak well and express their thoughts clearly. However, they cannot express the same thoughts clearly when writing, and the sentence structure is often grammatically incorrect. Others who struggle with writing have problems expressing themselves with both oral and written language. The thoughts they express are disconnected, disorganized, unclear and often grammatically incorrect.

The people who have racing minds often find their thoughts race much faster than their hands are able to write them down. They often skip words and, sometimes, whole thoughts as they try to write. Their ideas often run together so the written product is disorganized.

Individuals who have good oral communication skills often find that they are unable to write well because they cannot use the same level of vocabulary or sentence structure as they do when they speak. Since spoken language is different from written language, those who can speak well, but not write well, avoid writing because it is frustrating and embarrassing. Those individuals who have difficulties with sequencing evidence sentence structure that is awkward and grammatically incorrect.

Individuals who have difficulty with written language need to practice writing skills. Free writing, just trying to express ideas in writing, can actually reinforce poor sentence structure and bad habits because the person often tries to write as he/she speaks. Expanded drafts is a technique which I have used with students and find helpful in developing writing skills. This technique emphasizes using written language rather than oral expression.



The technique of expanding drafts involves the writing of short simple sentences and expanding them with modifiers, phrases and clauses with each subsequent draft. This writing technique can be introduced to individuals with very weak writing skills by first working on single sentences before introducing the use of the technique for paragraphs. For example the student writes a simple sentence.

John walked home.

The student then rewrites the sentence adding an adverb to modify the verb, a prepositional phrase to add detail, and a possessive pronoun to modify the noun.

John walked slowly down the street to his home.

Next the student rewrites the sentence again, this time adding another adverb and adjectives to modify the nouns.

John walked slowly and cautiously down the dark street to his brightly lit home.

The person with very weak writing skills may need to practice writing single sentences for a while before moving on to writing paragraphs. Other students can begin this exercise by writing a few simple sentences about a topic. I use the following exercise to introduce expanding drafts to students who are working on improving writing paragraphs. Directions: write three sentences of five words each. Rewrite these sentences adding one adjective for each noun, one adverb for the verb and one prepositional phrase.

Joan saw a boy playing. She called to the boy. He walked over to her.

Here is an example of the first rewrite.

Joan saw a little boy playing quietly in the park. She softly called to the boy. He walked joyfully over to her.

The second rewrite adds other modifiers and clauses.

As she walked down the long tree-lined lane, Joan saw a little blond boy playing quietly in the city park. She softly called to the little boy who was deeply involved in his toys. When he saw her, the boy walked joyfully over to her and kissed her on her cheek.

The expanding draft exercise helps the person to organize their ideas, add details and keep sentences grammatically correct. This technique can be more than an exercise to improve writing skills, it can be used whenever a person needs to express thoughts in writing. A few small paragraphs can be expanded into a letter, an essay or any other writing assignment a person might have. Students attempting to pass the GED exam can use expanding drafts to keep their thoughts organized and grammatically correct. As individuals who use expanding drafts improve their writing skills, they may not need to begin with very simple sentences. Because of the practice they receive using this techniques as an exercise, they can rewrite adding details and descriptors to anything they write.

## Word Part Exploration

Many students will need help with exploring how words are used. This exercise allows them to write using the structure of language rather than just writing one's ideas or thoughts.

## Sense

<u>noun</u>	The professor made sense.
<u>adjective</u>	Mary is very sensitive to noise.
<u>adjective</u>	The fall knocked him senseless.
<u>noun</u>	What he said was pure nonsense.

## Act

<u>verb</u>	Please act your age.
<u>noun</u>	The play has three acts.
<u>adjective</u>	The little boy is very active.
<u>noun</u>	The activity was planned weeks in advance.
<u>verb</u>	Press the button to activate the program.
<u>noun</u>	The reactor is about to blow.

verb            He reacted differently than I expected.

For a complete copy of the manual **Improving Writing Skills for Individuals Who Learn Differently** Richard Cooper, Ph.D. 1999

**Contact :**

Learning disAbilities Resources

P.O. Box 716

Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

610-446-6126 Fax 610-446-6129 (\$16.95 US funds – includes cost of shipping)

Copying of the worksheets is permitted and encouraged.

## Input from Online Delivery of Chapter Four



### When screening and assessment merge!

Literacy Link South Central wanted to give readers of this manual a valuable component of the online workshop: participant input. The following bullet points are compiled from participant responses, and may or may not include information or opinions in keeping with our evaluative constructs. We encourage you to filter the comments as you would in any classroom setting.



### Activity 1

At the beginning of the workshop, we talked about your experiences trying out the Delta Screener (presented in Chapter 3) in your program. The results definitely varied! Here's what you told us:

- It was easy to use and learner-friendly; the questions were gentle and not invasive. It gave me some great information.
- The learner seemed resentful the further we got into it; I don't think it gave truthful results.
- There were good questions but the overall level was too high for my group of learners. The questions about educational level focused on college and weren't relevant for my group. I would need to paraphrase / rework the tool to make it more useful for my program.
- Gave good insight into the learner's history.
- I used it in a small group setting. The learners were very keen although some found it difficult to complete. They found it helpful.
- It doesn't lend itself to learners with ID.
- It was a bit long; it would have better if we had administered it in chunks.
- It helped the learners understand things about their LD.
- It got the staff and volunteers talking more openly about LD.
- We're going to incorporate it into our intake form.



## Activity 2

We looked at the Cooper Screening Tool (which you can find at <http://www.learningdifferences.com>) and asked you if you could think of a particular learner that you would use this tool with and why. Here's what you told us:

- I like the section on left/right discrimination
- The organizational section clarifies a lot for me.
- I would use it with someone who wants to further explore his/her LD
- I liked the self-awareness tool, especially for those learners who have been in the program for a while.
- Although the Cooper is longer than the Delta, learners who used it in one program preferred it because it was easier to understand. It also made them think about their learning, about what works and what doesn't. They didn't find it invasive.
- It could be useful as a teaching/learner tool as well as a screener.



## Activity 3

After taking a look at the Cooper Screening Tool, we looked at the Adult Learning Disability Screening test. We asked if you could think of a particular learner that you would use this test with and why. Here's what you told us.

- It rules out hearing problems right away, which is great.
- It would be good with higher-level learners.
- The test is American and should be modified to be "more Canadian". It does have some rather invasive questions but this could be changed.
- It's well set up to administer orally.
- We already ask a lot of these questions at intake but the screener makes the process more formal.
- A good initial assessment tool that could be followed up by the Cooper or Delta.



#### Activity 4

Throughout this series of modules, it became apparent that the various screening tools ask very similar questions (because they are important questions to ask!). We asked you what you think should be the key questions to ask when screening for LD. Here's what you told us.

- How many schools did you attend?
- When did you go to school?
- What language did you speak at home?
- Did you like school? What did you like? What didn't you like?
- Is there a family history of LD or learning difficulties?
- Do you find it easier to express yourself verbally or in writing?
- What happens when you look at a page of print?
- Were you ever tested for LD or spend time with a special ed or remedial teacher?
- Have you had your vision and/or hearing tested?
- How many jobs have you had in the past year?
- Do you like to work in a quiet place or in groups?
- Do you read a lot? Do you like to read?
- Are you taking any medication that might impact your learning?



### Activity 5

We provided a brief overview of how Literacy Link South Central carried out the research project and decided which screening tools to review.

We asked you to tell us which criteria are most important when choosing screening tools and why. Here's what you told us:

- Writing samples are helpful.
- They must be non-threatening.
- They must be simple and short – for both the learner and the practitioner.
- There must be clear indications of “next steps”.
- They should identify whether the potential learning disability is visual, auditory, organizational, etc.
- Knowing what the learner's goal is can be helpful when deciding what tool to use.
- They need to address the special needs of the learner (e.g. deaf community).
- They must be culturally appropriate (e.g. Native content)
- The organization should be able to provide strategies to respond to the disabilities they are trying to identify.



## Activity 6

After looking at a writing sample, we asked you to share strategies that you have found effective in encouraging learners to self-assess. Here's what you told us.

- Have learners list the things they enjoy doing and are good at.
- Look into multiple intelligences and learning styles. True Colours is also good. Take a look at <http://www.cgcanada.com/cgcanada/truecolors.html>.
- Get some resources from the internet.
- Set up individual goal tracking sheets. Include information on what helped the learner achieve his/her goal.
- Work on building self-esteem and trust.
- Read aloud.
- Work on group skills.
- Provide editing checklists so that the learner can self-assess before handing in his/her work.
- Encourage learners to problem solve before going to the instructor.
- Model learning and coping strategies.
- Keep a file – every time you use a strategy, add it to the file!
- Refer to Literacy Link South Central's manual from the first phase of this project.
- Mel Levine has some good information; check out his website. Destination Literacy is another great resource.