



What's in this section?

- Reading for understanding – text book prose
- Reading fluency
- Writing exam and assignment questions
- Study skills
- Case studies and lesson plans
- Useful references for this section

Who is this section for?

The activities in this section are designed for students who are enrolled in a vocational course, such as a TAFE course, and who are struggling with the reading and writing demands of the course. A vocational course is any post-school course such as hospitality, plumbing or business etc.

What materials to use?

If you have been asked to help a student who is enrolled in a vocational course, then they will have very immediate needs. It is possible that by the time you have your first session, they have assignments which are overdue, reading which hasn't been done and an assessment looming next week!

The immediate nature of the task will dictate the content of your sessions and the materials you use. You should always use reading material and teaching/learning activities which are directly related to the course.

If it is possible to talk with one of the course teachers, you may be able to borrow some other texts or notes related to the course. Working in coordination with the course teacher is the ideal situation. You can then find out what are the most immediate needs and most pressing problems.

Your role

Many students in this situation just want someone to do the assignments for them. This however, is not your role. (Although you will be surprised how adept you will get at knowing how to install a hot water heater or design a diet for a two year old or lay a tiled floor...!)

Your role is to:

1. assist with the reading and writing skills needed for the immediate tasks such as preparing for an assessment or doing an assignment.
2. help the student to develop reading and writing and study skills which will allow them to become an independent learner.



The nature of the assistance you give to your student will depend largely on the course they are doing and the particular literacy demands it makes on its students. For example, some students are required to read text books, to do research in the library and to write essays, whilst others only have to work from a manual or course notes and their assignments require no more than short answers to questions.

Your first job therefore is to find out what your student will be required to read and what type of writing is required. If you are not in a position to be able to speak to the teacher, then get your student to bring along as much information about the course as they have been given, so you can try to work it out together.

What about maths?

This section does not cover the maths needed for the student's course or trade. If maths is a problem, refer to the section on *Everyday numeracy*, or one of the references or websites at the end of this section.

Reading for understanding - text book prose

The strategies suggested here should be useful for readers who have trouble understanding or remembering material they need to read for study. These readers can probably recognise and 'sound out the words' but still have trouble taking it all in.

Your aim is to help your student:

- manage the immediate reading tasks needed for their course
- develop the reading skills required to become an independent learner.

Background

Is your student having trouble reading and understanding text book material? There can be a number of sources of problems here:

1. Concepts

First, the reading matter may be overloaded with concepts that are totally new. We all find reading easiest when we are reading about a topic that we already know something about. The more new concepts we encounter, the more difficult the reading becomes. We need to understand something of the topic in order to 'hook' new concepts on to it, since we learn by assimilating new information in to things we already know about.

2. Vocabulary

Secondly, if the material has a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary, the reader can't predict what words are coming on the basis of knowledge of the topic. See *How do we read?* in Section 1. This will slow down the reading and it will become laboured and hesitant.

3. Grammar

Sometimes text book prose can be written in a style which may be unfamiliar. That is, the grammar of the sentence unfolds in an unfamiliar way. Think of legal language. See *How do we read?* in Section I. This will also result in laboured, hesitant reading.

4. Organisation of the ideas

It helps to understand how the ideas are organised in a chapter or article. For example, we can more easily predict what is coming if we know that the sections are arranged as *introduction, causes, effects, solutions etc.*

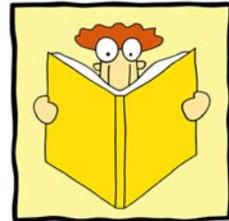
5. An inactive, unquestioning mind

If your student has developed the habit of just reading words without an active, questioning mind, they will have trouble remembering what they read. Such students often try to rely on rote learning without attempting to make sense of what they have read.

Some solutions

1. A simpler version

If the problem text is overloaded with new concepts, find a book or article covering the same or similar topic written in a simpler way. Perhaps try the internet; or get someone to talk about it. The reader will then have a better framework on which to attach the new information when they go back to the problem text.



2. Skim

Skim first, or read the difficult text superficially to start with, just to get the broad picture. Don't get bogged down in the details. When finished, the student jots down what they can remember of the main ideas, or highlights them in the text. Then when they return to re-read it they have a big picture framework to build on.

3. Clarify new vocabulary

Start to clarify some of the unknown vocabulary. However, remember that with technical language, a dictionary type definition is sometimes not very much help. Some of the words may not be understood properly until the whole concept is clear.

If the student is not familiar with the particular style of language (for example, legal or scientific language) it will help if you read it aloud to them first. Perhaps read it onto a tape to replay until they get used to the rhythms of the language.

4. Read actively

Make sure the student is beginning to read with an active mind rather than just reading words. Try this routine:

- **Scan**
First read headings, sub headings, look at illustrations and graphics and their captions. Search for clues as to the organisation of ideas in the chapter. The first paragraph and the sub headings will usually help here.
- **Question**
What questions pop into your mind? *What is this all about? ... Is it a historical survey of the topic? ... Does that chart tell me about the increase in recent years? ... What on earth does 'multiple type families' mean? ... is this about the video we saw in class? ... I wonder if it relates to Piaget's theory? ...* The questions may not turn out to be really pertinent. That doesn't matter. The important thing is that you are reading with an active, questioning mind which is what all good readers do subconsciously when they are reading. Try turning sub headings into questions.

- **Read**
Now read. You are now reading for a purpose.
- **Review**
At the end of each section, look away from the book for a few seconds and review the information, taking time to check back on anything you are not sure of.

5. Reciprocal questioning or ReQuest

This is another technique to encourage the reader to read with a questioning mind. In this technique the tutor and student take turns at asking the questions.

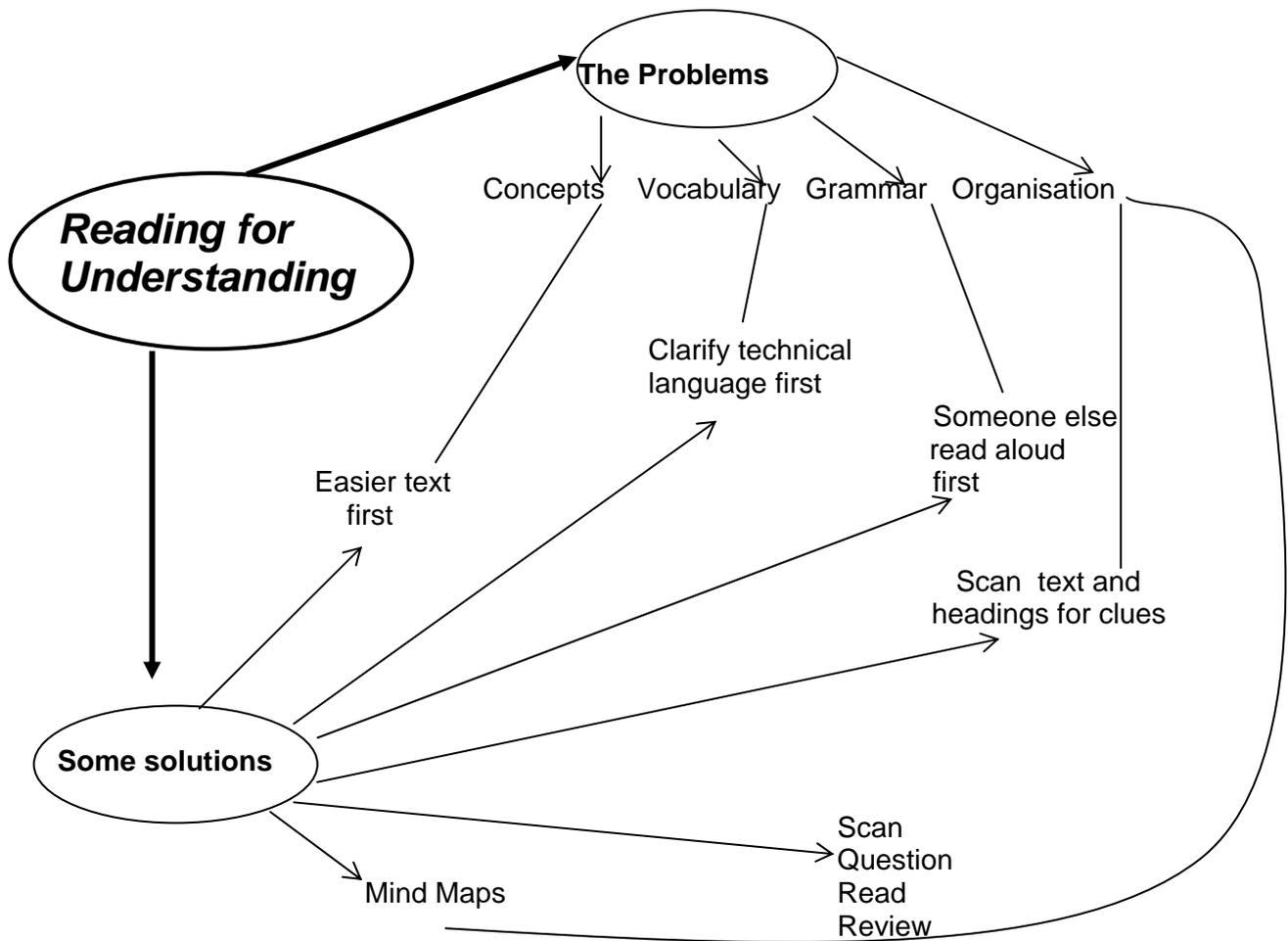
After reading a couple of sentences, the student asks whatever questions occur to them about the material or the vocabulary. They are told to ask the kind of questions a teacher might ask. *What does that mean? ... What does that refer to? ... What's this chapter going to be about?* Answers are not expected at this stage.

The student reads another few sentences and then the tutor takes a turn at asking the questions ... and so on for a few paragraphs.

6. Mind mapping

It is difficult to remember things that aren't properly organised in our minds. We understand and remember things best when we have to do something with the information - when we have to make sense of it. Mind mapping will help the reader to do this. A mind map is a representation or diagram of the main points in a text, using the key words with arrows and other symbols (eg + or =) to show the relationship between them.

For example, a mind map of this section might look like this:



7. Classification

The technique called classification is very much like mind mapping in that it helps the reader organise the material in their mind. It is a simpler procedure than mind mapping and is more suited to smaller pieces of text.

After reading the passage, perhaps a few times, until they have grasped the central ideas, ask your student to underline or highlight about twenty words in the passage which are crucial to the meaning.

Once they have selected their words, they write them on pieces of cardboard.

Then they arrange the cards in a way that virtually re-tells the text. They can put in arrows to connect the words and ideas together.

When they are happy with the pattern they have chosen, they tell the tutor what the article was about using the cards as a prompt.

Stress that there is no right or wrong way to lay out the cards – each reader would probably make a different pattern.

As a general rule, when your student is reading with you....**Pause ... prompt ... praise**

When your student doesn't know a word:

- Don't provide the word straight away. Give them time to think about it.
- Then give them some clues:

What letter does it begin with? Can you think of a word that begins with 's' that would fit there?

Or you might tell them to read on a few words further and see if they can work it out.

- If that doesn't help, then just tell them the word.
- Make sure to praise their efforts. There will usually be some approximation to the print.

If your student misreads a word:

- Don't correct them straight away.
- If their mistake doesn't alter the sense of the passage, then ignore it.
- If it alters the sense of the passage or their reading results in nonsense, stop them and say *Does that make sense? Does that sound right? Have another look at that.*

What materials do you need?

- The text book
- Possibly a simpler book on the same or similar topic
- Dictionary
- Possibly a tape recorder and audio tape
- Paper and pens
- Blank word cards

Reading fluency

The activities in this section are designed for students who can recognise or 'sound out' most of the words but who have developed a habit of slow, hesitant, word-by-word reading and as a result, have trouble with comprehension.

Very slow hesitant reading can be frustrating and an embarrassment for people who need to read aloud in public, for example at meetings, or who want to be able to read to their children. It can also interfere with comprehension. Readers who concentrate so hard on saying the words can lose track of the meaning so that they are not able to predict ahead and they are not holding 'chunks' of meaning in their head.

The eyes of efficient readers do not rest on every word. They bounce along the line and take in only as much of the print as is needed. (See the section *How do we read?*) However, the eyes of some inefficient readers have developed a motor habit of stopping on each word. One of the things such readers need to do is to break this motor habit and to take in more words with each fixation of the eyes.

Your aim is to help your student:

- develop a motor habit of moving their eyes quickly across the page
- prove that it is not necessary for the eyes to rest on every letter and every word in order to read.

Some solutions

1. Reading with your student

Select something that is a little more difficult than your student's independent reading level but something that he or she is interested in or needs to read

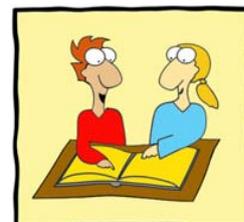
Clarify any difficult vocabulary first and give an overview of what it is about.

You read it aloud with them. Your reading should perhaps be a little slower than usual, but still fluent. Try making slightly longer pauses at commas and between sentences. Don't try to slow down to your student's 'word calling' pace. This can sometimes be difficult so it may be better to tell your student to read along with you 'in their head' while you read aloud.

As you are reading, trace your finger along under the line – not pointing at each word, but moving your finger fluently along.

Make sure you are sitting so that the student can see the book comfortably and easily.

The student is not to worry about making errors or falling behind. If they make errors, they should just keep going.



You may need to 'sell' this method to your student. Many adults see it as cheating or they complain that they can't keep up with your voice. This is probably because they are still trying to look carefully at every word and that is precisely the habit you are trying to break. It may need several sessions of 10 to 15 minutes for them to get used to the method but it is well worth persevering.

2. Read-along

This is similar to the procedure above except that you make a cassette tape recording of your reading.

Tape your reading of the passage. Again, your reading should be a little slow, but not so slow that it loses normal intonation and fluency.

Take care that your reading is accurate and that you have no mistakes recorded on the tape. Replay it to check this, as making mistakes is easier than we think! It is a normal aspect of the reading process but for this exercise, your reading needs to be absolutely accurate.

The amount you record will depend on your student's reading skill and the nature of the text. It may just be a few pages or it may be a whole chapter.

3. Repeated reading

It is useful to encourage your student to learn passages by reading them over and over until they can read them fluently. They may start off by reading with you as suggested above, and then read the passage several times alone or with the tape until they feel they can read it fluently.

Again, some students resist this method because they feel it is cheating, but if they are using some clues from the print to help them remember the material, then the process is very much like real reading.

4. Practise skimming

Make sure your student gets used to skim reading. That is, reading faster than is comfortable to get the main ideas. If they spend a few minutes a day practising skimming, they may find their normal reading speed has increased. Skimming is a very useful skill. Give your student a passage or a page and see how quickly they can pick out the key words and main points.

5. 100 words per minute

This is the repeated reading strategy, but with a short term goal. There is evidence that a reading speed of about 100 words per minute is the critical reading speed for optimal comprehension.

You will need several passages of about 100 words long. The passages should be just a little more difficult than the student's independent level of reading and of course, something that interests them. You also need a digital clock or watch or ideally, a stop watch.

As with the repeated reading strategy, read the passage through with your student to make sure they can recognise all the words. Then they re-read it silently several times, timing themselves each time until they can read it in one minute. Then move on to another passage.

It is a good motivator to record the time taken for each reading. The next page has a blank record sheet for you to use.

What materials do you need?

- Text book, lesson notes etc
- Perhaps an audio tape and tape recorder
- Digital watch or clock

100 word per minute record sheet

| Name of passage | Date and time taken |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |
| | Date: min : secs |

Writing exam and assignment questions

This section has suggestions for students who may be able to manage everyday personal writing (a personal letter or a note) but have trouble with the particular type of writing required to answer exam questions or complete assignments.

Your aim is to help your student:

- understand the literacy skills involved in understanding and answering exam and assignment questions
- develop these skills so they can use them independently.

First, find out what sort of writing your student needs to do. Do the assignments and assessment tasks only require short answers, that is, a sentence or maybe a paragraph? Or are longer pieces, maybe essays, required? In either case, the first task, and often the most important task, is to help your student understand what the question really wants them to do.

How do I answer this?

Analyse the question

Most questions have two, or sometimes three, important parts to them which need to be identified:

1. What is the question about? That is, what is the general topic and the focus of the topic?
2. In some questions the student also needs to take note of any limitations there may be to the topic. For example:

*Summarise the nutritional needs of children **between 3 and 5 years**.*

3. What do I have to do with the topic? Look for the verbs or task words which tell you how to answer the question. For example:

***Summarise** the nutritional needs of children between 3 and 5 years.*



Here are some of the commonly used terms or task words and their meanings:

Describe	Give a written, detailed account.
Explain	Interpret the facts, clarify reasons and examine the 'how' and 'why'.
Illustrate	Use examples, a figure or diagram to explain or make clear.
Outline	Give an account, indicating main features or general principles. Omit minor details.
Summarise	Give a brief account of the main points, omitting details and examples.
Compare	Note the similarities and differences.
Contrast	Compare by showing the differences.
Discuss	Examine by argument or debate, giving reasons for and against. Explore an issue from different points of view.
Review	Make a survey of and examine the subject critically.
Define	Clarify the precise meaning of a word, term or phrase.
Evaluate	Make a judgment of the worth of something or some idea.
Justify	State your reasons for a conclusion.
Trace	Give the development, or history of an event or idea.

Talk first ... then write

Your student may have a good grasp of the practical aspects of their course but has trouble transferring this to writing. Encouraging them to talk about the topic is a good way to build a bridge between the practical and the written task. Encourage them to be explicit. Ask questions and encourage them to consult their notes or text book for anything which they're not sure of.

Look at model pieces of writing

Your student needs to be clear also just how the information is to be presented. The format and the way the language is used will differ depending on what they are asked to do with the topic (that is, what the task words are). For example, if they have to discuss an issue, the writing will take a very different form from that used to describe a process. There are different rules or conventions concerning these different types of writing which you may intuitively understand but which need to be made explicit for your student. These different types of writing are called genres. The table on the following page lists some common genres which your student may need to write, and some of the language features which they should be aware of.



Do not bother your student by introducing them to more of these text genres than they need. Just look down the list and see which ones match the kinds of writing they are required to do.

The best way to help your student understand how to write in the appropriate genre is to find some models and examine them together. For example, if an assignment question asks them to *describe the process for sewing seed into garden beds*, you

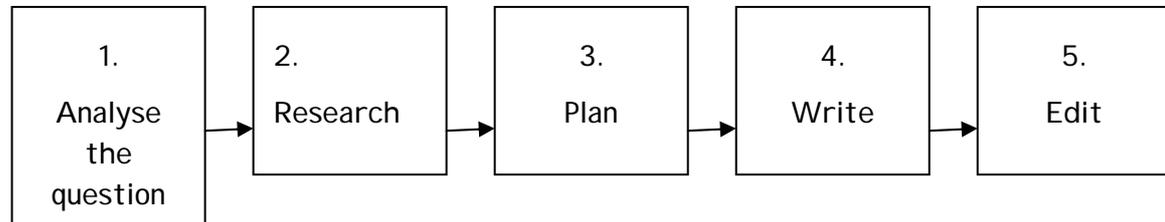
could find other examples of process descriptions in the text book, which could be used as a model. Together you could look for the language features which are listed against the procedure genre in the table below.

Some common text types (genres) (For more common text types, see Section 5)

Genre or text type	Features
Recount (Telling what happened)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure usually consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ orientation (who, when, where) ○ then detail the events, usually time sequenced. • Use past tense • Action verbs (went, did, thought ...) • Linking words to do with time (after, then, next ...) • May include personal reactions.
Procedure (How to do something - eg recipes, instructions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure usually consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the goal (sometimes just a heading) ○ materials (listed) ○ method (sequentially in steps). • Verbs are action words and commands usually placed at or near the beginning of the sentence (take, beat, dampen, screw ...) • Usually set out in point form or a series of numbered steps.
Argument (or point of view) Presents only one side of the case, ie for or against.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the use of over emotive words • Verbs are mainly simple present tense • Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...) • Structure usually consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ statement of the point of view first ○ then development of the argument point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts ○ restatement of the position at the end.
Discussion (Similar to an argument but presenting two or more points of view)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the use of over emotive words • Verbs are mainly simple present tense • Use of logical connective words (therefore, so, because of, however ...) • Structure usually consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ introduction - states the issue and the points of controversy ○ then statement of the argument for, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts ○ then argument against, point by point with use of examples, statistics and facts ○ then conclusion - a recommendation based on the weight of evidence.
Explanation (How or why something happens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbs are simple present (or sometimes past) tense • Structure usually consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a general statement ○ a sequenced explanation of how or why, usually a series of logical steps in the process, in the order in which they happen • Linking words to do with time (first, following, finally ...) • Linking words to do with cause and effect relationships (if/then, as a result, since ...)

Writing an essay - or longer piece of writing

Some courses require the students to do sustained pieces of writing, or essays. There are a number of steps to be worked through in writing an essay. The most basic of these are:



1. Analyse the question

See *Analyse the question*, this Section, page 12.

2. Research

It is useful for the student to begin by jotting down initial ideas. This will help guide the reading. Making a simple mind map of what they already know is also a good way to start.

It is best to begin reading by getting an overview of the topic - this is probably given in the textbook. Then move to more detailed, specific references.

Having found the appropriate text or texts, note taking is the next consideration. Many students take copious notes, rewriting whole slabs of text. They should be encouraged to write notes in their own words and take care to note the full reference details, including page numbers, of anything they make note of or any photocopies they make.

3. Plan

It is now time to plan the essay or to return to the initial rough plan the student made before beginning their research. The plan should include the information which will be included and the order in which it will be presented, or the structure of the essay.

Every essay should consist of:

Introduction

Restate the question as a statement and say briefly, without detail, what perspective you are taking on the topic. This should be about 10% of the essay.

The body

Explain each point you wish to make, in detail.

Conclusion

This draws together all that you have said. No new information should be written in this section. This is about 10% of your essay.

References

If you have used any.

It is difficult to try to write the introduction or the conclusion until the body of the essay has been written. The writer doesn't know what they are introducing or what conclusions they are making until the body of the essay has been properly

developed. At this stage it is a waste of time to worry about them. Encourage your student to write the body first.

The instructions or task words will give some direction as to how the paragraphs in the body are organised. For example, if the task is to 'discuss', the student is required to explore an issue from different points of view, giving arguments for and against. The paragraphs in the body of the essay will then be arranged as a series of logical points which are each developed. Or it could be organised as arguments for, then arguments against.

If however, the task is to 'trace the development of ...' the body of the essay will be organised in chronological sequence of events.

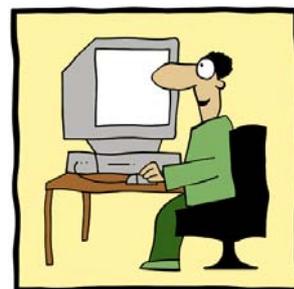
See *Look at model pieces of writing*, this Section, page 13.

Encourage your student to give a heading to each point they are going to include, and list them in the order in which they are going to present them. Note that traditional essay format does not include headings. Your student should check with the teacher for guidelines. Headings are however a useful planning tool, whether they are included in the final draft or not.

4. Write

Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, usually at the beginning of the paragraph. This tells the reader what the paragraph is about. Ensuring that there is a clear topic sentence near the beginning of each paragraph is one of the keys to clear, logical, reader-friendly writing.

Remember, this is the first draft. The student should concentrate on getting their ideas down clearly and logically and not worry about spelling, punctuation etc at this point, as that will only distract them from the main task.



5. Edit

The next step is for your student to proofread what they have written. This is a two step procedure: the spelling and punctuation and then the ideas.

1. It is probably best to start by fixing the spelling. Tell your student to put a line under any words which they think may be wrong or which they weren't sure of then have another try and check in the dictionary, or you may have to help.

Then it is useful to get your student to read it aloud so that they can hear what they have written and try to pick up any omitted words or parts that just don't sound right (that is, they are not grammatical). Reading aloud also helps to identify where the full stops should be.

2. Then they need to look at the way the ideas have been developed. *Is it logical? Has anything been left out? Is there anything that is irrelevant? Is there any 'waffle' that should be left out? Are the introduction and conclusion appropriate?*

Also, they should re-read the question to make sure they've answered it.

Encourage your student to write in plain English. Students often try to write like a text book and end up writing passages which the reader simply can not understand. If this is the case for your student, it often helps to ask them to

tell you what they want to say - then tell them to write it down like that (or almost like that).

What about spelling?

If your student is a poor speller, you will need to help them with this also. But be realistic about the progress that is possible in the time that you have available.

Your aim is to help your student:

- learn to spell the important words related to their trade or occupation
- develop a routine for checking their written work and finding and fixing most of their errors.

Work on the errors that your student produces in their written work. Don't bother with spelling lists etc. It is not the best way to learn and you won't have time.

How do we spell?

When we are spelling or learning to spell, we are using three senses:

1. The visual memory for the appearance of the word. This is perhaps the most important factor in learning to spell.
2. The sound of the word is also important. You should check that your student is saying the word correctly and hearing the sounds in the word. You should be aware however, that even the most careful speakers do not pronounce words the way they are spelt. For example, when we say *walked* we do not pronounce the ending as it is spelt. What we are actually saying is something like *wɔ:kt*. People from a non-English speaking background in particular will have trouble with this aspect of spelling.
3. The feel of the word as we write it is also important in learning to spell. Many people say that a mis-spelling can actually feel wrong.

We are also drawing on our knowledge of the meaning of the word and its context.

How can I help my student?

Encourage your student to 'have a go' at problem words

When your student asks *How do you spell...?* tell them to try it first. Chances are they will have most of the word right and will then know which part they have to learn.

Eventually you might have to help them with it or help look it up. You should also help them to find their way around a dictionary.

Set up a learn-to-spell routine

Concentrate on the words needed for the course, and eventually the occupation. Telling your student how a word is spelt this week doesn't mean they will remember it next week. They have to put some effort into learning to spell.

- Write the words out clearly on a sheet of paper. You should print in lower case letters. Or ask your student to copy it out from the dictionary or the text book or course notes.
- If it is a long word, help break it into syllables and pronounce it that way. For example, *eng/in/eer/ing*.
- Ask the student to copy the word carefully. If it is a long word encourage them to study the word and try to remember it in chunks rather than copying it letter by letter. Then ask them to underline the difficult bit which causes the mistake and ask themselves why they got it wrong and work out a way to remember it.
- They then re-write the word several times while spelling it to themselves. Writing words over and over usually seemed like punishment at school, but it is really a most effective way of learning to spell a word. You are reinforcing the three senses; the look of the word, the sound of it and the feel of it.
- They should then cover it over and try to write it from memory then check it themselves.
- Ten minutes later, try again.
- At the end of the session, try again.
- Next session, try again.
- Keep a record of these selected words. The student might choose to record these words in the back of an exercise book or in a small notebook.



If your student is a very poor speller and you want some more suggestions about spelling, look at Section 5, page 20 *Writing and spelling - Some more helpful hints for learning to spell*.

What materials do you need?

- Any information you can gather about course requirements
- Assessment/assignment schedule, past exam questions etc
- Text books, course notes etc
- If possible, model essays or assignment answers
- Paper and pens, highlighter, etc
- Dictionary

Study skills

Your aim is to help your student:

- organise their study routine
- learn how to learn.

Organise

One of the earliest tasks in your first session with your student is to help them to organise their notes and hand-outs.

Make sure that:

- they have a separate, easily identified section in their folder for each subject
- they write the subject or teacher's name and the date on every handout they are given, if it is not already printed on the sheet.

Sometimes the course teacher will take responsibility for helping the students to organise their notes, but it still requires constant monitoring and reminding. Otherwise their job as a learner and yours as a helper will become impossible.

Now study

Make sure that your student knows how to read in different ways for different purposes so that they don't waste time reading something carefully and deeply when they are just looking for some specific information. Give them practice in:

- **Skimming** This is looking quickly over a piece of text to try to understand the main ideas. It is the reading we do when we are looking to see if something is worth reading. Give your student a section of text or a chapter and see how quickly they can pick out the key words and main ideas.
- **Scanning** At other times scanning will be sufficient. Scanning means you are looking for specific information in a text. Give your student a section of text or a chapter and see how quickly they can find a specific piece of information.

For many students, studying means simply reading and rereading their notes and texts in a passive way, hoping that something will sink in. That is not studying, and the student will remember very little. In order to memorise information, we need to do something with it. The activities below will suggest some ways of doing this.

Again, you should find out what form of exam or assessment questions your student can expect. In technology/trade courses there might be:

- multiple choice questions

- cloze (fill in the blanks)
- label diagrams
- complete tables, diagrams, charts
- short answers (1 or 2 sentences)
- true/false
- matching information.

In other courses they are more likely to be essay type questions.

You should give your student plenty of practice answering the kinds of questions they are most likely to encounter.

Review/study strategies

Some of the following suggestions may not represent the form of questions which are likely to be encountered in the course, but they will nevertheless provide your student with good learning practice.

Cloze exercises

A cloze exercise is a passage with a number of words deleted which the student has to guess using the clues given by the rest of the sentence or passage. Choose the words which you delete very carefully. They should be words which the student should know or should be able to work out from the passage. For example:

As the flux expands from the centre it cuts the When the current stops the field collapses, again cutting the conductor. Because a moving magnetic field induces a in a conductor, there must be a voltage induced in the very conductor producing the field in the first place.

Labelling diagrams

Photocopy or copy a diagram from the text or notes without the labels and ask your student to label it.

Complete tables, diagrams, charts

Photocopy or copy a table, diagram or chart from the text or notes, with some information missing, which your student has to complete.

Mind maps

Help your student to make a mind map of material they are trying to memorise. Mind maps can help students to see relationships between ideas, which in turn can help recall. It is much easier to recall interrelated chunks of information than isolated items of information. The act of creating the mind map in itself will help memory. An added bonus is that our recall of graphic information (diagrams etc) is much greater than for slabs of text. See this Section page 6 for example.

Sequencing activities

If there are steps in a procedure to be memorized, write them in random order and ask your student to re-order them. Or get them to write them on pieces of card or paper, mix them up and have them re-order them.

Make up own exam/assessment questions

All of the above activities are much more effective if your student makes up their own exercises (with your help). They might make up a cloze exercise or copy a diagram with the labels left off, or a table with some of the information missing, and complete it for homework that night, or in your session next week.

Turn headings into questions

Give your student practice in turning the headings in the text book into questions, then see if they can answer them.

Explain what they have read

After reading a section of the notes, get your student to explain it to you and encourage them to do this when they are studying alone. They should explain aloud to them self what they have just read. Saying it aloud and explaining to yourself activates additional parts of the brain and helps you memorise the information.

Make notes

Making notes in your own words is useful. Copying out slabs of the text is not. Learning is about making sense of new ideas and hooking the new concepts on to your existing knowledge. You need to put it into your own words for that to happen.

However, it is best not to make notes while reading. Encourage your student to read a section at a time then put the book aside and try to summarise it. The quality of their reading will improve, just knowing that they are going to summarise it.

Review

At the end of a study period, or at the end of a session with you, it is very important to review what has just been learnt. A short review immediately at the end of the study period, rather than at a later time is really helpful in retaining the information. Just ask your student to tell you what has been covered in the session, using any notes etc as a prompt.

Scan ... question ... read ... review and Reciprocal questioning

Look at some of the activities in the earlier section *Reading for understanding*, in particular the *Scan ... question ... read ... review* and the *Reciprocal questioning* sections. (p 4, 5)

What materials do you need?

- Text books, notes and handouts
- Pens, highlighters and paper

Case studies and lesson plans

Case study 1: Margaret

Background

Margaret was not a successful student at school but has always passionately wanted to work with children. She just scraped into the Child Care course, mainly as a result of the obvious commitment to the career which she displayed at interview. She is now having a struggle with the written work required of her. She failed her first assignment and is struggling with the second one. She has considered dropping out of the course but has decided to try once again with some help from a tutor.



Literacy ability

Margaret's literacy ability allows her to cope quite well with everyday tasks. She can read articles which interest her in popular magazines; she uses the computer and sends emails to her friends (albeit with spelling mistakes). She has some small cousins who she baby-sits regularly and can read stories to them and read and write notes to the children's parents.

Immediate literacy needs

She is, however, having trouble coping with the reading and writing demands of her course.

Reading: She says that she starts to read the text book but she can't take anything in. She can 'read' all the words and can work out most of the difficult ones but that doesn't help her understand what it is about. She has started Chapter 1 several times but gives up in frustration.

Writing: The problem with her last assignment was that she didn't answer the question and the ideas were clumsily expressed and didn't seem to flow logically anyway. There were a few very basic spelling errors.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Margaret

Lesson 1

You spend a lot of the session going through her course information, course objectives, course notes etc. and helping her organise them in her folder.

She has mentioned her problem reading the text book so you introduce her to the scan ... question ... read ... review routine.

First you browse through the text book, looking at the chapter headings and table of contents and modeling questioning behaviour such as: *What is the book about? ... Does it only cover the theoretical background or will it give me practical advice about caring for children? ... Is it about child development? ... What will it tell me about child psychology? ...*

Then you do the same with the first chapter, then the first section of the chapter.

Then you start to read. If she is sufficiently confident, she can read it herself or you could take turns.

At the end of each paragraph or so, you stop and ask questions (*Reciprocal questioning*). It doesn't matter whether the questions can be answered yet. The important thing is that she is reading with a questioning mind.

When you have finished with a section, ask her to review it. She tells you what she can remember of it then you help her to make a mind map of this information.

She has an assignment due soon so you help her to analyse the question.

You help her make a rough plan or mind map of what she thinks her answer might look like.

The information needed will be found in her handouts, her notes and her text book, so you introduce her to the skill of skimming to find the relevant information and show her how to use the index in the text book.

You help her with a rough draft of the first part and she finishes it during the week.

You review the reading and writing skills you have introduced her to during the session.

Lesson 2

Before you look at the draft of Margaret's assignment, you tell her to look over it and try to find any spelling mistakes, and to put a line under any words she thinks may not be right. You write out the correct spelling for her. (At a later date you will help her find her way around a dictionary to check on these herself, but today the assignment is urgent.)

You praise her achievement at writing so much etc ... etc then ask her to read it out loud to you, stopping her once or twice to ask *Does that sound right? ... How could you have said that differently? ... Do we need a new sentence there?...*

Then you help her look at the content of what she has written. *Has she answered the question? ... Do the ideas flow logically? ... Has she given enough details and examples?* You help her scan her text book for more examples and some quotes.

She takes the edited draft away to rewrite at home and you praise ... praise ... praise the achievement so far.

She had a few spelling mistakes on words which are central to her course and which she will need to write often so you set up a learn-to-spell routine for her using three of these words.

You look at the first assignment which she did and failed, and talk about how it could have been better. In particular you help her analyse the question, do a rough plan of what she should have included and scan the text book and notes for the information which she should have used.

Together you read the next section of the text book, modelling the scan ... question ... read ... review and *Reciprocal questioning* techniques and reviewing by making notes or mind maps.

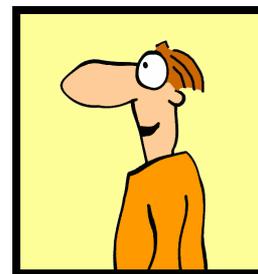
Since her reading is slow and hesitant you ask her to read the same section over and over till she can read it faster and tell her to do this several times during the week (repeated reading).

You review what you have talked about and ask her to have another try at her spelling words.

Case study 1: Ahmed

Background

Although Ahmed was born in Australia, his parents were recent migrants and they did not speak English at home. They had very little literacy in English and were not able to help Ahmed with his schoolwork. He did not speak very much English by the time he started school and he struggled with reading and writing throughout his schooling. Although he stayed at school till the end of year 10, his Year 10 qualification was a very minimal one.



Ahmed was always very keen about cars and since his uncle owned a panel beating business, he offered him an apprenticeship. He loves working in the workshop but his days at TAFE are a challenge.

Literacy ability

Ahmed does not read anything for pleasure. He flips through motor magazines and looks at the pictures but has no confidence that he could read anything very much. When pressed however, he proves that he can read many words and can have a go at sounding words out. That is, he knows what sounds the letters might represent, but he has no real confidence in attacking unknown words.

His spelling is very poor and he avoids writing as much as possible.

Immediate literacy needs

The course reading material consists of a set of course notes and an occasional handout. The end of each section in the notes contains a review page which the students are expected to complete at home. Ahmed feels he is unable to do this as he can't read it well enough. The only one he has done was copied from another student.

Most of the questions require only one word or one sentence answers, or are cloze exercises, sequencing exercises or exercises where the student is expected to label a diagram or complete a table.

Ahmed needs to:

- understand what the question is about and how he is expected to answer it
- recognise the key words in his notes
- develop some reading strategies to allow him to predict what an unknown word might be
- scan his notes for specific information
- develop a learn-to-spell strategy.

Getting it all together - some lesson plans for Ahmed

Lesson 1

In your first session you spend some time sorting out his hand-outs and helping him to organise a system for the hand-outs.

Together you go through the course notes and help him become familiar with the organisation of the manual. You look at the table of contents and match it up with the course objectives which he has been given in his course information hand-out. You ask him what has been covered so far in the course and find the sub-headings which match this. You show him how to use the table of contents to find information.

You ask him to read a section from the notes and model the scan ... question ... read ... review technique. *Let's read this section ... What is the chapter heading? ... Tell me in your own words what it might be about ... Do you think it will just tell us about the structure of the chassis or will it give us information about how to repair a problem? ... Is it just about cars or does it cover heavy vehicles also? ... Look at this diagram ... What is it about?*

You check that he recognises some of the key vocabulary. These will probably be words in the heading, sub-headings and captions of diagrams. If there are any he doesn't know, you write them on a piece of paper for him and get him to copy them and say them.

Now start to read. If his reading is very slow and hesitant, you take it in turns to read a paragraph each, remembering the pause ... prompt ... praise routine.

You continue modelling the questioning behavior by 'wondering out loud' at the end of each section. *Do you know what X means? Let's see if it tells us in the next part ...*

You help him review by asking him to tell you what it was all about and you model a very simple mind map for him.

You help him find the section in his review questions which covers this part of the notes and help him to analyse the questions. Then you help him to do a few questions.

You set up a learn-to-spell routine for him for two or three key words.

Review the reading skills you have introduced him to in the session.

Lesson 2

You review the reading and writing skills you introduced Ahmed to last week and the content of the section you read together. With the notes open you ask him to tell you in his own words what it was about.

Following the scan ... question ... read ... review routine, together you read another section of the notes.

Because his reading is so slow and hesitant, you get him to practise repeated reading of a section and tell him to continue to practise this at home.

In order to encourage him to use the skill of prediction in his reading, and to give him practice with the format of many of the review questions in his book, you make a cloze exercise of a paragraph in his notes which he has already read and which he is familiar with.

You ask him to make a cloze exercise out of the next paragraph. Next week you will ask him to complete this.

You help him to recognise the different types of questions that recur in his review questions by going through a few of them and asking him to pick out all the cloze exercises or questions where he is asked to *list* some things or *label a diagram* or *match the information in the first column with the words in the second column* etc.

You help him do some more of his review questions by helping him with the skills needed to analyse the questions and skim his notes for the information.

You work on some spelling mistakes which he has made.

You review the reading and writing skills that you have talked about and the content of the section of his notes which you read.

You remind him to do some repeated reading practice at home and to look over his spelling words

Some useful references for this section

- *Deadly Bay: Open for Work*, TAFE NSW Access Division, 2001.
(An interactive CD ROM of literacy/numeracy resource materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the context of 6 training areas: business, horticulture, recreation, seafood, hospitality and tourism)
- Goddard R. & Regan M. *The Value of Time. Numeracy for Workers in Manufacturing*, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1995.
- *Henry Sprays it Safe*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005. (A CD-ROM resource to assist market gardeners to develop language, literacy and numeracy skills for the safe use of chemical sprays.)
- Marr B. Anderson C. and Tout D. *Numeracy on the Line - Language based numeracy activities for adults*, National Automotive Industry Training Board, 1994. (Designed for employees in vehicle manufacturing but with application to any modern workplace.)
- *Overdrive*, TAFE NSW Access & General Education Curriculum Division, 2005. (A CD ROM resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are working [or are interested in working] in the automotive and repair industry.)
- *Strategies for Success: Developing English Language Literacy and Numeracy in Vocational Courses*, Foundation Studies Training Division, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, 1996.
(Now out of print but available in most TAFE NSW Adult Basic Education sections)

Websites

- http://www.dest.gov.au/ty/litnet/numeracy/home/nh_0000.htm
Vocational Numeracy Online - a resource for students in vocational education and training. Click on *next* to choose your industry.
- www.decs.act.gov.au/publicat/litnumVET Literacy/Numeracy suggestions for vocational students.
- Most universities have useful websites offering study skills advice. Some of the most useful and user-friendly of these are:
 - www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/learning/pdfs/study.pdf: How do I study effectively
 - www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/learning/read.htm: Reading
 - www.icu.edu.au/studying/services/studyskills/effreading: Effective reading
 - <http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/learning/reading>: Reading and remembering
 - www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/reading.htm: Links to other useful sites