

Working with ELL Literacy Learners

Alberta Routes

Tip Sheet 16

An English Language Learner (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) literacy learner is someone who may have had

- minimal experience in a classroom,
- interrupted or restricted access to education for a variety of reasons,
- minimal formal education in their first language,
- little to no experience with non-Roman alphabets or
- may fit into one of the following categories:

Pre-literate	Their first language does not have written forms or where print is not part of daily life
Non-literate	Does not read or write in any language
Semi-literate	Some basic reading and writing skills, but are not yet functionally literate

General Tips for Working with ELL Literacy Learners

- Basic and straightforward language and literacy skills.
- Specific and targeted learning strategies.
- Small manageable tasks to build self-confidence.
- Slow pace.
- Repetition.
- Teach new vocabulary and concepts orally before teaching them in written form.

Specific Tips for Working with ELL Literacy Learners

- **Interactive instructional approach (whole-part-whole):**
 - Present a task in its entirety (show what the task will look like when it's finished).
 - Break down the task into manageable, individual pieces that learners complete one step at a time.
 - Address the task in its entirety at the end (learners put all the steps together in the final task).
 - See *A Practical Guide to Teaching ESL Literacy* (pgs. 202-203) for an example
- **Learner-centred tasks:**
 - Begin with the learner's strengths, knowledge, and prior experience.
 - Build in oral communication as the foundation for literacy development.
 - Use tasks that are meaningful and relevant to the learner.
 - Choose vocabulary, grammar, and strategies that relate to the discussions with the learner.
 - Focus on both meaning and form.
 - Scaffold (support that is gradually removed) to build in concepts and confidence.
 - Practice, reinforce, and transfer learning from one task to another (from lesson to real-life situations, community, and workplace).

- **Skills, knowledge, and strategy development for reading**
 - Build a sight word bank (before phonics)
 - Teach phonetic cues
 - Work with sentences from the beginning
 - Teach sequencing and directionality
 - Teach reading strategies

- **Skills, knowledge, and strategy development for writing**
 - Provide structure, sequence, and repetition.
 - Focus on mechanics (e.g., spelling, handwriting.)
 - Recycle and spiral instruction (repetition, repetition, repetition.)
 - Consider the socio-cultural and contextual needs of the learner.
 - Use real-world tasks that the learner must address outside the classroom (e.g., note from the child’s teacher, doctor’s appointment, work incident report.)
 - Make space for learners to collaborate with other learners.

Resources Available

<p>ATESL resource library ATESL</p>	<p>Resources include NICO (Newcomer Introduction to Classes Online), Literacy assessment tools, and interactive English.</p>
<p>English Express Newspaper CALP Express</p>	<p>Supported by CALP – includes articles and personal narratives.</p>
<p>CLB: ESL for Adult Literacy Learners (ALL) Language.ca</p>	<p>Document to support EAL practitioners in identifying needs and abilities of their literacy learners.</p>
<p>CLB: ESL for ALL Support Kit Language.ca</p>	<p>Supports instructors working with learners with literacy needs in CLB-referenced classrooms including planning, assessment, resources, and exemplars.</p>

<p>A Practical Guide to Teaching ESL Literacy</p> <p><u>Bow Valley College</u></p>	<p>Resource for literacy instructors and includes skills for literacy development, approaches to teaching literacy, and materials and resources</p>
<p>ESL Literacy Readers</p> <p><u>Bow Valley College</u></p>	<p>40 ESL-theme-based literacy stories designed specifically for adult ESL literacy learners that come with instructor guides.</p>

Alberta Routes Workshops

<https://albertaroutes.norquest.ca/events.aspx>

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