Literacy and Essential Skills Online Resources

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology has compiled the following selection of literacy and essential skills online resources to be used by educators, tutors, career practitioners, etc. who assist clients/students with reading, writing, listening, speaking, numeracy and computer skills. Many of these tools are easy-to-print and can be used by teachers in a classroom setting or by learners independently. Other interactive resources can be used by learners online, or in some cases, programs can be downloaded for use on a classroom computer.

LITERACY RESOURCES & TEACHING TOOLS

The following resources are designed for teaching a variety of literacy and essential skills, including reading, writing, numeracy and communication, as well as planning materials and teaching tools for educators.

ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities (ER PAC)
(Norquest College)

This resource package will guide and support effective English as a Second Language instruction for new and experienced teachers. This resource will assist with planning and delivering training, help teachers understand what is necessary in ESL programs and classrooms, tools for assessing learners, planning lessons, and finding materials and ideas.

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) Publications Search
(Alberta Employment and Immigration)

ALIS offers a large selection of adult literacy resources that can be found by selecting “Low Literacy” in the Audience field of the Search box. There are resources on career planning, work search, job maintenance and budgeting basics.

The Teaching Toolbox
(Literacy Nova Scotia)

The Teaching Toolbox is a video series produced for the Nova Scotia Practitioner Training and Certificate Program. Each video highlights or demonstrates a practical teaching technique that can be used with adult learners. The series includes “Advice without Giving Advice,” “Making Change: Using Money to Teach Math,” and “Marking for Confidence in Communications.”

Educational Software
[Coordinated by National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)]

This site offers a number of adult literacy and learning programs that have been reviewed and approved by learners and instructors, and can be downloaded directly from the website. Instructors will find resources that cover a range of skill levels plus ESL and teach subjects such as math, reading, spelling, vocabulary and typing. By using the pull-down menus, instructors are able to choose the content, skill level and operating system they want, and the results will only show the programs that match these criteria.

Literacy Tools
[National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), Ireland]

Literacytools.ie offers a wide variety of games, print and online exercises for adult literacy learners, as well as a tutor’s resources section. Exercises are available in a number of topics, or learners can choose to work on a particular skill such as reading, spelling or numbers.

ESL Tutor Training Kit: A Learner-Centred Approach to Tutoring Adult ESL Learners
(Created by Myrina Rutten-James)

The Tutor Training Manual provides basic teaching strategies and tools that practitioners can use to help adult learners develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Adults learn best when they make decisions regarding what materials or strategies should be used. When tutoring an adult learner, it is important that all activities and content be learner-centred.
Learning English with CBC
(CBC Edmonton and Alberta Employment and Immigration)
This site offers CBC Edmonton radio news and feature stories that can be used as tools for Albertans learning English. Each story has corresponding vocabulary and reading comprehension activities, as well as a complete transcript and answer key. These lessons are geared towards learners at CLB level 4.

Academic Studies English Series: Support Materials and Exercises
(New Brunswick Community College)
This is a series of support modules for instructors teaching low literacy to adult learners. Learners can work through these units in a classroom, with a tutor or independently. Answers are included. Modules available in this series include: Speaking and Listening; Writing Letters; Grammar – Parts of Speech; Grammar – Parts of the Sentence; Reading Comprehension and more.

Multi-Cultural Educational Services: Online Activities
(Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning, and Minnesota Literacy Council)
This site provides interactive activities for learners on topics like basic math, listening and phonics, nutrition, reading medicine labels and more. There is also a section dedicated to online and printable Basic Literacy Exercises on subjects like writing a cheque, using a timesheet, filling out a form and reading a map.

Easy Reading Career Planning Series
(Alberta Employment and Immigration)
This site provides a number of career planning resources for low literacy adults. Download and print resources or order copies at www.alis.alberta.ca/publications. Resources include:
- **Work and You Book 1: Make Some Job Choices** – a workbook that takes low literacy clients through a brief self-assessment, occupational clusters and create a short list of occupations;
- **Work and You Book 2: Decide on a Job** – helps low literacy clients research and evaluate the short list of jobs they created in Book 1;
- **Work and You: Help for Career Advisors** – includes objectives and strategies, discussion topics, supplemental activities and other resources to help career advisors support clients;
- **Easy Reading Job Profiles** – 24 easy-to-print job profiles that tell stories about someone who does each job, typical duties, hours of work, pay and educational requirements.

Skillswise
[Created by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)]
This site provides a variety of printable factsheets, worksheets, online quizzes and games to help users to improve their English and math skills. Learners can work on their grammar, spelling, writing, vocabulary and numbers skills, as well as read stories submitted by other learners. There is also a place for Tutors to find lesson plans, teaching inspiration and more.

TV 411
(Produced by the Adult Literacy Media Alliance)
This easy-to-navigate, interactive site supports hands-on learning for adults who want to strengthen their literacy skills. Subjects include reading, writing, vocabulary, math and learning. The site also provides lesson ideas for teachers, facilitators and tutors working with adult learners. Videos of the companion television series and print products are also available.

GCF Global Learning
(Goodwill Community Foundation, Inc.)
GCFLearnfree.org offers interactive courses, activities and games in subjects including everyday life, money basics, math, and email. There are also free training courses for software programs like Microsoft Office, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Courses can be completed online with the option of having content read aloud, or materials can be printed and completed in a classroom setting or independently by learners.
How To Kit – Literacy Games for Adults
(NWT Literacy Council)
This kit includes a variety of literacy games and supporting materials intended for adults in a classroom setting. It also provides suggestions on how these games can be adapted to French and Aboriginal languages. Games are designed for small or larger groups of learners, and include Bingo, Alphabet Scavenger Hunt, Crazy Word Chains, Mystery Boxes, Twenty Questions, and many more.

How To Kit – Facilitating A Workshop
(NWT Literacy Council)
Facilitating a workshop can be intimidating and requires a lot of advance work and preparation. This kit was developed to provide information, tips and suggestions to help plan and facilitate literacy workshops. Topics include building relationships in the community, finding a location and advertising, the role of the facilitator, icebreakers, group activities, and more.

READING
The resources below are designed specifically for instructors assisting learners with reading and document use skills.

Good Reads
(Grass Roots Press and ABC Life Literacy Canada)
This is a series of titles for adults with low literacy skills. The books are written by well-known Canadian authors and the themes appeal to a mature audience. Reading guides are available for each title. The series can be purchased online or picked up at a local library.

English Express
(Alberta Advanced Education and Technology)
EnglishExpress.ca features easy-to-print articles, personal stories, word games and other resources for teachers and tutors, as well as back issues of the English Express newspaper from 2006 to 2010. Learners can choose the reading level, and are able to listen and read along to the articles online.

Document Use Tip Sheet
(Human Resources and Skills Development Canada)
This is an easy-to-print tool that provides practical tips to help learners improve their Document Use skills. Learners can review the tips and practice their skills with the exercises provided.

Stories and Activities for English 101 and 120
(NWT Literacy Council)
This resource provides eight stories for low literacy adult learners as well as corresponding activities. The stories vary according to reading level so readers can choose the stories that best suit their needs. Activities can be completed in a classroom setting or independently by the learner.

Changing Lanes: English as a Second Language Reading Series
(Halifax Learning Centre)
Changing Lanes is a seven-book reading series for adult literacy learners. Each book deals with one or more life skills (Ex. Fatima Goes to the Bank, Farid Takes the Bus) and books are divided into two parts: reading and exercises. Reading and activities can be completed in a group or independently.

The Learning Edge
(Wellington County Learning Centre; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and the National Literacy Secretariat of the Government of Canada)
Adult learners are able to listen and read along to articles and stories. *The Learning Edge* also has learning activities with sound and video, and includes tests for math and reading. Subjects include health, safety, work, newspaper ads, household bills, and more.

**Internet Picture Dictionary**  
(Copyright by pdictionary.com)  
This site is a picture dictionary where users can search for words, or look them up by letter or category. Learners can also expand their vocabulary with the spelling activities and word games, including flashcards, fill-in-the-blanks and word scrambles. All of the games use pictures to help learners with their vocabulary.

**How To Kit – Readers Theatre**  
(NWT Literacy Council)  
*Readers Theatre* is a reading and learning tool that adult education instructors can use to help learners develop an interest in reading. *Readers Theatre* generally involves two or more readers reading aloud. Readers read stories from a prepared script and they can learn to adapt their own scripts from other stories.

**Vocabulary Is Fun**  
(Created by Jacob Richman)  
*Vocabulary is Fun* offers a variety of educational games like online word searches, crossword puzzles, and matching games. There are different levels of difficulty and users can choose the subject and the vocabulary list that will be used in the word game. Subjects include animals, food, geography, transportation and more.

**WRITING**

*The resources below are designed specifically for instructors assisting learners with writing skills.*

**Writing Den**  
(Created by ACT360 Media)  
This site provides lessons and activities to improve English reading, comprehension and writing skills. Activities are divided into three levels of difficulty: words, sentences and paragraphs. The site offers the Tip-O-Matic section where learners can look up grammar rules, helper words and other writing tips. Learners can also sign up for a word-of-the-day email to improve their vocabulary.

**Writing Tip Sheet**  
(Human Resources and Skills Development Canada)  
This is an easy-to-print tool that provides practical tips to help learners improve their Writing skills. Learners can review the tips and practice their skills with the exercises provided.

**NUMERACY**

*The resources below are designed specifically for instructors assisting learners with numeracy skills.*

**AAA Math**  
This site provides a range of lessons and activities on a variety of math topics, including basic math, graphs, money, measurement, fractions, percentages and much more. Users can choose their lessons and activities by topic and by level of difficulty.

**Money Math – Everyday Math Skills**  
(Authors Lisa Campbell and NWT Literacy Council)  
*Money Math* is a printable workbook that teaches basic math skills through topics like personal finances, saving money and consumer math. Users benefit from learning about topics that are present in the workplace, at home and in their everyday lives. Learners can work through the lessons and the worksheets
on their own or with others in a classroom setting. *Money Math* covers some of the other essential skills, including reading, numeracy, and document use.

## COMPUTER USE

*The resources below are designed specifically for instructors assisting learners with computer use skills.*

**The ESL Computer Book – The Internet: Using Microsoft Explorer**  
(Author Kathy Burnett)  
This workbook is a basic introduction to the Internet and was developed for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners to use in a classroom setting with an instructor or as a self-teaching guide. The first few pages of the workbook explain the basic skills that are needed to understand the Internet. After these pages, there is no order to the chapters, so learners can choose the topics that interest them the most. There are practice activities following each page of instruction.

**Tools for Today**  
(Saskatoon Public Library and other partners)  
*Tools for Today* is an interactive, instructional tool designed to provide beginner computer users with a basic understanding of computers, their applications, email, and the Internet. Learners begin with computer basics, including how to get started, information about the desktop, using the mouse, working with windows, and more. It can easily be downloaded from the website onto a computer.

## OTHER USEFUL LINKS

*For further information about literacy and essential skills resources, consult the following websites.*

**Alberta Learning Information Services (ALIS) Publications**  
(http://www.alis.alberta.ca/publications)  
ALIS provides access to a variety of literacy publications. To find appropriate publications, select “Low Literacy” in the Audience window.

**Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) Tools and Resources**  
(http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/tools_apps.shtml)  
OLES developed a series of free and easy-to-use tools for literacy and essential skills learning. Scroll down to the “Learning” section to find work sheets and other resources.

**NALD – Canada’s Literacy and Essential Skills Network Library Database**  
(http://library.nald.ca/)  
The NALD library has many resources for literacy learners like reading material, how-to-kits and tools for instructors. For example, search for “low literacy reading,” “grammar,” “how-to-kit,” etc. You can unselect “Research Materials” to limit the search to learning materials.

**The Alberta Library (TAL)**  
(www.thealbertalibrary.ab.ca)  
Local libraries across the province provide access to a variety of other useful print resources for literacy learning. Visit the TAL website for information about libraries in your area.