



Getting Started With Writing From the Beginning

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LESLLA - Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults

LESLLA is an *international* forum of researchers, practitioners and policy makers who share an interest in helping adult immigrants with little or no formal schooling develop literacy and second language skills.

LESLLA learners can be from any country of origin and immigrate to any country in the world.

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Beginning Students: Needs

- ▶ have difficulty reading and writing in their native language, since they may have had little or no formal schooling in their native country
- ▶ may not be able to read or write at all in their native or any other language
- ▶ may even speak a language that does not have a written form, such as Mosuo (Florez & Terrill, 2003)
- ▶ may have experienced trauma in their own country or in the transition (Adkins, Sample, & Birman, 1999)
- ▶ struggle with basic daily writing activities, such as filling out forms, signing documents, writing a note to a child's teacher



Beginning Students: Strengths

- ▶ Rich and complex social networks
- ▶ Life-skill problem solving
- ▶ Flexibility and creativity
- ▶ Advanced strategies for learning without literacy
- ▶ Possible oral proficiency well above being able to read and write
- ▶ May have a job



(Vinogradov, 2008)

Types of L1 Literacy of L2 Language Learners

L1 Literacy	Explanation
Nonliterate	Learners have had no access to literacy instruction but it is available in native country.
Preiterate	The learner's first language has no written form or is in the process of developing a written form (e.g., many American indigenous, African, Australian, and Pacific languages have no written form).
Semiliterate	Learners have limited access to literacy instruction.
Nonalphabet literate	Learners are literate in a language written in a nonalphabetic script (e.g., Mandarin Chinese).
Non-Roman alphabet literate	Learners are literate in a language written in a non-Roman alphabet (e.g. Arabic, Greek, Korean, Russian, and Thai). Direction of reading varies
Roman alphabet literate	Learners are literate in a language written in a Roman alphabet script (e.g., French, German, and Spanish). They read from left to right and recognize letter shapes and fonts.

Students need to be able to...

- ▶ hold a pencil
- ▶ use upper and lowercase letter conventions (e.g., Tom vs. tOm)
- ▶ use page conventions (i.e., left to right, top to bottom, front to back)
- ▶ use manipulatives OR shapes to spell words and write words and numbers
- ▶ sequence words in sentences related to relevant tasks



Beginning students also may find using a pencil difficult, because...

- ▶ They are not accustomed to copying words or letters.
- ▶ They may have trouble writing on unlined spaces without some sort of structure.
- ▶ They may have trouble writing on lines or, as shown in some textbooks or workbooks, within boxes and on lines under sentences.
- ▶ They may not know that they should make capital letters bigger than lower case letters.
- ▶ They may not know proper spacing between words and letters or proper punctuation.
- ▶ Words and phrases such as *sentence*, *question*, *capital letters*, and *punctuation* may be new concepts. (Schwarz, 2008)

Typical Instructional Strategies 1

- ▶ Anything to develop fine motor skills needed for writing, such as coloring
- ▶ Students form letters out of sandpaper, modelling clay, or string, or with the help of magnetic letters
- ▶ Tracing/Connect-the-dots
- ▶ Copying letters from the board
- ▶ Letter or word dictation (more advanced could have short sentences)

Typical Instructional Strategies 2

- Using wipe-clean white boards (hand held) to write words, short phrases
- Making a picture dictionary (commercial ones have cluttered pictures)
- Matching letters or words that go together; e.g., **first** and **name** (will see these on a form)
- Letter or word dictation
- Language Experience Approach (LEA)



English Language Proficiency Standards

- ▶ Released in November, 2016
- ▶ Written by a panel of national experts, not all in adult education, led by the American Institutes of Research and sponsored by OCTAE
- ▶ Includes correspondence to College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematical and Science Practices
- ▶ Adapted from the ELPA21 K-12 ELPs, used by 19 states “to help ELLs in K-12 settings to prepare for the language demands of standards-based instruction.” These are standards written by a west-coast consortium of states similar to WIDA.
- ▶ Strongly emphasize the academic language needed by ELLs to engage with and meet state-adopted content standards
- ▶ Address the four language skills -- speaking, listening, reading and writing -- across five levels, which are not aligned with NRS descriptors



ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR ADULT EDUCATION

With Correspondences to College and Career Readiness
Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy, and
Mathematical and Science Practices

October 2016

AIR

ELP Standard 5

An ELL can conduct research and evaluate and communicate findings to answer questions or solve problems.

Level 1: By the end of the English language proficiency level 1, an ELL can...with support,

- Carry out short, shared research projects
- Gather information from a few provided printed and digital sources
- ***Label collected information, experiences, or events***
- Recall information from experience or from a provided source



How to Meet ELP Standard 5

After going on a class field trip:

Hand out worksheets with photos of the places visited.

Students label the pictures with names of the places or events; e.g., bus stop, store, shopping. These names are provided on the board for the students to copy.

After talking about clothes:

Label pictures of certain clothes items. Or have clothes items available for students to label clothes tags and attach them to the clothes.



ELP Standard 10

An ELL can demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English to communicate level-appropriate speech and writing.

Level 1: By the end of English language proficiency level 1, an ELL can... with support,

- recognize and use a small number of frequently occurring nouns, noun phrases, verbs, conjunctions, and prepositions
- understand and respond to simple questions.



How to Meet ELP Standard 10

Sentence strips: Give pairs of students very short sentences (maybe 3-4 words) that have been cut up. They reassemble the sentences and then copy them down in their notebooks.

I LIKE: Give each student a worksheet with **I LIKE** written at the top. Then give them a sheet of paper with a list of many nouns and verbs, such as: tea, eating, walking, apples, etc. They transfer the nouns and actions that they like to their worksheet. They can then read these off to the rest of the class or to a partner.



In Summary...

There are many strategies that can be used to help beginning-level learners meet the new academic standards for ELLs, the ELPs.

It is a matter of adapting, ratcheting up or down, the activities to meet the learners where they are and help them move to the next skill or level.

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