

Writing Strategies for Low Literacy Learners

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Writing for a purpose:

Ask: why write? Bring in examples of below if possible.

- make lists, e.g., I'm going to the grocery store. What do I need?
- share a recipe--too many ingredients to remember, so write it down so you don't forget
- share something personal- because your story matters
- write a letter to someone back home; write a thank you note or a birthday card
- record a memory
- share your thinking with others, eg., post on facebook or publish an article
- keep a journal; write captions for a photo album

Practice handwriting:

- sometimes learners are embarrassed by handwriting, so practicing helps ameliorate this; use keyboard if possible to help bypass sense of feeling childish
- create reasons to write things that are not directly about instruction,
 - eg., make a habit of doing birthday cards (students can practice writing generic phrases and learn additional phrases)
 - maybe your program needs better signage: Men's Room, Women's Room. Exit signs. Signs to indicate where supplies are kept.
- be light about handwriting; it's not the main point here; we use keyboards a lot in any case; **do** eventually give attention to capitals and lower case.

Don't worry about spelling!

Who cares? Give tons of credit if you can just decipher it. Provide a separate sheet for common spelling words, but don't mark up a piece of writing with a lot of spelling corrections. That's not the point. The point is just writing! As part of other lessons, focus on spelling. Give gentle tests (offer lots of time to study; offer

a practice test first and then the “real” test), especially emphasizing the correct spelling of **common** words.

Structure classroom so there are lots of opportunities to write/read:

-Ask students: “ Can you come up to the board and write that?”

-Write name and date on everything.

-Have name cards in front of each student. Gradually add to the name card--how many children, where s/he works, where s/he is from, favorite color, favorite food etc.

-Put small talk in writing on pieces of paper around the table. Everyday go around the room. Each student holds a question in their hand: “How are you?” “How are your children?” “What did you do today?” “it is a beautiful day today.” “I like your new shirt!” “How was work?” Then answers are available on a different color piece of paper: I am fine thanks. How are you?” My children are good. Thank you.” Etc...

-Write down homework assignment---copy it from the board.

Build community!

-invite laughter and lightness and opportunities to connect-this is perhaps the single most important thing! It will build relationships of trust. People will take risks. People will show themselves more, and so they’ll be more willing to write in a meaningful way.