

HOW TO TEACH DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS FOR LOW PRINT-LITERACY LEARNERS

PROMINENT GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL LITERACY FOR LOW PRINT-LITERACY LEARNERS

How do low print-literacy learners differ from language learners of higher levels?

- These challenges are two-fold: **digital skills** and/or **hardware challenges**
 - Digital skills:
 - Learner knowledge and confidence in independently using virtual platforms to meaningfully participate in online learning
 - Hardware challenges:
 - Technological access to appropriate devices for online learning
- Learners with no gaps in literacy are more likely to have the capacity to read instructions on how to navigate the internet and virtual programming, but low print-literacy learners may need more **hands-on supports** to develop digital skillsets and digital literacy



HOW DIGITAL LITERACY TRANSLATES INTO EVERYDAY NEEDS

- Digital literacy is vital to living in Canada and **accessing day-to-day needs**, such as:
 - **Personal banking**, including: paying bills, purchasing transit tickets, monitoring utilities usages, buying or selling goods
 - Communicating with **schools**
 - Accessing general information to be an **informed citizen**
 - Participating in **civic engagement**
 - Applying for **government services**
 - Finding **employment**, accessing professional development **training**
- Language learning programs provide technical support for learners by:
 - Helping learners access **equipment/hardware and software** needed to meaningfully participate in online learning
 - Providing **accessible technology support** for learners
 - Providing learners **extra technology support** as needed (teaching assistants, peer support, tutorials, recordings, etc.)

Sources: Campana, M. (2021). Valuing equity first - digital exclusion, inclusion, and literacy. Cf. B. ESL for ALL Support Kit "Digital Literacy Podcast". ATESL Best Practices for Technology and Online Learning

INTEGRATING DIGITAL LITERACY LEARNING WITHIN LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Language training programs provide technical support for low print-literacy learners by:
 - Providing **extra technology support** as needed (teaching assistants, peer support, tutorials, recordings, etc.)
 - **Orienting learners** to platforms necessary to participate in language learning
 - Curating tools that **reduce cognitive load**, that are *free to access, engaging, and meet multiple learning outcomes*
- Class activities build transferrable digital literacy skills by:
 - Building **vocabulary** for digital literacy
 - Providing instructions given in **plain language** and **modelling examples** for learners
 - Hosting class activities that mirror and can be transferred into real world needs such as *emailing, accessing information, finding employment, applications for jobs and government programs*
 - Integrating digital literacy learning into **regular language learning, daily**

Adapted from: ATESL Best Practices for Technology and Online Learning

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10 TIPS TO INTEGRATE DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM

Adapted from: [CLB: ESL for ALL Support Kit "Digital Literacy Podcast"](#)

BE MINDFUL OF HIGH COGNITIVE LOADS WHEN ACQUIRING DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS

Consider initially separating digital literacy learning from language learning and plan that these skills may not be possible to build at the same time for some learners.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT YOUR LEARNERS CAN DO

For example, even though learners may own a smartphone, this does not guarantee that they have the digital literacy skills to meaningfully participate in language course learning.

TEACH TRANSFERRABLE DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS

Frame digital literacy within real world, everyday tasks that can be utilized outside of the classroom setting.

CONSIDER WHAT YOU WANT YOUR LEARNERS TO BE ABLE TO DO WITH TECHNOLOGY

Perform needs assessments to determine the unique assets of each learner.

NEW TECHNOLOGY CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY, ALLOW TIME TO TRIAL NEW RESOURCES AND APPROACHES

Be kind to oneself when learning new strategies. Instructors may be challenged to navigate new areas that they may not have expertise in, but should have adequate resources and strategies to troubleshoot as needed.

CONSIDER THAT NOT ALL LEARNERS SHARE EQUAL ACCESS TO DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Accessibility is key to meaningful participation within virtual learning. For example, learners need access to appropriate devices to participate in learning such as laptops and Chromebooks. Consider utilizing digital lending libraries or other strategies.

INTEGRATE LESSONS ON DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND SAFETY

Inform learners on safe internet practices including how to identify phishing scams and online etiquette.

MODEL SKILLS FOR LEARNERS

- Introduce new skills by doing a demonstration together with learners
- Find ways to integrate new digital skills in multiple ways throughout the language course

BUILD LEARNER CONFIDENCE THROUGH APPROPRIATELY LEVELLED DIGITAL TASKS

- Sharing reliable resources and methods to troubleshoot arising challenges
- Consider learners' current abilities when selecting resources and tasks

ONCE BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS ARE BUILT, CONSISTENTLY USE TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND DEVELOPING LITERACY

Digital literacy is a modern reality. Find methods to ensure the sustainability and applicability of digital skills developed. Avoid backsliding, encourage up-skilling, and promote continuous digital skills development.

TIPS FOR CREATING PAPER-BASED STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES FOR DIGITAL LITERACY LEARNING

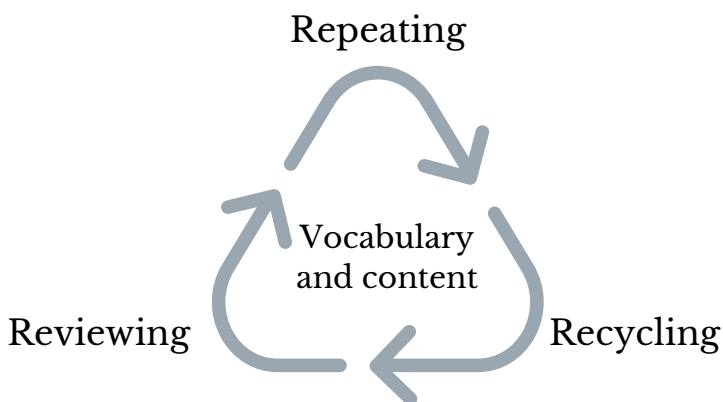
Design considerations:

- Utilizing **larger** font sizes
- Ensuring **contrast** with images and text
- Using **white space** around images and text
- Indicating page **navigation and controls** such as:
 - One or two clicks
 - Scroll up or down
 - Swipe left or right
 - **Avoid** using drag-and-drop

Reduce cognitive load by:

- Managing sensory stimulus
- Having **explicit** instructions
- **Chunking** information into units
- Connecting and integrating images with language
- Removing redundant information

Create simple and supported steps by:



For additional resources, please refer to:

- Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (2016) ESL for Adult Literacy Learners (ALL). Ottawa.
<https://www.language.ca/product/pdf-e-020-clb-esl-for-all/>

Template for a paper-based guide to increasing digital literacy

1.

IMAGE/GRAPHIC
related to the
described step

Instruction

- Plain language
- Concise text

Tips for writing instruction boxes:

- Offer learners **levelled resources** to assist with independent troubleshooting
- Ensure each step has a **clear objective**
- Ensure steps are **sequential** and have **clear linkages**
- Utilize plain language **definitions** where needed