

Basic Skills Awareness Training

Summary of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Core Curricula

As part of the Government's strategy for improving adult basic skills a set of national standards have been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) which summarise the skills and capabilities relating to literacy and numeracy that adults need in order to function and progress at work, and in the wider society.

Literacy covers abilities in:

- speaking and listening
- reading and comprehension
- writing and communicating

Numeracy covers abilities in:

- understanding and using mathematical information
- calculating and manipulating mathematical information
- interpreting results and communicating mathematical information

The national standards for adult literacy and numeracy are specified at three levels: Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2. Entry level is further divided into three stages (Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3) in order to provide detailed descriptions of the earliest stages of learning in each skill. The types of skills adults will be expected to achieve at each level are summarised in the tables below (see Figures 1 and 2). Entry Level standards are broadly equivalent to the attainment expected of seven year olds, Level 1 standards equate with the attainment of 11 year olds and Level 2 with GCSE attainment levels.

Figure 1: The National standards for literacy, with examples and school equivalents

National Standard	At this level, adults will be able, for example, to:	School level equivalent
Entry 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and obtain information from common signs and symbols 	Level 1 (age 5)
Entry 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use punctuation correctly, including capital letters, full stops and question marks 	Level 2 (age 7)
Entry 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organise writing in short paragraphs 	Level 3 (age 9)
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the main points and specific detail in texts 	Level 4 (age 11)
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and understand a range of texts of varying complexity accurately and independently 	GCSE A*-C (age 16)

Figure 2: The National standards for numeracy, with examples and school equivalents

National Standard	At this level, adults will be able, for example, to:	School level equivalent
Entry 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise and name common shapes such as rectangles, circles, cubes, etc. 	Level 1 (age 5)
Entry 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and understand information in simple diagrams and charts 	Level 2 (age 7)
Entry 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> add or subtract using three-digit numbers 	Level 3 (age 9)
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise and use fractions, decimals and percentages 	Level 4 (age 11)
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> find the mean, median and mode and use them as appropriate to compare two sets of data 	GCSE A*-C (age 16)

Source: *Skills For Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills* (DfES, 2001:

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/ABS_Strategy_Doc_Final.pdf)

Supporting adult learners

The Basic Skills Agency have identified a number of key principles that help to maximise learning, achievement and learner satisfaction for adults. These principles can be applied to formal learning contexts (such as adult education sessions on an accredited course) as well as the more informal learning experiences provided via museums, archives and libraries:

- Assess what the learner can do and build on previous knowledge
- Negotiate and follow the learner's priorities
- Incorporate the learner's own words, language, materials and personal context into the learning experience
- Develop the learner's skills through what motivates and interests them
- Keep expectations high while giving learners opportunities to experience success in their own terms
- Be clear about the purpose of any activity / learning experience, how it relates to the skills being developed and the needs of the individual learner
- Make everything explicit and check understanding frequently
- Remember that most learners will have a 'spiky' profile which crosses levels (E.g. a dyslexic learner with visual-motor processing difficulties may have reading skills at Level 2 but writing skills at Entry Level 2 as a result of handwriting and spelling difficulties).

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum

Each element of the adult literacy core curriculum comprises the following:

- a brief description about the standards for either speaking and listening, reading or writing expected at each level
- detailed statements about the additional skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for the achievement of the standards, arranged according to the following 3 dimensions for reading and writing:
 - (a) Text focus – dealing with the meaning of the text, the ability to read critically and flexibly and write in different styles and forms

- (b) Sentence focus – dealing with grammar and sentence structure
- (c) Word focus – looking at the individual words themselves, their structure, spelling and individual character
- an example of a relevant literacy task
- a list of sample activities that could be used to develop the skills or areas of knowledge in question
- guidance notes for teachers and educators on literacy development techniques

An overview of the progression between capabilities for literacy is summarised on pages 12-13 (*Source: Adult Literacy Core Curriculum, DfES, 2001*).

Adult Numeracy Core Curriculum

The adult numeracy core curriculum is broken down into the skills and knowledge of number, measures, shape and space, and handling data required to meet the national standards. Each element of the curriculum comprises:

- 4 descriptors relating to what adults should be able to read and understand, specify and describe, generate results about and present and explain at a particular level
- detailed statements about the additional skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for the achievement of the numeracy, arranged under the following 3 headings:
 - (a) Number – including whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages
 - (b) Measure, shape and space – including common measures of money, time temperature, distance, length, weight, capacity, perimeter, area and volume, and shape and position
 - (c) Handling data – including data and statistical measures, and probability
- an example of a relevant numeracy task
- a list of sample activities that could be used to develop the skills or areas of knowledge in question
- guidance notes for teachers and educators on techniques and approaches for developing numeracy

An overview of the progression between capabilities for numeracy is summarised on pages 12-13 (*Source: Adult Numeracy Core Curriculum, DfES, 2001*).

Further information:

The full texts of the adult literacy and numeracy core curricula can be downloaded from the Basic Skills Agency web site at <http://www.basic-skills.co.uk> or ordered (free of charge) c/o:

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