

Resources to support the pilot of functional skills

Teaching and learning functional English

Teaching and learning functional English

Contents

General introduction	5
Teaching and learning functional English	
Overview	19
1. Introduction	21
1.1 What is functional English?	21
1.2 The functional English vision	21
1.3 Teaching functional English	22
1.4 How to read the standards	23
1.5 Progression through the levels	25
2. Speaking and listening	27
2.1 Introduction	28
2.2 Starting points	30
2.3 Awareness of audience	33
2.4 Speaking	37
2.5 Discussions	42
2.6 Listening	49
2.7 Non-verbal communication	53
2.8 Presentations	57
3. Reading	65
3.1 Introduction	66
3.2 Choosing functional reading material	68
3.3 Improving reading skills	74
3.4 Applying reading skills	83
4. Writing	91
4.1 Introduction	92
4.2 Audience and purpose	96
4.3 Types of document	99
4.4 Checking written work	111
4.5 Improving writing skills	114
5. References and resources	123
Acronyms	132

General introduction

Preface

This resource has been prepared by the functional skills support programme for use in the 1000 centres that will be piloting functional skills from September 2007. These include schools, colleges, training providers, work-based learning, adult and community learning, and secure contexts. Functional skills will be piloted at all levels from Entry level to Level 2, and to learners aged from 14 upwards, including links with GCSE in the relevant subjects.

This resource is in four parts:

1. Managing delivery
2. Teaching and learning functional English
3. Teaching and learning functional mathematics
4. Teaching and learning functional Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The aim is to offer support that will enable the reader to move forward with the implementation of the pilot for functional skills. It is expected that most specialist teaching staff (English, mathematics, ICT) and leaders/managers in the pilot centres will have had the opportunity to attend the CPD sessions organised by the functional skills support programme in June and July 2007, with follow-up sessions in October 2007 and February 2008.

Clearly, different practitioners, coming from different backgrounds, have very different areas of familiarity, interest and concern in relation to functional skills. An important aim of this material is to encourage common levels of understanding, so that teachers and leaders/managers coming from school, college, training provider, prison education and so on can develop a shared understanding, vocabulary and approach to functional skills that, while fit for each setting, have a common core.

It is important to understand two key points.

- This pilot is genuinely developmental, ie it is not expected that the pilot centres will 'get it right first time'. Rather, supported by the functional skills support programme, by the awarding bodies, and by these and subsequent materials and resources, they will develop good practice and share experience during the three years of the pilot. This will inform the national roll-out of functional skills in 2010.
- These materials are about management, and about teaching and learning. It is not their role to give guidance on preparing learners for summative assessment, in whatever form or forms this will be piloted.

The functional skills support programme

Support for centres in the pilot will be available from the functional skills support programme, which is managed by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and by the Secondary National Strategy (SNS), and from the awarding bodies.

QIA has contracted the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) to develop a range of support materials. See www.LSNeducation.org.uk/functionalskills

SNS will deliver support for workforce development. Initially, this support will be focused on those centres taking part in the functional skills pilots from September 2007. See www.standards.dfes.gov.uk

Other sources of information and support

DfES 14-19 website at www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19 Go to 'Qualifications' and then 'Getting the basics right: Functional skills'.

The QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/qca_6062.aspx has information about the functional skills standards and the pilot.

The Key Skills Support Programme has a continuing brief to provide centres with information about functional skills developments. See www.keyskillssupport.net

Many of the awarding bodies' websites have sections dedicated to functional skills.

Introduction

What are functional skills?

The DfES defined functional skills as:

‘the core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills, and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently effectively and independently in life and at work.’

14-19 Education and Skills: Implementation Plan (DfES, 2005a)

The origins of functional skills lie in the Tomlinson report on 14-19 reform (DfES, 2004) and in the government’s response in the White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005b). Tomlinson argued that it was possible for young people to achieve grade C and above in GCSE English and mathematics without having a satisfactory standard of literacy or numeracy. In the White Paper, the government promised a ‘sharper focus on the basics’ and to ensure that learners have a sound grounding in ‘functional skills’.

Functional skills qualifications are therefore being developed in English, mathematics and ICT. The intention is that, in due course, functional skills qualifications will provide a single ladder of achievement from Entry to Level 3 that is available to all learners aged 14+ in all sectors.

A problem solving approach

A key characteristic of functional skills is that they are based on a problem solving approach. Learners who are ‘functionally skilled’ are able to use and apply the English/mathematics/ICT they know to tackle problems that arise in their life and work.

Clearly, teachers cannot know what English/mathematics/ICT their learners will use as they move through their lives. This means that we cannot identify a curriculum core that every learner will use. Instead, and much more powerfully, learners should be taught to use and apply the English/mathematics/ICT that they know, and to ask for help with the areas with which they are less confident.

It is essential to think of learners becoming functional in their English/mathematics/ICT, rather than thinking that there is a vital body of knowledge, known as functional English/mathematics/ICT.

The implications for teaching and learning are significant and will need to be introduced gradually and thoughtfully, but they do not threaten aspects of existing good practice. Helping learners to become more ‘functional’ is supported by existing practices including:

- learning through application
- learner-centred approaches

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

- active learning and a problem-centred approach
- partnership learning
- assessment for learning.

Why are functional skills needed?

‘Employers and educators have identified these skills as vital for enabling young people and adults to have the practical skills to succeed in further learning, employment and life in modern society.’

‘Functional’ skills – Your questions answered (DfES, 2006a)

The introduction of functional skills, both into the 14-19 curriculum and for adult learners, is being driven by a number of social, educational and economic concerns. For example:

- Only 45% of school leavers achieve five A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics.

The ‘need to give every child a good command of English and maths’ is seen ‘as the way to overcome economic and social disadvantage and make equality of opportunity a reality’ for every child.

Higher Standards, Better Schools for All (DfES, 2005c)

- Without functional skills, pupils would find it ‘almost impossible to succeed’ because of the difficulty they would have in accessing the secondary curriculum.

2020 Vision (the ‘Gilbert Review’) (DfES, 2006b)

- Basic skill levels of those leaving school and seeking employment are inadequate.

Working on the Three Rs (CBI, 2006)

- Functional skills are central to achieving the outcomes of ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES, 2003), particularly:
 - enjoy and achieve
 - make a positive contribution
 - achieve economic well-being.

Functional skills for employability – the skills agenda

For the UK to remain economically competitive, the knowledge and skills base of the population must increase. Low post-16 participation rates mean that learners are not staying in learning to achieve the Level 2 (GCSE A*-C) benchmark that will lead them into employability.

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

A series of government publications and policies, particularly in the last five years, has emphasised the importance of these skills for employability and set what has become known as ‘the skills agenda’. The ‘Leitch Report’ (2006) said:

‘In the 21st century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice.’

Leitch identified the following skills as ‘applicable in most jobs’:

- literacy
- numeracy
- team working
- communication

and set targets to close the ‘skills gap’ by 2020, including:

- 95% of adults to achieve functional literacy and numeracy (three times the current projected rate of improvement – 7.4 million adult attainments)
- more than 90% of adults to be qualified at least to Level 2 – 5.7 million adult attainments
- 4 million adult Level 3 attainments
- half a million apprenticeships a year
- 40% of adults to be qualified to Level 4 and above.

Leitch was very clear that, while the focus of his report was on the skills of adults aged between 19 and 65, these targets will not be achieved unless they are underpinned by 14-19 education and training:

‘... the Review also recognises how vital effective education for young people is to the new ambition. School standards have improved over the past decade, with more young people than ever achieving five good GCSEs. And yet, more than one in six young people leave school unable to read, write and add up properly. The proportion of young people staying in education past 16 is below the OECD average. The Review emphasises how critical reforms to GCSEs are to improve functional literacy and numeracy. The new 14-19 Diplomas must succeed.’

The development of functional skills in schools and colleges will make a major contribution to meeting these targets.

World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England was published in July 2007. It presents the Government’s response to the Leitch Review.

The same message comes from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI):

‘Weak functional skills are associated with higher unemployment, lower earnings, poorer chances of career progression and social exclusion... The time has come to ensure that school-leavers in future have the functional

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

skills they need for work and daily life. In short, British business sees concerted action on functional skills as a key priority.'

Working on the Three Rs (CBI, 2006)

This is not simply a matter of young people not being 'good at maths' or 'not being able to spell and punctuate'. While some may have these weaknesses, the real problem is that even those who can demonstrate the knowledge and understanding required by GCSE do not know how to use and apply their knowledge in practical work-based contexts; this is a problem of skills rather than of knowledge. As explained above, functional skills are not only about knowledge – they are about the use and application of English, mathematics and ICT in real contexts.

Functional skills in higher education

English, mathematics and ICT skills, and the ability to apply them in contexts, are critical to successful progression in education and training post-19. In recent years, many higher education institutions (HEIs) have highlighted the lack of these skills among school leavers. They have shown how weaknesses in these skills have a negative impact on retention and achievement in degree level courses. As a result, many HEIs have to provide remedial courses in these subjects, even to undergraduates who have good grades at GCSE. As with young people entering employment, this is not simply a matter of undergraduates being weak in English, maths and/or ICT. The problem is that even those who have achieved good grades at GCSE do not know how to use and apply their knowledge in practical contexts, whether these are in the humanities, the sciences, engineering, business, or the plethora of vocational degrees that are now available. Functional skills are designed to develop these applied skills.

Functional skills in everyday life

Official and unofficial reports dating back to the 19th century have identified poor standards of literacy and numeracy as a problem affecting not only the employability of individuals and the impact on the economy, but also the quality of people's lives in the broadest sense. Recent research from the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC), for example, has confirmed that people with poor levels of literacy and numeracy have poorer physical and mental health, live in lower standard accommodation, have higher rates of family breakdown, are more politically apathetic, are more likely to have been in trouble with the police, and have lower self-esteem. In recent years, the ability to cope with ICT, even at a very basic level, has become necessary for people to operate effectively in everyday life.

Functional skills are therefore:

- central to the success of the reforms in 14-19 education and training and to the 'skills agenda'
- crucial for the personal development of all learners aged 14 and above
- needed for degree level study

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

- a platform for the development of employability skills
- fundamental to tackling the skills gap in England.

How are functional skills being developed?

The standards

QCA has developed draft standards for functional English, mathematics and ICT at Entry levels 1, 2 and 3, Level 1 and Level 2 (QCA June 2007). Figure 1 shows how these levels relate to the National Qualifications Framework.

Figure 1

Functional skills levels	National Qualifications Framework levels	Examples of qualifications at each level
Entry 1	Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adult Literacy and Numeracy certificates
Entry 2		
Entry 3		
Level 1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GCSEs grades D-G ▪ Level 1 Key Skills ▪ Level 1 Certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy ▪ Level 1 NVQ
Level 2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GCSEs grades A*-C ▪ Level 2 Key Skills ▪ Level 2 Certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy ▪ Level 2 NVQ ▪ BTEC First
Level 3 (NB standards not yet drafted)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AS and A levels ▪ Level 3 Key Skills ▪ Level 3 NVQ ▪ BTEC National

It is important to recognise that the 'levelness' of a functional skill is determined by a combination of factors:

- the complexity of the situation or problem the learner is tackling
- the familiarity to the learner of the situation or problem
- the technical demand of the skill required
- the independence of the learner in identifying and selecting the skills they will need, and in tackling the situation or problem.

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

A learner who is 'functional' in mathematics, English and/or ICT is able to consider a problem or task, identify the functional mathematics, English and/or ICT skills that will help them to tackle it, select from the range of skills in which they are competent (or know what help they need and who to ask), and apply them appropriately. This interplay of the four factors means, for example, that tackling a complex problem in a situation with which a learner is unfamiliar but that requires relatively undemanding English/mathematics/ICT skills may involve a higher level of 'functionality' than a relatively straightforward task in a familiar context that requires more advanced 'subject' skills. It is the combination of the four factors that confirms the functional skill level.

Following extensive consultation in 2005/06, small-scale trials of the draft standards were carried out in 2006/07. The resulting revised standards are being piloted by the awarding bodies from autumn 2007.

The focus of the draft standards is on:

- the application of transferable, practical skills underpinned by knowledge and understanding
- enhancing current GCSE provision
- offering a single ladder of achievement and progression with each level incorporating and building on the level/s below.

The draft standards:

- set out the expected knowledge, understanding and skills as well as their scope and level of demand
- are not detailed curricula or schemes of work
- do not set out models of assessment.

Details of how to 'read' the standards in each functional skill subject are included in the appropriate part of this publication.

Standards are, of course, only the first stage in developing qualifications. When they are finalised, QCA works with the awarding bodies to develop the assessment methods and the qualifications.

Assessment

The assessment regime for functional skills will influence:

- models of delivery
- approaches to teaching and learning
- learner motivation and engagement
- continuing professional development (CPD).

The assessment methods for functional skills qualifications must be fit for purpose across a wide range of learners in a wide range of contexts. It may be that no one method will be appropriate to all settings.

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

During the pilot, 12 awarding bodies will pilot a range of models of assessment. QCA has produced three documents, one for each functional skills subject, entitled 'Assessment arrangements and principles for pilot'. These documents define the parameters within which the awarding bodies will develop assessment models and materials for functional skills qualifications during the pilot. These models and materials will be accredited by QCA. Many of the principles are common to all three functional skills, including:

- the assessment can be entirely task-based, or a combination of tasks with test-style items
- the assessment should not be entirely test-based
- assessment items may be externally set by an awarding body or requirements may be externally set and provide for internally contextualised task-based assessments
- assessment is of the candidate's own ability to solve a problem or reach an outcome by independent application of skills.

For details of assessment, you should contact your awarding body.

The pilot

What has been learned from the trials of the standards and the approaches to assessment will inform the certificated pilots that run for three years from September 2007 (ie, candidates in these pilots can be awarded a functional skills certificate). These will involve approximately 1000 centres, most of whom will be schools but also including colleges, training providers, work-based provision, adult and community settings and secure settings.

From 2008, functional skills will be piloted within the first phase of Diplomas. Some 800 of the pilot centres are also piloting the Diploma (having passed through the 'Gateway'). They will therefore pilot all three functional skills. The other centres have been identified by QCA and the awarding bodies and may pilot one, two or all three functional skills.

Timelines

Start date	
September 2007	Three-year pilot (approximately 1000 centres) of functional English, mathematics and ICT in a range of contexts, including stand-alone.
September 2008	All three functional skills trialled within the first tranche of Diplomas (construction and the built environment, creative and media, engineering, society health and development, IT).
September 2010	Functional English, mathematics and ICT available nationally.

Where do functional skills fit in the 14-19 reform programme?

Functional skills are at the core of the 14-19 reform programme.

The key features of the reform programme are:

- a strengthened core – functional skills
- the Foundation Learning Tier
- revised GCSEs (from 2010)
- revised AS and A levels (from 2008)
- new Diplomas (from 2008)
- age 16 no longer a fixed point
- a new 'extended project' qualification at Level 3
- personalisation of learning.

'... passing these functional skills qualifications will be a requirement for achieving a C or better in GCSE English, maths or ICT. Young people will therefore have to master the functional skills in order to achieve a... Diploma or an apprenticeship.'

White Paper 14-19 Education and Skills (DfES, 2005)

In effect, therefore, achievement of functional skills will be a requirement for all 14-19 learners.

Key Stage 3

Level 1 functional skills will be embedded in the programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT at Key Stage 3.

Clearly, success at 14-19, and hence the success of the reforms as a whole, depends on establishing firm foundations at Key Stage 3. Hence, the emphasis on functional skills starts with reform of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and programmes of study.

QCA is currently reviewing what pupils learn at Key Stage 3 by revising the national curriculum programmes of study in order to provide:

- greater flexibility
- improved coherence
- increased personalisation.

One of the aims of the revised curriculum is to develop successful learners who possess 'the essential learning skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology'.

'Individuals at any age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work.’

www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview/

Key Stage 4

Level 2 functional skills will be embedded in the programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT at Key Stage 4.

The functional skills standards are being incorporated into the revised GCSE criteria for English, mathematics and ICT.

While delivery of the underpinning knowledge and understanding is likely to remain the responsibility of specialist GCSE teachers, functional skills will only become transferable when they are embedded across the curriculum. All staff will need to raise their awareness of the relevance of these skills and support learners in applying them in their subject areas.

Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) includes outcomes that require schools and other providers to focus on employability. These skills are developed at Key Stage 4 through work-related learning and enterprise education. Functional English, mathematics and ICT will provide learners with a platform on which to develop these wider employability skills.

The functional skills qualifications will therefore be:

- available as **free-standing qualifications** for learners aged 14 and over
- linked to the revised GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT that will be available nationally from 2010. To achieve a grade C or above, candidates will have to achieve the relevant functional skill at Level 2. During the pilot, candidates who achieve the GCSE standard but do not reach the required level in the functional skill will still receive the GCSE award
- a mandatory component of the new **Diplomas**. The Diplomas are a key area of the reforms set out in *14-19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005b). They are employer-led qualifications, designed to offer young people a motivating and relevant learning experience through a high quality programme that combines general education with applied practical learning.

They are intended for young people of all abilities and backgrounds and will offer clear routes for progression, whether to further or higher education or to skilled employment. At each stage of their learning, learners will be able to move from the traditional routes of GCSE/A level and vocational programmes to the Diploma, or vice versa, as well as across Diploma lines.

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

The Diplomas will extend learners' employability skills through a range of assessed learning and development activities that include:

- a focus on a particular economic sector
- a mandatory functional skills component
- personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS)
- work experience.

The qualifications are being developed jointly by the DCSF, QCA and the Skills for Business Network. Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs), who represent employers, further and higher education, schools and awarding bodies, are responsible for developing the content.

The Diplomas are being developed in 14 lines of learning which will be introduced in three phases between September 2008 and September 2010.

'Generic learning' is a mandatory component of all the Diplomas and includes:

- functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT
- personal, learning and thinking skills (these link closely to the key skills of Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance, and Problem Solving. It is expected that these key skills qualifications will continue to be available)
- work experience
- a project (extended at Level 3).

Achievement of all three functional skills at the appropriate level is therefore a requirement for gaining a Diploma:

Diploma level	Functional skills level
Foundation	Level 1
Higher and Advanced	Level 2

The Diplomas will be delivered by collaborative local partnerships which will involve a consortium of providers (including schools and colleges). To ensure high quality provision, these partnerships have been required to pass through a 'Gateway' process to confirm their readiness to deliver the Diploma from 2008.

The full specifications for the first five Diplomas will be available to centres by September 2007.

Foundation Learning Tier

The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) is the umbrella term for all provision below Level 2 that is taken by learners over the age of 14 (ie it includes adult

Teaching and learning functional English: General introduction

learners). It therefore encompasses what is currently categorised as pre-Entry, Entry level (split into Entry levels 1, 2 and 3) and Level 1.

Phased implementation of the FLT began in August 2007, with an increasing number of providers due to introduce learning programmes until a full complement is reached in 2010.

Learning programmes in FLT will draw on three curriculum areas: personal and social development, vocational/subject-based learning, and key and basic skills. The functional skills, once developed, will replace the key and basic skills. For details about the Foundation Learning Tier, see www.qca.org.uk/ft.

Apprenticeships

Although final decisions have not yet been made about the role of functional skills in apprenticeships, the expectation is that they will replace key skills Communication, Application of Number and ICT at Levels 1 and 2. Level 3 key skills and the wider key skills are likely to remain in frameworks, or could be introduced.

It is anticipated that key skills and Skills for Life will continue to be available for registration until 2010.

References

CBI (2006) *Working on the Three Rs*. London: Confederation of British Industry

DfES (2003) Green Paper: *Every Child Matters*. London: DfES

DfES (2004) *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform: Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform*. London: DfES (The Tomlinson Report)

DfES (2005a) *14-19 Education and Skills: Implementation Plan*. London: DfES

DfES (2005b) White Paper: *14-19 Education and Skills*. London: HMSO

DfES (2005c) White Paper: *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*. London: DfES

DfES (2006a) *'Functional' skills – Your questions answered*. London: DfES

DfES (2006b) *2020 Vision: Report of the teaching and learning in 2020 Review Group*. London: DfES

DIUS (2007) *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*. London: DIUS

Leitch, S. (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills: final report*. London: The Stationery Office

QCA (2007) *Functional skills draft standards*. www.qca.org.uk/qca_6066.aspx

Teaching and learning functional English

Overview

'Teaching and learning functional English' is intended to support teachers as they prepare courses that lead to qualifications in functional English, either free-standing or in the context of other qualifications. There are five sections.

The first section, the Introduction, sets out what functional English is, what is expected to change as a result of the Government's vision for functional English, and how teachers should use the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) document: *Functional skills standards: English*.

The following three sections focus on the three components of functional English: Speaking and listening, Reading, and Writing. Each section gives:

- an introduction to what being functional in the component means
- guidance on interpreting the levels of this component of functional English
- guidance on how teachers can approach this aspect of functional English in ways that learners will find realistic and engaging
- examples of a range of activities that can be adapted for use both by specialist English teachers and by non-specialists teaching other subjects or vocational areas.

The final section, 'References and resources', gives a wide range of materials that you may find useful.

Teaching and learning functional English: Overview

1. Introduction

Contents

- 1.1 What is functional English?
- 1.2 The functional English vision
- 1.3 Teaching functional English
- 1.4 How to read the standards
- 1.5 Progression through the levels

1.1 What is functional English?

The DfES's generic definition of functional skills noted that functional skills will:

‘provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Individuals of whatever age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work.’

The vision described is of learners:

- developing the practical applied skills needed for success in work, learning and life
- tackling the skills gap, improving productivity, enterprise and competitiveness
- becoming more confident in their studies in further and higher education
- becoming more confident in interaction with people in their lives.

Functional English will contribute to this agenda. Learners who are functional in English are able to communicate effectively in a wide range of meaningful contexts – in life, work, learning and their communities.

1.2 The functional English vision

The introduction to *Functional skills standards: English* states that:

‘The term *functional* should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, in their workplace and in educational settings. It requires learners to be able to communicate in ways that make them effective and involved as citizens, operate

Teaching and learning functional English: 1. Introduction

confidently and convey their ideas and opinions clearly in a wide range of contexts.

The aim of the English standards is to encourage learners to demonstrate their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills in a range of contexts and for various purposes. They are essentially concerned with developing and recognising the ability of learners to apply and transfer skills in ways that are appropriate to their situation.'

There are examples of what being functional in English may involve in a recent Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report (*Working on the three Rs*, August 2006). This states that employers are looking for people who can:

- articulate clearly
- take and pass on messages
- deal with customers effectively
- read, understand and follow a wide range of documents
- write fluently and accurately, using accepted business conventions of format, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

1.3 Teaching functional English

As a teacher, you cannot know all the specific tasks that your learners will be faced with in their lives that will require them to use their English skills. However, you can help them to apply their English skills to maximum effect. So, helping learners to become functional in English means helping them to:

- choose appropriate communication methods
- ensure their communication methods are fit for purpose
- communicate in ways that meet the needs of the audience and situation
- apply English skills in a range of meaningful contexts
- become increasingly independent in their learning.

It is essential to think of learners becoming functional in their English, rather than thinking there is a vital body of knowledge known as functional English.

This is likely to require a different approach to teaching and learning which focuses on applied learning, using wherever possible a subject or vocational focus. This has important implications both within English lessons and across the curriculum.

- Within their specialist English lessons, learners will need opportunities to apply their skills to a range of real and realistic topics, relevant to life and work. The topics should be plainly relevant to learners, appealing to them by being motivating, interesting and realistic. English teaching should reveal how English is used in life, enabling learners to gain experience of the breadth of applications of the subject.

Teaching and learning functional English: 1. Introduction

- In their wider programmes, learners will need appropriate support as they apply the skills of functional English in their subject or vocational area. On a GCSE programme, this might involve practising making a presentation or writing a report in another subject. On a work-based or work-related programme, this might include taking part in real or realistic team meetings, or researching a range of suppliers.

This calls for collaborative working. In particular:

- specialists and non-specialists will need to work together at the planning stage so that they are aware when each other will be tackling work relevant to functional English
- specialists may need to brief and support non-specialists so that they can in turn support learners as they practise and apply their English skills.

There should also be opportunities to link functional English with other functional skills (mathematics and ICT) and with other parts of the curriculum such as citizenship, enterprise or work-related learning.

The implications for teaching and learning the features of functional English described above are significant, and will need to be introduced gradually and thoughtfully but they do not threaten aspects of existing good practice. This resource sets out some of the ways in which making adjustments to help learners become more functional in English is supported by existing practices including:

- learning through application
- learner-centred approaches
- active learning
- partnership learning
- assessment for learning.

In doing this you will be building on the best of key skills, Skills for Life and GCSE teaching. This means that you may encounter approaches in this material that you have met before. We have written the material so that you can choose those parts that are most relevant to you.

1.4 How to read the standards

The standards for functional English are set out in a single document, published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) that covers the levels from Entry 1 to Level 2. After a brief introduction, the document sets out the standards in two sections. The document begins with a short introduction and statement of the purpose of the standards. The main body of the document then sets out the three components:

- Speaking and listening
- Reading
- Writing

Teaching and learning functional English: 1. Introduction

At the beginning of each of these components, there is a short explanatory note. It is well worth reading these introductory sections to gain a clear vision of the progression across the levels in general terms, before going on to look at the specifics of the standards.

The standards themselves are laid out in grid form with:

- the level
- the skill standard – this is the crucial statement and should be the overall focus of teaching and learning
- the coverage and range – these indicate the technical demand of the English skills and techniques that are likely to be used by learners performing at that level. Note that, in interpreting the coverage/range statements, learners at a specific level should be able to do everything expected by the lower levels as well.

A footnote states how the content corresponds to National Curriculum English, Adult Literacy Standards and Communication key skill.

As an example, here is the Level 2 speaking and listening component from the standards:

Level 2 (Speaking and listening)		
Level	Skill standard	Coverage and range
Level 2*	Make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to complex information and give a relevant, cogent response in appropriate language • present information and ideas clearly and persuasively to others • adapt contributions in discussions to suit audience, purpose and situation • make significant contributions to discussions, taking a range of roles and helping to move discussion forward to reach decisions <p>in a wide range of contexts, including those that involve others who are unfamiliar</p>
* The content corresponds to National Curriculum English level 6; Adult Literacy Standards and Communication key skill, level 2		

You can follow progression through from Entry levels to Level 2 in any one component (eg reading) or alternatively, follow through the requirements for a particular level across all three components.

Teaching and learning functional English: 1. Introduction

Note that the standards do not say how functional English will be assessed, nor do they give examples of how it should be developed or taught. The standards are designed to be context- and assessment-free.

1.5 Progression through the levels

Functional English standards have been issued for the first three levels of the National Qualifications Framework – Entry level, Level 1 and Level 2. As usual, Entry level is subdivided into Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 to reflect the importance of small incremental steps in learning for learners at these levels.

For ease of reference, Entry 1 is comparable in demand with National Curriculum level 1, Entry 2 with National Curriculum level 2 and Entry 3 with National Curriculum level 3. Level 1 is comparable with GCSE grades D-G and Level 2 is comparable with GCSE grades A*-C.

The level of functional English – as with the other functional skills – is determined by a combination of:

- the complexity of the situation
- the familiarity to the learner of the situation
- the technical demand of the skill required
- the independence of the learner in identifying and selecting the skills they will need, and in tackling the situation.

So, for example, the skill standard for speaking and listening at Entry 1 asks for ‘simple discussions/exchanges’ (complexity) and ‘familiar topics’ (familiarity). The skill standard in full is:

Participate in and understand the main points of simple discussions/exchanges about familiar topics with another person in a familiar situation.

By contrast, the skill standard for speaking and listening at Level 2 asks for ‘a range of contributions to discussions’ (complexity) and ‘a wide range of contexts’ (familiarity). The skill standard in full is:

Make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts.

It is of course important to bear in mind that progression is not linear but happens at different rates in different areas.

Within this resource, each section will examine what is required for each component at each level and help to show detailed progression between levels.

Teaching and learning functional English: 1. Introduction

2. Speaking and listening

Contents

2.1 Introduction

- Speaking and listening in functional English
- Progression through the levels
- Using this section

2.2 Starting points

2.3 Awareness of audience

2.4 Speaking

- Practising speaking one-to-one
- Asking questions

2.5 Discussions

- Group size, composition and layout
- Productive group talk behaviour
- Moving discussion on
- Persuasive speech

2.6 Listening

- Active listening
- Taking oral messages

2.7 Non-verbal communication

- Vocal signals
- Body language
- Personal presentation
- Assertiveness

2.8 Presentations

- Planning a presentation

2.1 Introduction

Speaking and listening in functional English

Speaking and listening is a vital tool for learning and provides a solid foundation for developing interpersonal skills. It is fundamental to all curriculum areas and contexts and to every aspect of study, work and life. People with good oral communication skills:

- have more productive relationships with other people
- are able to obtain the information they need from organisations and individuals they have to deal with
- can explain things clearly and make a case for themselves
- can relate well to peers and colleagues
- are more successful in their careers
- have a reduced risk of experiencing conflict and aggression from others.

Oral communication is one of the most highly valued skills by employers. The National Employers Skills Survey from LSC showed that the key areas in which employees were seen as lacking all require good communication skills:

- communication (61%)
- customer handling (55%)
- team working (52%)
- problem solving (47%).

Source: *National Employers Skills Survey 2003: Key findings* (LSC, 2004)

Teaching functional speaking and listening

Teaching of speaking and listening has been described as the 'Cinderella' of English. Although it is one of the three attainment targets for the National Curriculum, Ofsted reports that:

'Too little attention has been given to teaching the full National Curriculum programme of study for speaking and listening and the range of contexts provided for speaking and listening remains too limited.'

It also states:

'It is rare to find that pupils have targets for speaking and listening, although there are many for whom this is the main obstacle to achievement.'

English 2000-2005: A review of inspection evidence (Ofsted, 2005)

Speaking and listening is also a component of the adult literacy standards and the Communication key skill and, again, evidence suggests that teaching content is often limited to presentations and formal discussion.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

All this suggests the need for more explicit teaching of speaking and listening skills and this section contains a range of practical suggestions for doing so. These activities can be useful both within English and across the wider curriculum.

Progression through the levels

In the functional English standards for speaking and listening, the people/ audiences with whom learners engage, the complexity of topics and the range of contexts are the main indicators of progression through the levels. The following table shows the skills standards for speaking and listening at each level.

Entry 1	Participate in and understand the main points of simple discussions/exchanges about familiar topics with another person in a familiar situation
Entry 2	Participate in discussions/exchanges about familiar topics, making active contributions with one or more people in familiar situations
Entry 3	Respond appropriately to others and make more extended contributions in familiar formal and informal discussions/exchanges
Level 1	Take full part in formal and informal discussions/exchanges
Level 2	Make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts

As is clear from the table above, all levels involve:

- listening to and understanding the main points in discussions and exchanges
- responding appropriately
- speaking so that others can hear and understand
- expressing statements, opinions or information clearly.

However, by Level 2 it is also expected that learners 'make effective presentations'.

Using this section

The resource for teaching speaking and listening is present everywhere – in everyday speech. The approach in this section focuses on explicit teaching about spoken language, using learners' and others' own talk as the basis for reflection and analysis:

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

- **Experience** – learners actively participate in an activity that involves them in an aspect of speaking and/or listening using real and simulated situations
- **Reflection** – learners reflect on the experience and there is a clear and explicit focus on specific aspects of speaking and/or listening
- **Learning** – as a result of the experience and the reflection, learners have increased self-awareness and can plan how they might improve their speaking and/or listening skills.

It is not easy to divide speaking and listening skills into discrete categories because we use a combination of skills when we talk and listen. However, teaching does need to target specific skills and give learners opportunities to develop and practise them.

Many of the teaching strategies for speaking and listening are appropriate for different levels of learner. What will change at each level are learners' responses and the complexity of the situation and exchanges they are engaged with.

The themes in this section have been selected to cover the range of skills involved. They are:

- **Starting points** – raising learners' awareness of the skills of speaking and listening, recognising personal skills and setting targets
- **Awareness of audience** – learners thinking about how they come across to other people and considering the listener's needs
- **Speaking and Discussion** – successfully dealing with one-to-one and group discussions and exchanges
- **Listening** – from following simple instructions to active and reflective listening
- **Non-verbal communication** – the powerful messages this adds to all oral communication
- **Presentations** – planning and giving a presentation.

2.2 Starting points

All learners will have an established spoken language and unique strengths and weaknesses. They are unlikely to be explicitly aware of these or the specific skills of effective oral communication. This makes it difficult for them to set targets for improvement.

In addition, most oral communication is likely to involve a range of skills and behaviours. A single exchange could, for example, involve active listening, giving information, speaking clearly, showing empathy, asking questions, using persuasive language... and probably more.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Self-assessment can offer an effective way to identify learners' existing abilities, and below and on page 32 are two strategies for doing this. Self-awareness is a major factor in effective oral communication and the strategies are designed to promote greater awareness, as well as to identify strengths and targets for improvement.

What do good speakers and listeners do?

This activity helps learners to recognise what is involved in speaking and listening and to start to assess their own abilities. It can be completed in pairs, small groups or as a whole group discussion.

- Ask learners to come up with two lists – one of what someone who is good at speaking does, and one of what a good listener does. You could ask them to think of someone they consider to be a 'good listener' and then to explain why.
- Take feedback from the group(s) and record these on a flipchart or board in two columns.
- Use whole group discussion to arrive at agreement on a final list.
- Ask each learner to think about how far they possess the skills or attributes on the list.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Card sort

This activity includes a set of statements that learners can use to identify their strengths and to set targets for future development. By varying the statements, it can be used by all levels of learner.

The exercise will also raise awareness of the range of skills involved in speaking and listening, contribute to assessment for learning, and provide a basis for reflection on progress.

Create sets of between 16 and 24 cards, one set for each learner, with statements that are appropriate to their level and context and relevant to the speaking and listening standards. Examples:

- 'I can follow verbal instructions'
- 'I feel confident talking to a new person'
- 'I know when it is right to smile in a conversation'
- 'I speak clearly'
- 'I choose words that my listener will understand'
- 'I can explain ideas clearly'
- 'I pay attention when people talk to me'
- 'I let other people have their say in a discussion'
- 'I think about what I'm going to say'
- 'I know how to disagree politely'
- 'I can explain things to other people'

Explain to the group that speaking and listening involves a whole range of skills that we often take for granted.

Ask learners to write three headings on a sheet of paper – 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Hardly ever'. Give each learner a set of the cards.

Ask the learner(s) to read each card and ask themselves '*Is this statement true for me always, sometimes or hardly ever?*' They then put the card under the relevant heading. Encourage learners to think carefully before making a judgement.

Ask learners to use the results as a basis for setting targets.

2.3 Awareness of audience

Central to becoming functional in speaking and listening is having a good awareness of our audience.

- At Entry 1 learners are required to be involved only in exchanges and discussions with one other person and the audience is likely to be people with whom they are already familiar such as other learners, teachers, friends and other social contacts.
- At Entry 2 learners must make active contributions with one or more people; small group discussions become more appropriate.
- At Entry 3 and Level 1 learners take part in both formal and informal exchanges and they start to become aware of what they need to do to make a worthwhile contribution to a discussion.
- At Level 2, learners are required to adapt what they say for different audiences. These audiences will include people with whom they are unfamiliar.

Explain to learners that people start forming impressions of us as soon as we meet them. Our posture, facial expressions and gestures can speak louder than our words. They send out clear signals about our interest, openness and attentiveness, and give clues about whether what we are saying is consistent with what we are really feeling. Three things that will influence an audience are as follows:

- **Respect.** This is the esteem we show towards someone. If we do not show respect we are indicating that we do not care about them, or value them or their views. A key element is the way we communicate and show empathy.
- **Communicating feelings.** Obviously the words we utter do matter, but our actions, expressions, posture and physical behaviour can convey as much as the words. We can tell whether someone is angry or approachable, attentive or preoccupied, happy or sad, from their expression and tone and the way they walk, stand or sit.
- **Tone of voice.** Research has shown that the tone of voice carries more meaning than the individual words themselves. Tone of voice plays an even bigger part when we are on the phone and cannot see the other person. Call centre staff are often taught to smile when talking to customers on a telephone as their tone of voice becomes more positive.

Discuss with learners about how we change what we say and how we say it for different audiences – for example, in more or less formal contexts.

Showing respect

Use the questionnaire in Figure 2 on pages 35–36 to help learners reflect on the sort of behaviour that shows them whether other people value them as individuals and treat them with respect. You can use the example provided or adapt/create one for your learners.

- Explain that the best way to understand the importance of treating people with respect is to reflect on how you feel when it happens to you (or does not).
- Hand out the Respect questionnaire and give the learner(s) time to complete it.
- Once they have completed it, talk to them about the impact of being treated in different ways and where another behaviour would have a positive effect.
- Reflect together about whether the activity has made them think differently about their own responses to people.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Figure 2 Respect questionnaire

1 When this happens...

In a shop, the assistant answers my question without looking at me

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

2 When this happens...

I make a suggestion in a meeting and it is completely ignored. Then someone else makes the same suggestion and they're told it is brilliant

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

3 When this happens...

I ring up to complain about something and the person at the other end sounds as if they think it is my own fault... as if I'm making it up

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

4 When this happens...

I ring up to complain about something and the person at the other end listens carefully then says they're really sorry – it shouldn't have happened

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

5 When this happens...

My boss / teacher praises me in front of other people

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

6 When this happens...

My boss / teacher criticises me in front of other people

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

7 When this happens...

In the middle of a conversation, the other person glances at their watch

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

8 When this happens...

People I've just met forget my name, or get it wrong

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

9 When this happens...

I arrive on time for an appointment but the person I've come to see keeps me waiting

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

10 When this happens...

Someone I haven't seen for some time smiles at me, uses my name and asks how I am

...I do do not feel valued and respected because...

2.4 Speaking

Most of the speaking that we do in everyday life is on a one-to-one basis, whether talking with a teacher, a colleague at work, a shop worker, a friend or a member of the family. All levels of the standards for speaking and listening include one-to-one exchanges.

- At Entry 1 learners are required to talk with only one other person.
- At Entry 2, the standards specify 'one or more people'.
- Learners at Entry 3 and Levels 1 and 2 will be engaged in both formal and informal exchanges with a much wider range of people.
- Learners at Level 2 need to be able to assess the situation, respond appropriately and adapt quickly as the exchange moves on.

The first thing learners should think about is why they need to speak to another person. They will also need to consider:

- their relationship to this person
- how formal or informal their speech needs to be
- what the other person already knows
- what they need to know.

Who do you talk to?

This activity helps learners to recognise the range of people they talk to. It can be used with most learners at every level.

- Ask each learner to draw a circle in the centre of a piece of paper with their own name at the centre.
- They then draw a spider diagram of all the people they talk to. At Entry 3 and Levels 1 and 2, learners should be encouraged to use categories such as 'other students', 'work colleagues', 'teachers', 'family', 'customers'. At Entry 1 and 2 they may restrict the diagram to individual names. If a learner finds writing difficult the diagram could be drawn by a teacher in discussion with the learner.
- The next branch on the diagram describes what they talk to these people/groups about.
- Learners then reflect on whether they speak in exactly the same way to everyone in their diagram. For example, do they use the same tone of voice or words? do they stand or sit differently? how far do they adjust their language?

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Extension

Learners can keep a talk diary for a week recording whom they have spoken to, for what reason and how they consciously adjusted their language and tone.

Learners can plan and rehearse in their own minds an impending conversation, preferably with another adult in an unfamiliar situation and, following the exchange, record how they prepared for the conversation and reflect on how successfully they felt they had fulfilled their intention.

Practising speaking one-to-one

Encouraging pair and small group work in learning will help learners to develop their speaking skills. In particular, you can focus on:

- helping learners to speak clearly, so that they are readily understood
- helping them to build their confidence.

Table 1 suggests some relevant learning activities and contexts in which learners may apply the skills.

Table 1

Level	Activities and contexts
Entry 1	Order a take-away meal Make an appointment Leave an answerphone message Describe an event or experience Describe a picture
Entry 2	Describe familiar objects, what they are, how they work Back-to-back 'telephone' conversations – perhaps using a mobile phone as a prop Give an account of daily or weekly routine Explain a procedure or rules such as health and safety
Entry 3	Give an opinion on a local or topical issue Consider how to address different people – what does 'formal' mean and how should your language change? Reflect on how you adapt speech to different contexts such as friends, at school/college, at work, with colleagues or a manager Discuss the effect that pace, tone and volume have on an exchange

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Level 1	<p>Present points of view on a contentious issue</p> <p>Receive a visitor and show them round the school, college or workplace</p> <p>Read a short piece of writing and talk about it</p>
Level 2	<p>Give complex information or instructions to others</p> <p>Speak persuasively – eg to make a case or a sale</p> <p>Choose register and vocabulary for specific audiences</p> <p>Giving and accepting feedback</p> <p>Reducing conflict – eg handling a complaint</p>

Level 2 learners should also be introduced to the concept of 'register'. A change of register involves more than choosing vocabulary. It might also include sentence length and style – formal, chatty or deliberately vague speech.

Asking questions

Asking appropriate questions is a significant aspect of both speaking and listening. Questioning is explicitly referred to at Entry level and effective questioning underpins many of the skills required at Levels 1 and 2.

At Entry 1 and 2 learners will be using questions to gain information. They will benefit from practice with asking questions clearly and planning them in advance.

- Practical activities include asking for information in shops or asking for directions with an emphasis on speaking clearly and composing questions that will result in the information they need.
- Introduce them to the most common question words – 'what', 'who', 'where', 'when', 'how', 'why' – and ask them to compose a question on a given topic using each word.
- They will need to respond to simple questions, such as giving information about themselves to a doctor, teacher or careers officer. You can prepare question cards using a range of contexts and scenarios as a basis for paired activity.
- Learners should have opportunities to ask questions in real situations, outside the classroom.

Learners working at Entry 3 and above should be introduced to the different types of question and helped to select appropriate questioning techniques.

- Questions can be asked to check understanding, clarify or seek information or move a conversation on.
- Learners can watch/listen to radio or TV interviews and identify the types of question asked.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Open and closed questions

Many learners rely on closed questions. They need to recognise that, while appropriate in some situations, this will close down a conversation or exchange quite quickly. They should be helped to recognise the advantages of open questions to find out more, show empathy and extend a conversation.

Closed questions are useful when you need precise facts ('What colours does this come in?'), to check details ('What time was that?') or a yes or no answer ('Are you free tomorrow?').

Open questions can be used to:

- start a conversation
- allow the other person to tell you what they think or feel
- establish empathy
- move a conversation forward
- find out more about someone's experiences.

They include encouraging and follow-up questions designed to keep a conversation going and elicit more detail, for example: 'Can you tell me a bit more about that?', 'Then what happened?' or 'This is helpful, could you tell me more?'

Closed and open questions

This activity helps learners to recognise the difference between open and closed questions by rephrasing closed questions as open ones. You can use the questions either as a simple handout or a verbal activity.

Compile a list of closed questions such as:

- Do you like this colour?
- Did the interview go OK?
- Do you like the new lunch menu?
- Have you had a good day?

Remind learners to use words such as 'How', 'What' or 'Which' to start the question.

When the learners have rephrased the questions discuss the difference in the replies they might get. They could also try out both types of question in pairs.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Unhelpful questions

It can also be amusing to spend some time looking at unhelpful questions; that is, questions that either do not require an answer or where the questioner intends to give their own answer. This includes rhetorical questions such as 'Are we going to let them get away with this?' or statements phrased as questions such as 'Do you know what time this is?' (ie 'You're late!'). The Catherine Tate character Lauren's catchphrase 'Am I bovvered?' is a topical example.

Questions only

This group activity encourages learners to ask questions in order to gain knowledge or information.

You will need to decide on a topic for a session. This could be an aspect of their learning programme or any topic that the teacher has specific knowledge about, but with which learners are likely to be relatively unfamiliar.

- Tell your learners the topic for the session and explain that they will have to learn about it only by asking questions. You are not going to give any input other than to answer their questions. Sit on a chair, at the front of the room, without a desk in front of you.
- Learners ask questions and you answer them accurately but briefly. Avoid the temptation to over-elaborate your answers.
- When you feel they have gained sufficient information stop the activity.
- Review how much learners have learned from the session – they will be surprised at how much information they have gained.
- Discuss whether this approach made them listen more carefully to your answers and/or remember more of what they heard.

Extension

Learners may like to take their turn at being in the chair. They can choose any topic – for example a breed of dog they know about, an unusual sport they are involved in, a country or place they have visited.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Interviews

Interviews are a good way of allowing learners to practise asking and answering questions. At a simple level, learners could work in pairs to find out as much as they can about their partner's knowledge or views on a given topic. Possible topics are worst day at school/work, ideal holiday, a hobby, a piece of equipment.

You could move on to role plays of mock interviews for a job, college or university where learners will be faced with more probing questions.

Resources: There are video examples of teachers encouraging speaking in *Teaching speaking and listening* DVD ROM (Secondary National Strategy). The *Speaking and listening toolkit* (Key Skills Support Programme) has more activities on speaking. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

2.5 Discussions

Discussing is a crucial skill in work, life and learning. At work, a discussion with a colleague may be very informal but it may be more formal if a supervisor or manager is involved. In situations like team meetings there are often formal rules which people need to be aware of and respect.

It is important to give learners chances to practise discussion, for example by providing opportunities for them to talk in different contexts, so that they get used to describing things, explaining reasons and expressing their own ideas. Learners have plenty of opportunities to take part in discussions whatever type of programme they are on.

- Group discussion is increasingly used in many subjects other than the 'obvious' ones such as English and history.
- Discussion forms the main basis for work in personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- Work-based learners will be involved in discussions with colleagues and teams, and learners may attend meetings in the workplace.

Speaking in a group can seem daunting to some learners. Building learners' confidence through preparation and practice can make a big difference to their ability to take part in group discussions and even to enjoy having their say. All learners can benefit from an increased awareness of what makes a discussion effective and from opportunities to develop their ability to play a full and productive part in it.

Group size, composition and layout

The size and composition of groups and the layout of the room can have a big effect on how productive discussions will be. It is also useful to be aware of barriers to effective discussions.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Group size

Pairs – these are quick and easy to organise because furniture does not need to be moved. They are also less threatening and each learner is obliged to talk. However, there is little challenge from different viewpoints and they are therefore prone to quick consensus.

Groups of 3–4 – a group this size allows for a broader input of ideas yet remains a relatively secure number for learners who are less confident. There is a risk that some members will not contribute, so group composition is important.

Groups of 5–8 – this can bridge the gap between small group discussion and whole class discussion. They are also a common size for meetings and discussions at work. They are good for discussions that require a range of views and for developing turn-taking skills and teamwork. Care needs to be taken to ensure that one or two group members do not dominate and groups may need to include someone who can lead or chair the discussion.

Whole group – in whole group discussion, everyone gets the same experience and the teacher can guide and monitor the talk. If it is a large group (more than 12) it is inevitable that some learners will remain silent unless they are explicitly drawn in. This may make less confident learners uncomfortable.

Group composition

Groupings should be managed by the teacher and planned to suit the task. All groups must be given clear instructions about the purpose of the task, what they must do, what outcomes are expected and how long they have to complete it. Learners can be grouped in terms of:

- friendship – when sharing and confidence-building are priorities
- ability – when it is important to pitch the work at the right level
- structured mix – to ensure diversity and a range of viewpoints
- random mix – a democratic way to build up experiences of working with a range of other people.

Room layout

The environment for a discussion is important. This includes the space you use, the layout of tables and chairs, and other resources such as whiteboard, flipchart, internet or library access for learners to search for information. Room layouts include:

- U-shape
- café style, cabaret style
- theatre style
- hollow square
- classroom style.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Consider the effect of each on formality, levels of contribution, etc. Many learners will feel nervous about talking in front of a large group so pair and small group work can be very helpful here.

Traditional classroom style is not good for discussions. It is very difficult for learners to make eye contact or to use active listening.

Barriers to effective discussion

It is important to be aware of the range of things that can get in the way of effective group discussions. These include:

- **Language** – use of technical language or jargon can exclude some. Language may be used inappropriately – for example, informal language that is used in a formal setting and vice versa. Participants may not have English as their first language.
- **Environment** – a noisy environment can make it hard to hear what others are saying and can be distracting. Other environmental factors, including heat, light, lack of space or lack of facilities, can have an effect.
- **Time** – there may be a lack of time or a discussion can sometimes take too long and participants' attention can wander.

Ground rules

This activity encourages learners to identify and follow rules and behaviours for productive discussion. Encouraging learners to think through rules that they might apply to a group discussion can help them to understand how a discussion should work. It is important that the learners themselves set the 'rules' as they are then more likely to follow them.

Explain to learners that ground rules for discussion can help everyone to have their say and to keep a discussion on track. You may want to give some prompts such as 'listen to other people carefully' but do not give them all the obvious ones.

- Divide the group into smaller groups or pairs and give each group/pair some blank cards.
- Ask them to spend 10–15 minutes coming up with a set of rules for effective discussion. They will need to discuss and agree these before writing one rule on each card.
- When the time is up ask each group/pair to read out their rules. List them on a flipchart.
- Ask the whole group to discuss these ground rules, and agree which they want to adopt.

The group can refer to these rules throughout their discussions.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Productive group talk behaviour

Learners need to develop the ability to talk and work together purposefully in groups. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy document *Literacy across the curriculum* identifies the following productive group talk behaviour:

- Making suggestions or introducing new ideas
- Supporting others' suggestions by building on them, clarifying them or modifying them
- Challenging ideas so that others reflect on their validity
- Reasoning or justifying ideas
- Asking questions to seek clarification and elaboration
- Summarising to move the discussion on
- Analysing and evaluating to make explicit the strengths and weaknesses of own and others' ideas.

Drawing a talk map

This activity, which is particularly suitable for learners working at Level 2, will help them to analyse the speaking patterns in a group, eg who makes most/fewest contributions, what types of contribution people make, and who they address.

If necessary, divide learners into groups of between four and eight people. Arrange each group into a suitable layout for discussion.

One learner will act as the observer and draw the talk map. They should sit outside the group, as unobtrusively as possible, but so that they can see and hear all group members.

Give the observer a blank sheet of paper on which they will record the interaction as follows:

1. Draw a diagram of where group members are sitting, with names.
2. Add a box in the middle labelled 'whole group'.
3. Every time someone speaks put a mark next to their name.
4. Draw arrows to show whom each speaker addresses. Are they addressing another group member or the whole group?
5. Note the type of contribution such as question, agreement, encouraging another to get involved.

When the discussion has ended, the group can interpret the talk map. They should consider things such as who contributed most, what roles did people take, who moved discussion on.

Learners can also draw talk maps based on video discussions – in which case the whole class or group can act as observer.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Moving discussion forward

Level 2 learners need to 'make significant contributions to discussions, taking a range of roles and helping to move the discussion forward to reach decisions'.

It is helpful to give learners the opportunity to lead or facilitate a discussion. This will help prepare them for the realities of working life or for seminar work in college, sixth form or higher education.

'Leading a discussion' is a demanding skill. It involves:

- **clear purpose:** ensuring that everyone involved knows what the discussion is about and what it is meant to achieve, and maintaining the focus
- **managing time:** making sure that the purpose of the discussion is achieved in the time available. This may involve reminding group members of the time left, or could involve making sure they get through a set agenda
- **encouraging contributions:** this may mean encouraging quieter participants to join in and deterring more confident speakers from dominating
- **question and recap:** keeping the discussion on track by encouraging contributors to make relevant points and asking questions for clarification and to make sure that everyone has understood what has been said
- **ending the discussion:** closing the discussion either by summarising or by feeding back to the group what has been decided or agreed.

Learners need to be aware of what is involved in leading a discussion, and recognise that taking this role may mean that they have less opportunity to make their own points or express their own views as they open, sustain, move forward and close the discussion.

Facilitating discussion

The success of a discussion depends to a great extent on the person who facilitates it, and the teacher's role is crucial. A good facilitator:

- selects, or helps the group to select, appropriate topics for discussions
- introduces the topic and clearly explains the purpose of the discussion
- is comfortable with silence – people need time to think
- makes sure that one or two people do not dominate
- models active listening skills so learners feel they have been heard
- organises the room so that it is conducive to discussion
- moves the discussion forward.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Discourse markers

For Level 1 and 2 learners it is worth introducing a specific focus on discourse markers. Once they are familiar with these they will enjoy noticing them on the radio, on TV and in their own and others' everyday speech. Below is an extract from *Introducing the grammar of talk* (QCA, 2006).

'Discourse markers often have "pragmatic" meanings different from their dictionary meaning. Thus in actual dialogue *now* or *right* do not mean *at this moment* or *correct*, respectively.

'Discourse markers signpost and signal interactively how a speaker plans to organise a dialogue. People speaking face to face or on the phone often use *anyway* to show that they wish to finish that particular topic or return to another topic. Similarly, *so* can indicate that a speaker is summing up, while *okay* often indicates that a speaker is ready to move on to the next phase of business; or it can signal that a speaker is checking that the listener approves of what is being done.'

Using transcripts

Recording and transcribing conversations helps learners to develop language awareness and noticing skills. For example, learners can identify words that signal active listening. Transcripts also help learners to look more closely at specific aspects of spoken language and to recognise how important non-verbal communication is in a conversation.

You will need to record and transcribe a conversation – perhaps one involving one or more of your learners or one you were involved in yourself. This is important because the teacher needs to be aware of the context and the relationship(s) between the people involved. The conversation need not be more than five minutes long – transcription takes time. When transcribing you should include vocalisations such as 'umm', 'er'. Number the lines to facilitate discussion of the transcript.

Most learners are intrigued and surprised by seeing transcripts of talk. For example they may notice:

- the number of pauses and gaps
- how few of the statements are complete sentences
- how speakers signal changes of topic to the listener(s)
- how the relationship between the people affects the way they talk.

[continued...]

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

1. Give out the transcript and allow learners a few minutes to read it. If you also show it using PowerPoint, responses can be modified to model ways to improve.
2. Ask them for their first impressions – perhaps prompting using the points above if necessary. Did anything surprise them?
3. Ask learners what was missing from the transcript that is present in speech. Examples are tone of voice, non-verbal communication. Did this make it harder to follow?

You could finish by playing the recording to them.

Extension

You could compare the transcript of real speech with how speech is written in a novel.

Learners may also enjoy using tape recorders to record and then transcribe their own and peers' conversations.

Persuasive speech

At Level 2 the standards say that learners must be able to 'present information and ideas clearly and persuasively to others'.

Practical strategies for doing this could be:

- **'Sales pitch'** – learners bring in (or teacher provides) a product which learners then have to 'sell' to the rest of the group. They will need time to prepare. Get them to think about:
 - what people need to know about the product – its features
 - what the product can offer to people who buy it – its benefits
 - which key words or phrases listeners are likely to 'hook onto' or remember.
- **'Come fly with me'** – provide a range of brochures about resorts or towns. Learners have to describe the resort or town and persuade people to visit.

Resources: For more on discussion see Section 7, 'The management of group talk' in *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). The *Speaking and listening toolkit* (Key Skills Support Programme) has more activities on discussion. See also the *Teaching speaking and listening* DVD ROM (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

2.6 Listening

Listening is a vital functional skill in life and work and for learning in all curriculum areas. However it is an invisible and largely untaught skill.

We can all become better listeners. The result is likely to be improved relationships, less conflict and increased effectiveness – in short, better communication with peers, colleagues, teachers, friends and family.

Active listening

Being able to listen attentively and to understand and remember what you have heard is a valuable skill. If you feel you have something important to say but no one listens to you properly, it can be upsetting and frustrating. Active listening is a way of paying attention to other people so that they feel you understand what they are saying.

Active listening means listening for a purpose, perhaps to get information or to solve a problem, but it can also involve simply showing support or taking an interest in how a person feels.

In many vocational sectors – such as health and social care, childcare or hairdressing – it is particularly important for learners to develop the ability to reflect on their performance as a listener.

How can you show you are listening actively?

- Set aside what you are doing in order to concentrate on the speaker.
- Make sure your mind is focused so that you can give the speaker your full attention.
- Make eye contact with the speaker.
- Sit where you can be seen without the person having to turn to you to see you – arrange chairs so that you are at a slight angle, where each of you can comfortably see the other one.
- Sit close enough for comfort and so that you can easily be heard without having to raise your voice. Check whether the distance between you feels comfortable for both of you. Remember that people vary in the amount of 'personal space' they need.
- Be quiet – by not interrupting, you encourage the other person to speak.
- Nod your head to indicate you are listening.
- Use expressions like '*I see*', '*Yes*' and '*Mmm*'.
- Check your understanding from time to time. Say, '*So you mean...?*'
- Paraphrasing – this does not just mean repeating what the person has said but putting it into your own words.
- Use 'open' body language, such as leaning forward, facial expressions and gestures that show you are actively listening and interested. See page 53.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

- Ask 'open questions'. These are questions that encourage the person to share their thoughts and feelings, rather than give 'Yes', 'No' or one- or two-word answers. See page 40.
- Try to really 'hear' what the speaker is attempting to say, including any emotion behind it. Avoid jumping to conclusions or judging people.

Listening triads

This activity is particularly suitable for Level 2 learners who have already been introduced to the principles of active listening. It provides opportunities to practise, observe and give feedback on listening skills.

Ask learners to work in threes, with one person taking each of the following roles:

- speaker
- listener
- observer.

The speaker chooses a topic they will talk about. It could be something that happened at school or work or in their personal or social lives. They will talk about this for 3–5 minutes, so they will need a minute or so to think through what they will say.

While the speaker talks:

- the listener listens, reflects back, uses non-verbal communication and asks questions
- the observer watches and makes notes as appropriate
- after the 3–5 minutes the trio reflect on how it went, focusing on the positive aspects – what both the speaker and the listener did well.

Ask the trio to swap roles and do the exercise again. Ideally, everyone should experience the three roles.

Finally, draw out what everyone has learned from the activity about good speaking and listening skills.

Resources: For more on listening see Section 8, 'Listening' in *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). The *Speaking and listening toolkit* (Key Skills Support Programme) has more activities on listening. See also the *Teaching speaking and listening* DVD ROM (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Tuning in and tuning out

Explain to learners that active listening is a vital skill but it is tiring and difficult to maintain over a long period. Good listeners are able to move in and out of active listening (for example in meetings or during a presentation) because they notice clues that tell them when they should actively listen again.

The next activity helps learners identify the main points when listening, using the context of a radio programme. They will be encouraged to recognise the times when we listen more actively and to identify the 'clues' that trigger this type of listening.

Bring in a radio or use the 'listen again' option on BBC radio websites.

You will need to choose a programme appropriate to your learners' interests and level. It should be a factual talk programme, such as a news programme or an interview. You could involve learners in choosing the programme.

You may want to ask learners to make notes about the programme as they listen.

When the programme has finished, discuss issues such as:

- Did they capture the main points of the programme? How did learners differ?
- Did they find their attention drifting during the programme? Did this matter?
- How does our attention come and go while listening? What kinds of clues help us to 'switch on' again for vital bits of information? (Examples are a change of speaker, a change in tone of voice or a question.)

Taking oral messages

One of the most common situations in which we have to listen is when we take a message. Learners will be expected to take messages from a range of people, at home and at work. Messages may be relayed in person or by telephone. Taking a message requires careful listening, accurate recording or remembering of the facts, and passing on the message accurately.

Talk to your learners about ways to pass on a message. What will make it more likely that the message is passed on accurately?

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Messages

At a simple level, 'Chinese whispers' is a good ice-breaker for message taking.

A variation of this is to give each learner a written message which they have to remember and pass on to another person in the group. This person then passes the message on to another, and so on. At the end, check who has each message and how it compares with the original.

Record a series of messages on a tape recorder or answerphone and play these to your learners.

Using 'envoys' to pass information from one group to another in small group work involves listening and passing on key points.

Barriers to message taking

It is worth exploring some of the barriers that people come across when taking messages and how they deal with them. You could ask your learners what problems they've experienced when taking a message and discuss ways to overcome these. The table below gives some ideas.

Barriers to taking an accurate message	Solution
Others not speaking clearly	Do not be afraid to ask the speaker to repeat the message or to slow down so that you can make a note of what they are saying.
Names or words that are difficult to remember or spell	Ask the speaker to spell out names or technical words. Sometimes it is acceptable to make a guess. If the message is informal then spelling isn't so important.
Angry or demanding callers or customers	Stay calm and offer to take a message if you are unable to deal with the problem. Make sure that you get the key facts. Smile and be reassuring if you are face to face.

2.7 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is used in both speaking and listening. It is a powerful communication tool which we use all the time – often unconsciously. Becoming aware of our own and others' non-verbal behaviour can help improve the quality of any discussion or exchange.

Learners enjoy finding out about non-verbal communication – providing it is done sensitively. It is also vital to make sure that they understand that non-verbal communication can be open to a range of interpretations and analysing one element in isolation can be misleading. There are other factors that need to be taken into account. For example:

- Cultural differences may affect the amount of eye contact that is considered appropriate.
- People with hearing or visual impairment may stand 'too close' so that they can hear or see better.
- Learners with behaviour in the autistic spectrum or movement disorders may give misleading non-verbal messages.

Non-verbal communication includes vocal signals, body language and personal presentation.

Vocal signals

These include:

- **tone of voice** – a high-pitched voice can show excitement, happiness or stress; a raised voice can show anger or frustration; a low pitch can convey that a topic is serious
- **vocalisations** – we use sounds like 'mmm', 'Aha', 'er' when we are listening to show how we are reacting or to indicate that we are paying attention and listening to a speaker.

Body language

- **Gesture** – includes the use of hands, head and body. Some are simple to interpret such as pointing or nodding, others are more complex such as playing with hair or placing a hand on one's cheek.
- **Posture** – this plays an important part in first impressions. Walking with an upright posture and head held high indicates confidence. Slouching in a chair gives the impression of boredom.
- **Facial expression** – smiling, frowning or staring give powerful messages about how a person is feeling.
- **Eye contact** – is something that some learners will find hard to make in formal situations or when meeting someone for the first time. Learners should know that it is good to make eye contact at the beginning of a

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

conversation and then to look at the person occasionally during the conversation but to break contact from time to time.

- **Body contact** – can be a tricky area. What is appropriate depends on the context and the relationship between two people. However, there is one piece of body contact that all learners should become comfortable with – a firm handshake. Many young people feel very inhibited about this. They should be encouraged to practise until they become comfortable with each other and with people they meet.
- **Personal space** – this is best described as the space we need around ourselves to feel comfortable in the company of others. The general rule is to avoid standing too close, as it can seem threatening, or too far, so as to appear distant or uninterested.

Personal presentation

This means thinking about how we present ourselves to others and includes appearance (such as wearing the right clothes for an interview), mannerisms and social manners.

Developing learners' social manners does not mean giving lessons in etiquette! At a simple level it means smiling when meeting someone, introducing yourself, greeting people appropriately and using their name.

Resources: The *Speaking and listening toolkit* (Key Skills Support Programme) has more activities on non-verbal communication. There is also a *Teaching speaking and listening* DVD ROM (Secondary National Strategy) that provides video clips that can be used to explore the impact of non-verbal communication. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Non-verbal communication

This simple group, individual or pairs game helps learners to interpret different types of non-verbal communication.

Either make up sets of cards or write examples of non-verbal communication on a flipchart or whiteboard. Examples could include:

- arms crossed
- raised eyebrows
- slumping in a chair
- talking quickly
- raised voice
- playing with hair
- smiling
- nodding
- shaking head
- pulling at ear
- hands clasped behind head
- tapping fingers
- thin lipped
- making eye contact
- avoiding eye contact.

Ask learners to suggest what these behaviours may indicate. It can be useful to do this in pairs and then to share as a whole group. This will also help to reinforce the fact that non-verbal communication can be open to a range of interpretations.

Extension

Learners can role-play different forms of non-verbal communication during a conversation. They might be given particular behaviours to include. Give learners some statements and ask them to say them in different tones of voice.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a vital communication and life skill. Learning to be assertive can increase confidence and self-esteem and enable people to handle conflict more effectively. An important part of assertiveness is open, secure body language. Practising standing or walking in an assertive way can help to develop assertiveness.

Passive body language is the classic 'victim' stance of hunched shoulders, avoiding eye contact. An aggressive stance could involve clenched fists or standing inside another person's 'comfort zone'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Ask learners to walk around the room, starting by walking in their normal way. As they walk around, ask them to change how they are walking when you call out 'passive', 'aggressive' or 'assertive'.

Soap opera

This activity helps learners to recognise the effect of non-verbal communication (NVC) on listeners. Because it uses a dramatic performance, the NVC is likely to be more marked and easier to identify.

- Record an episode of a soap opera – pick one that is popular with your learners and where they will be familiar with the characters.
- Ask learners to draw three columns on a piece of paper, headed 'Character', 'What he or she did' and 'What was the effect?'
- Explain that you will show the video and ask learners to make notes in the first two columns of any non-verbal communication they see.
- Show, say, 10 to 15 minutes of the video.
- When the video is finished, ask learners to complete the third column about the effect that the non-verbal communication had on the other actors involved in the exchange or discussion.
- Ask learners to feed back on the activity. How you do this will depend on the size of your group. With a large group you may ask them to share what they saw in pairs or fours. With a small group you can have a single discussion.

Extension

Factual programmes such as *Newsnight* or the news, particularly those where the presenter is trying to convey authority or power, can also give valuable insights into non-verbal communication. Similarly chat shows can provide a wealth of examples from a wide range of people.

2.8 Presentations

The Level 2 standard includes: 'make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts'. Learners may have to give presentations in their work, in other curricular areas, or in Higher Education.

Learners usually need most help with organising and structuring what they are going to say and overcoming nervousness. They often spend all their time on preparing a script or a PowerPoint presentation rather than on the skills of delivering the presentation clearly and effectively. Learners will benefit from a step-by-step approach to building their skills and confidence, with plenty of opportunities to practise and reflect on their performance.

Many of the strategies for helping learners with other aspects of speaking are also useful in developing their presentation skills, for example being aware of the audience, choosing appropriate language and speaking clearly. Confidence also grows in line with the amount of preparation. Although they may be nervous, the more a learner has thought through, planned and practised their presentation, the less stressful they will find it.

Preparing to give a presentation involves several elements:

Planning. A presentation must have a clear structure, usually beginning with an introduction and ending with a summary of the main points. Learners will need guidance on structuring and organising material under headings.

Using visual aids. It is often good practice to use visual aids as part of a presentation. You can help learners by discussing the range of visual aids available such as handouts, flipcharts, slides, objects and computer-based presentations and explaining what makes an effective visual aid, such as the number of words on a slide and clear labels on diagrams.

Rehearsing (practising). Confidence comes with practice, and it is important to try out a presentation to check how it flows, whether it fits the time available, and whether the delivery is fluent.

Evaluating feedback. Constructive feedback can be very useful here. You will need to discuss with learners appropriate ways of giving feedback to each other that is not damaging. They may be called upon to do this during practice sessions.

First, ask your learners to discuss (perhaps in small groups) how they feel about having to stand up in front of other people and give a presentation. Then take them through the main stages needed to prepare a presentation. It is best to start with simple, non-threatening activities that do not involve a lot of preparation to get learners used to talking in front of others before moving on to preparing for and giving a presentation.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Just a minute

Going straight into a presentation can be daunting, so it can help learners if you start with a short activity that gets them talking in front of others. This well-known game from BBC radio gets people talking to a group without realising it. Because it is fun, learners do not register what they have done, quite naturally and enjoyably, until it is over.

Write down a list of topics that all learners will know something about – for example, holidays, pets, mobile phones. You will need a timer.

Appoint yourself chairperson and explain the rules. They must not:

- repeat any words or phrases (except those in the title)
- hesitate for too long (you'll need to use your judgement here)
- deviate from the topic.

Give the first speaker a topic which they must try to speak on for 60 seconds.

Any group member can challenge the speaker if they think that they repeated a word or phrase, paused for too long or went off the point, by raising their hand and saying 'repetition', 'hesitation' or 'deviation'.

Make a note of how much time has gone when the challenge is made. If you decide that the challenge is justified, the challenger scores a point and takes over the subject for however long is left from the original 60 seconds.

If the challenge is not valid, the speaker keeps the subject, gets a point and carries on for whatever time is left, or until another challenge.

Whoever is speaking at the end of the minute is the winner of that round and gets an extra point.

Planning a presentation

The first stage of planning a presentation is to identify the main points or sections of the talk. Spider diagrams and storyboard formats are helpful with this. Because they are visual, they give an instant and clear picture of what the presentation will cover.

Structuring and planning a presentation involves breaking the overall task down into manageable steps:

- identify a topic or subject
- clarify the purpose and audience
- research the topic
- structure the content
- gather visual aids/props
- prepare room and equipment.

Checklist for preparing a presentation

The following questions can act as a checklist or prompts to help planning:

- What is the subject of your talk?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- How much time do you have?
- Where will you give your talk?
- Who is going to listen to the talk?
- Where will you get your information?
- How will you organise the information?
- What sort of language is appropriate?
- Do you need to use any pictures, charts or diagrams?
- What equipment will you need?
- Do you need to provide handouts or any other supporting material?

Clarifying purpose and audience

The first stage is to decide the purpose and audience for the presentation. The purpose affects the content, the shape and the style. Is it to inform (give information), persuade (get others to accept an argument) or make a case (explain options and implications)?

Think about the audience. Learners should consider:

- who they are – for example, whether they already know them, what interests them, why they are coming
- what the audience may already know about the topic
- what language will be appropriate and, in particular, which technical terms the audience will understand
- how many people will be there.

Researching the topic

Once the subject, purpose and audience for the presentation are clear, learners need to spend time researching and making notes. Learners can collect information quickly and easily from books, trade journals, catalogues and the internet. The latter is a good source of pictures or illustrations, though you should be alert to possible copyright implications. See 'Researching new styles, techniques or treatment' on page 71 for more ideas on researching a topic.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Structuring the content of the presentation

Once learners have researched the topic, the next stage is to structure what they will say. Suggest that they remember to have a beginning, a middle and an end and that they follow the 'speaker's code': *say what you are going to say... say it... say what you have just said*. If they are going to invite the audience to ask questions, they should remember to tell them when they can do so – it is a good idea to keep questions until the end to avoid a presentation turning into a discussion.

Using cue cards

Cue cards can act as useful prompts for a presentation and learners should practise writing these. PowerPoint slides can also act as cues for what is going to be said next.

- Use cards about the size of a filing card.
- Write one key word or short phrase for the main heading.
- Use a maximum of four lines to a card.
- Underline headings and number the points.
- Write in large letters or capitals, so that you can read them at a glance.
- Number your cards in case you drop them.
- Do not worry about having to glance down – it can add just the right pause.
- Make sure that you have a clear introduction – in 30 seconds tell them what your headlines are going to be.
- On the final card, remind them of your headlines and finish on a high note.

Learners should feed back to you on their outline plan before they continue their research and prepare their presentation.

The next stage is to plan the content of the presentation in more detail for the rehearsal session, including any visual aids they will use.

Resources: 'How to...' sheets on structuring information and preparing a talk are available from the Key Skills Support Programme. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

A (very) short talk

This practice activity involves learners talking to a group about a subject for one or two minutes. They should choose a familiar subject, which does not need research, and use spider diagrams and cue cards to help their planning and delivery.

- Ask learners to choose a topic they will speak about. It should be one where they are giving information, rather than expressing an opinion. If they are working or have done work experience it could be about a work procedure; alternatively it could be about a personal interest.
- Give learners time to plan what they want to say and to write some cue cards.
- Give each learner up to two minutes for their talk. Learners should ask the group if they have any questions at the end.
- Ask each member of the group to give positive feedback about the talk.
- Help each learner to make a list of areas for development, such as speaking clearly, keeping to the point, facing the audience.

Using visual aids

Images and visual aids can make a positive contribution to a presentation, but only if they are relevant and used with confidence. Learners may need help to identify the difference between using just any image and choosing one that illustrates their talk appropriately. They must also be careful to avoid images that are discriminatory or in any other way inappropriate.

Encourage learners to think widely about the range of possible images, visual aids and presentation media, and the ways they can be used.

- **Images** include photographs, diagrams, charts, graphs, flowcharts, paintings.
- **Visual aids** could be a model or other physical object such as equipment, tools or a book, or a wall or table display.
- **Presentation options** include whiteboard, flipchart, overhead projector, PowerPoint.

To help them get started, you could give learners a topic for a talk, ask them to find two appropriate images, and say how they would present them.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Rehearsing the presentation

Give learners an opportunity to practise their talk or presentation. Spend a little time going over some key tips and help them to try out as many of the techniques as they can.

- **Body language:** Stand up straight, head up, look towards the back of the room to project the voice, make eye contact with the audience, adopt a relaxed but confident stance, avoid crossing arms and legs, use gestures and posture to emphasise points, face the audience (not the screen or chart), smile.
- **Appearance:** A clean, tidy personal appearance will boost a learner's confidence.
- **Voice:** Speak slowly, speak clearly, use a lively tone of voice, loud enough for everyone to hear.
- **Language:** This must be right for the subject and audience: avoid informalities, avoid jargon, keep it simple, signpost the main points of your talk: *'I am now going to move on to...'*, *'I'm going to cover the following topics...'*
- **Visual aids:** Use them to add interest and at appropriate times during the talk but avoid over-use and distracting the audience.
- **Handouts:** These can provide useful information for the audience – do not give them out at the same time as you are starting your talk or the audience will be looking at the paper and not at you.
- **Structure:** The structure of your talk should be clear to the audience.

Evaluating the rehearsal

Encourage learners to reflect on their performance. This will help build their confidence and will allow them to identify any changes they might need to make.

Stress that this was a rehearsal so they should not worry if it wasn't perfect.

First, give the learner your personal feedback. This will act as a model for the sort of feedback that other learners may give. Then invite constructive feedback from the group. Finally, give the speaker the checklist in Figure 3 to complete so that they can reflect on whether they need to change their talk, in terms of either the content or their delivery.

Teaching and learning functional English: 2. Speaking and listening

Figure 3 Presentations – self-rating checklist

1 = I really need to work on this 3 = Pretty good			2 = OK, but I need to improve 4 = I did this really well		
Did I...	Rating	Notes/comments			
choose a subject that would interest my audience?	1 2 3 4	Try to pick a topic that is relevant and will give new information.			
begin in a way that interested and engaged them?	1 2 3 4	Get the attention of your audience from the start, think of how to engage their interest and make an impact – your first sentence sets the tone. Look at them, speak clearly and don't mumble.			
make sure that it was the right length?	1 2 3 4	Inexperienced presenters often try to say too much rather than too little. Practise your talk/presentation and time yourself.			
have a logical structure?	1 2 3 4	Divide your talk/presentation into three or four main sections, with a number of points for each.			
tell them clearly at the beginning what my talk was about?	1 2 3 4	Explain at the start what you will be covering – perhaps by using a slide of main points or topics.			
speak at the right pace?	1 2 3 4	If you're nervous, you may tend to rush and gabble. But don't go too slowly or you'll bore them. Practise with a tape recorder to see how you sound.			
use an appropriate tone of voice?	1 2 3 4	Try to sound lively, confident and friendly – if you don't seem interested in what you're talking about, then your audience will not be.			
use my notes and prompts well?	1 2 3 4	Don't read your talk/presentation from pages of notes. Use cards or a single sheet with large print. Well-prepared slides can act as your notes and prompts.			
take care about how I looked and presented myself?	1 2 3 4	Stand up straight and look directly at your audience. Wear clothes that you feel comfortable in but are smart. Remember to smile.			
use visual images or aids to add interest?	1 2 3 4	Give your audience something to look at. Slides or PowerPoint can help reinforce your main points – keep them brief, use diagrams or pictures where possible and don't use too many. A 'prop' can also gain attention.			
end with a summary of the main points?	1 2 3 4	Don't suddenly say 'Well, that's it then.' Make sure that your audience leaves with a clear overview of what your talk was about.			
encourage questions and discussion about the talk/presentation?	1 2 3 4	Don't just ask 'Any questions?' – people may not say anything. Avoid 'closed' questions where they can just say 'Yes' or 'No'. Ask some specific questions to help the audience get started. Answer questions briefly – don't feel you have to go on and on in case no one else asks anything.			

3. Reading

Contents

3.1 Introduction

- Reading in functional English
- Progression through the levels
- Using this section

3.2 Choosing functional reading material

- Sources of material
- Choosing materials for different levels
- Types of text
- Using screen-based reading information

3.3 Improving reading skills

- Shared reading
- Guided reading
- Questioning techniques
- Close reading techniques
- Note making techniques
- Supporting Entry level learners

3.4 Applying reading skills

- Researching information
- Summarising
- Detecting bias
- Responding actively to texts
- Finding opportunities to apply reading skills

3.1 Introduction

Reading in functional English

To be functional in reading, learners need to be able to read the wide range of materials they encounter in their:

- life – for example newspapers, advertisements, information from their local council or electricity supplier, letters from banks or solicitors
- work – for example manuals, health and safety instructions, emails, memos, reports, minutes of meetings
- learning – for example course or programme documents, text books, source materials, test or exam papers.

They may well have to read material that is difficult, biased, persuasive, misleading, or with complex small print. Their ability to read well will help them to make informed choices and to obtain value for money. It will also help them to avoid getting trapped into damaging agreements that can be hard to change later.

Learners who are secure functional readers can:

- read fluently with few pauses and a constant speed
- understand texts on a literal level, picking out relevant points and detail
- read between the lines to infer and deduce hidden and implied meanings and recognise the writer's intentions
- recognise the use of language, including emotive or persuasive language
- use the format, structure and other organisational features to aid understanding.

Teaching functional reading

For learners to become secure functional readers, they need to learn to become resilient and to persevere in their search for meaning, especially when they meet challenging material. They also need to be resourceful in their use of the information they read and in finding appropriate information for themselves, and to reflect on their performance as readers and what they need to do to improve.

How you can support learners with this will depend very much on your responsibilities.

- Specialist English teachers will already be helping learners to improve their reading skills and to use these within the English curriculum. The challenge of functional English will be to help learners apply their skills to a range of realistic situations. You may also be able to support other teachers, for example by sharing your knowledge of ways of helping learners get better at reading.
- Teachers of other subjects or vocational specialists will be able to help identify reading material that learners will find relevant and interesting. You will also be able to support learners with reading and interpreting this material.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Resources: For more on supporting reading across a learner's programme see *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Progression through the levels

'In reading, complexity, purpose, length and variety of texts are the key indicators of progression through the standards.'

(Functional skill standards: English)

As with all functional skills, a learner can be functional at any level from Entry 1 to Level 2. The following table shows the skills standards for reading at each level.

Entry 1	Read and understand short, simple texts
Entry 2	Read and understand straightforward texts
Entry 3	Independently read and understand straightforward texts for a purpose
Level 1	Read and understand a range of texts
Level 2	Compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions

The standards provide some useful examples of what these might mean in practice:

- At Entry 1, a 'short, simple text might be a set of directions or the text of a brief email message'.
- At Entry 2, 'straightforward texts indicate uncomplicated factual content, rather than content dealing with a complexity of ideas. This might be a short article in a newspaper about a local issue or a series of instructions about operating equipment or dealing with customers'.
- Level 1 texts could include 'reports, instructional, explanatory and persuasive texts'.

This has important implications for teaching:

- For Entry level learners it is important to teach and reinforce reading strategies so that they can access material and make meaning – for example, improving phonics capability or sight vocabulary so that they become independent and fluent readers. This is a specialist area that requires frequent support.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- At Levels 1 and 2 teaching strategies need to focus upon developing reading for understanding. The statement in the functional skill standards ‘read and understand texts and take appropriate action’ means that Level 2 learners not only have to be able to demonstrate their competence as a reader; they have to apply their knowledge and understanding in order to take action based on what they have read. They have to learn to respond to a variety of points of view and range of materials in an appropriate manner.

Resources: See section 5, ‘References and resources’ for information about the *Progression maps* (Secondary National Strategy) which can help with planning progression for your learners. Also, QCA has produced *Amplification of the functional English standards*, which includes progression grids, and *Functional skills English exemplification*.

Using this section

You may not need to read all the material in this section. Some will be familiar to you and some may not be relevant to the work you do. So choose the parts that seem most relevant.

- **Choosing functional reading material** (page 68) gives guidance and ideas for identifying texts that will be relevant and engaging for learners.
- **Improving reading skills** (page 74) introduces some of the main techniques for helping learners become better readers – for example shared and guided reading.
- **Applying reading skills** (page 83) describes the kind of activities that can help learners to practise and apply their skills and become truly functional in their reading.

3.2 Choosing functional reading material

From the functional skills standards for reading it is clear that the ‘complexity, purpose, length and variety of texts are the key indicators of progression through the standards’. We also have the challenge of applying skills in real contexts and for a genuine purpose. Selecting reading material is therefore a vital place to start.

Sources of material

Vocational material

For learners on vocational programmes there should be no shortage of material that is directly relevant to their occupation. Here are some examples from a range of sectors.

- In motor vehicle occupations you could use car magazines, websites, manufacturers’ manuals, tool and equipment brochures, maintenance schedules, letters from suppliers and customers, etc.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- In health and social care you could use care plans, health magazines, leaflets, product brochures, diaries, websites, etc.
- In hospitality and catering you could use menus, hotel brochures, hotel and restaurant websites, stock reports, job descriptions, etc.

Resources: Note that in these and other sectors there are valuable resources in the *Teaching and learning packs* (Key Skills Support Programme) and the *Embedded learning* materials (Skills for Life Programme). See section 5, 'References and resources' for more information.

Material from other real-life contexts

You can also obtain valuable real-life material from a range of sources.

- Post offices carry a wide range of forms and information sheets.
- Health centres have leaflets, information sheets, posters, etc.
- Supermarkets and DIY stores have product information, promotional material, magazines, etc.
- Car showrooms or hairdressers have brochures, magazines, product information, etc.
- The internet can provide a wide range of materials.

Subject-based material

In schools and colleges learners use a wide range of reading material such as text books, study guides, source material, etc. All provide opportunities for functional reading activities.

Resources: See the *Literacy in series* (Secondary National Strategy) in section 5, 'References and resources'.

Material from learners

You can also ask learners to find and bring in materials themselves from their work, work experience, life and interests.

All these resources can help learners to:

- work with real material that is relevant and interesting to them
- work in small groups to talk together and share their ideas
- practise their skills in identifying the purpose and meaning of the text
- decide whether the writer achieved what they intended.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Petrol station

The next time you visit a petrol station look at the amount and varying types of text around you, from the health and safety warnings on the petrol pumps to the advertising and instructional text on notices and displays. Use a digital camera to quickly capture this scene (it is sensible to ask for permission first). Then consider the images with a group.

Why is the text there in the first place (the purpose)? For example, look at:

- health and safety warnings about naked flames, fumes, spillages and the use of mobile phones
- advertising and promotional campaigns to get the customer to spend more money
- instructions about how to use the pumps and how to pay.

This lets you look at several text types together and compare them.

- Making meaning from real text in a real context helps learners to look closely at the writer's choice of words and the impact on themselves as readers.
- Looking at the design and position of the text is interesting as the text has to fit into available space, eg there is very little space on the head of the nozzle but text is placed there. What does it say? Why is it there? How does the writer hope the customer will respond when they read it? If the space is limited how does that influence the word choice?
- When learners are out in familiar surroundings, they could look for similar texts and review them in a group. They could use a camera, collect examples, or just make a list. This can continue over time and you can create regular opportunities for learners to bring in and share their latest finds and examples.

Choosing materials for different levels

Entry 1 and 2

At Entry 1 and 2 it can be difficult to find functional, age-appropriate texts; much of what is used to support these learners is written for a much younger age group. To motivate readers who have been unable to progress through the early stages of reading it is important to find texts that support their self-esteem and enable them to achieve.

Entry 3 and Level 1

At Entry 3 and Level 1 it is often tempting to use simplified texts with learners to make the reading part of an activity easier. However you can prepare learners for more complex texts by:

- telling them the context

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- paraphrasing what the text is about
- identifying technical or difficult words and explaining them
- checking the size of print and font used. A simpler font will help some readers. Unusual font styles can cause confusion
- encouraging them to read in pairs and support each other
- giving them the text to read in advance
- reminding them how the text works so that they can understand the format.

Level 2

At Level 2 the coverage and range includes ‘to identify the purpose of texts and comment how effectively meaning is conveyed’. Learners will need considerable practice and experience in order to do this independently. Often the texts used in teaching are determined by the qualification being studied but, to do things differently, you can:

- look at how texts work in the real world
- make use of technology such as the internet to widen the available selection both of texts and of the way texts are presented
- involve learners in making choices and finding texts.

Researching new styles, techniques or treatments

Hairdressing learners need to keep track of new and emerging themes and trends. They may have to learn new styles and techniques, and learn about other treatments such as Indian head massage. The more information they are able to find, use and apply, the more satisfied their clients will be and the more likely to return to the salon. Learning new and interesting things will also keep learners more up to date.

This activity asks learners to select a new style, technique or treatment they would like to research. They should first think in general about what services clients would like to receive and what information other learners or members of staff could also benefit from. They should then find at least two sources of reading material – they could use the internet, trade magazines/journals, books and sector-specific instruction manuals. They should try to exceed the expectations of clients and colleagues by identifying interesting and relevant facts about the style, technique or treatment.

The resources they obtain can provide additional useful reading material for other activities. You could adapt this activity for other vocational sectors, and you could use it with individuals or groups.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Types of text

In selecting materials to use, aim for a variety of different types of text.

The main categories of non-fiction texts are:

- instructions – eg manuals, procedures, recipes, giving directions
- recount – eg match commentary, science experiment write-up
- explanation – eg the rain cycle, the internal combustion engine
- information – eg food in Roman Britain, health and safety guidance
- persuasion – eg advertisement, manifesto, brochure
- discussion – eg magazine article, essay, report
- analysis – eg literary criticism, analytical essay, business report
- evaluation – eg critical review, reflection on outcomes.

You can work with different types of text in many ways. The following activity gives one example:

In the press

Newspapers and the media are rich sources of shorter texts, from headlines to news summaries. Newspapers can also be used to identify different types of text, eg advertising, comment, information. You can focus on particular interests of different learners, eg sport, fashion or their own work.

Ask learners to cut up and sort articles from a newspaper. They can read and sort articles according to:

- types of writing
- the purpose of the writing
- effectiveness
- attractiveness of the layout
- whether factual or opinion-based.

Then compare the news in the paper with news as presented on the internet and television. Learners can access these and follow one item of news.

Sometimes a news item runs for more than one day so learners can track its progress on television, on the web and in the papers. The text summaries that run underneath the bulletins of news broadcasts help focus on the shorter text. The television bulletin supports the understanding of the less accomplished reader.

Resources: There is more useful material on the characteristics of different types of text in *Literacy across the curriculum*, Module 2 (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Using screen-based reading material

Learners will need practice in reading material on screen and in particular on the internet. You should provide opportunities for learners to read material in this way.

Reading text on screen – especially websites – can be a challenge even to the most fluent reader as the text is often not displayed in the traditional line-by-line layout. Instead, illustrations, diagrams and pieces of text are arranged over the page and the reader has to search for the information needed.

Learners have to understand not only what the writer is trying to do, but also what the page designer is doing in trying to help the reader. It is desirable to give all learners at all stages experience of using the web purposefully and to show them how text works on screen. This gives them real-life examples of finding information quickly.

Learners will also have opportunities to read images, diagrams, graphs and layout in subjects across the curriculum, for example mathematics and geography, or in the workplace. This is another opportunity for English teachers to work with other teachers to help learners build and practise their functional skills.

Finding your way

In this activity learners use one of the route-finder websites to investigate a journey they have taken or would like to take.

- The learner chooses the starting-point and destination but has to have a reason for their choice.
- When they find the site they have to read and follow the instructions to use the route planner. If they have made the journey before, they can make notes of the route they took and how it differed, or of additional details.
- They can also note any extra information about the journey that the site can provide.
- Finally, they give their opinion on how easy the site was to use. What helped them (eg the text, the maps, other information)? What was not helpful? Did advertising distract them or interest them?

As an extension of the task, they can compare different sites that have the same purpose.

This could be done independently and in their own time. Make sure the learner is aware of the reading skills they are using and reflects on how well they performed the task.

3.3 Improving reading skills

The emphasis of functional skills is on applying reading skills in real or realistic situations. However, many learners will need help with improving aspects of their reading skills before they can apply these skills confidently. This section looks at some of the strategies used by English teachers to support the development of reading skills.

The teaching of higher level reading skills has to be done explicitly and often, using a number of strategies to enable learners to fully understand the writer's intention and the full meaning of a text. The strategies needed include the following.

- **Shared reading** (page 74) allows the teacher to model close reading, discuss why words and phrases have been selected, and encourage the learners to identify possible effects.
- **Guided reading** (page 76) is very effective in exploring more demanding texts and sharing ideas in a cooperative situation with smaller groups.
- **Questioning techniques** (page 77) will help learners read and respond independently and appropriately. Letting learners devise their own questions is a useful technique that advances their ability to make meaning from a text.
- **Close reading techniques** (page 78) such as text marking help to reveal the hidden meaning in a text but also encourage the learner to express their own ideas.
- **Note making techniques** (page 81) such as lists and spider diagrams help learners to identify the main points in a text.

You should constantly reinforce the need for the learner to 'read as a writer and to write as a reader' in order to be aware of both audience and purpose, and provide frequent opportunities to identify how a text works and whether the writer has been successful in their aim.

Shared reading

Shared reading is a group activity where learners all use the same text. You can use this technique to extend the reading skills of all levels of learner by varying the challenge of the text.

Shared reading involves:

- choosing an appropriate text for the topic and the learner(s)
- introducing the text – for example, by discussing who wrote it, for what purpose
- projecting the text onto a screen or using a large printed version so the whole group can see it
- annotating the text so that learners see clearly which words are needed to answer a specific question.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Shared reading is particularly valuable for learners at Level 1 or below who gain access to texts of greater richness and complexity than they otherwise would be able to read. It builds confidence, avoids embarrassment and teaches more advanced skills. However, it is equally valuable for teaching the higher-level skills of inference and deduction and highlighting the difference between fact and opinion. It allows the learner to see as well as hear the discussion and the evidence used to support the answer.

- You can teach the technique of questioning a text for the writer's intention and then ask learners to do a similar activity independently having seen what they have to do and how they are to do it.
- You can demonstrate reading strategies such as re-reading, predicting, skimming and scanning.

Reading a recipe

This activity suggests one way of using shared reading to read and understand a new recipe. Choose an illustrated recipe from a magazine or cookbook so that the illustration can be included alongside the text and considered in the discussion. The same approach could be used with other reading material – for example, a hairdressing or motor vehicle magazine or a brochure for a travel agent or retail firm.

Ideally, project the text itself or a photograph of it onto a screen – overhead projectors work well as you can write your annotations directly onto the transparency. If projection facilities are not available then photocopy the text to a size that all learners can see and display it at the front. Again you can annotate this photocopy. Alternatively, you can reproduce the recipe on A3 size paper so that small groups can work together, or A4 for pairs or individuals.

- Establish the text type and its purpose. Ask learners in pairs what they think they already know about this text type and how it works.
- Identify any words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. These can be ingredients or cooking techniques. List them at the side of the text.
- Discuss the format. How is the recipe arranged and why is it arranged that way (eg, ingredients at the beginning, instructions, any information about nutritional value, calorie and fat content)?
- Read the whole text with them or ask them to read it for themselves before starting to analyse it.
- Look at the choice of words and the simplicity of the instructions. Why is simplicity necessary? Do the instructions work? Identify the steps in the process and model what happens when a step is missing. Annotate the text as you discuss it, eg imperative verbs (such as 'sit down' or 'follow') that tell the reader what to do.
- Ask learners to judge whether the writer achieved their objective. Could learners make the dish? Was the recipe easy to understand? How would they improve it?

You could extend the session by providing another recipe or recipes, doing the same task and then comparing them. Learners can choose the best, giving reasons for their choice.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Guided reading

Guided reading is a way of working with a small group on a shared text to develop reading strategies. It is useful for all levels of learner and can be used to teach higher level questioning of the text. The complexity of the text can be matched to the ability of the group but, as with shared reading, the technique helps learners to access texts that they would be unable to read independently.

The benefits of guided reading are that learners:

- can take more responsibility for improving their reading
- obtain instant feedback on their success and also help on how to improve
- share their learning with the group and learn from each other by evaluating their performance together
- have an opportunity to discuss their reading and give their opinions
- can have targets set and regularly reviewed.

Guided reading can be part of a broad learning sequence for a number of lessons and act as a link between whole group work and independent work. However, the guided session itself is divided into clear sections to form a regular and systematic instructional sequence of its own, as in this example.

Using guided reading

Identify a small group of learners who have a similar learning need and choose a time when you can spend at least 20 minutes with them. Choose a text that will fit the needs and interests of the learners and prepare some questions about it in advance. Aim for a mix of questions with some where the answers can easily be found in the text, and others that call for 'reading between the lines'. Present these in a handout.

The guided reading sequence is as follows.

- Begin by introducing the text – discuss as a group what kind of text it is.
- Discuss possible reading strategies to use with this text and agree together which will be the best to adopt.
- Ask each learner to read the material independently and answer the questions – while they do this you can go round the group supporting individuals.
- Return to the text as a group and develop the responses to the questions as a group activity.
- Set individual targets and plan next steps.

This approach gives you an opportunity to assess the progress each learner is making. Assessing reading in this way is formative for the learner and informative for the teacher.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Questioning techniques

Another important technique is questioning. You can question learners about their reading to:

- check their reading and understanding
- help them to develop their own ability to raise and formulate questions.

This requires planning and an understanding of how to extend the learner's thinking and responses to texts. When questioning learners, you should avoid:

- asking too many of the same type of question
- expecting quick responses and, if they are not forthcoming, answering the question yourself
- asking too many questions at once
- focusing on a small number of learners, not involving the whole group.

It is helpful to:

- plan questions in advance and write them down so that the learners can see as well as hear the questions being asked
- use a mixture of 'open' and 'closed' questions. Closed questions are useful to check understanding during explanations and to check recall. Open questions develop higher order skills and encourage a variety of acceptable responses
- allow enough time for individuals or pairs to consider their response to the questions. In this way everyone participates and has to pay attention. It also allows time to extend their thinking from the concrete and factual to the analytical and evaluative.

SQ3R

Questioning is a vital part of the technique called 'SQ3R'. SQ3R stands for:

- Survey – skim the text, looking at main headings and subheadings, introductory and concluding paragraphs, etc
- Question – ask questions you hope the text will answer
- Read – read the text carefully, concentrating on reading each section fully
- Recall – go through the text in your mind, trying to sum up the main point of each section
- Review – go back to the text to check you have understood the main points.

You can use this technique whenever learners need to read extended material for their studies or work. After the initial survey, ask the learners to write down some questions they will try to answer during their reading. After their reading, ask them to reflect on how well their questions worked, and how they might improve them next time.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Close reading techniques

The ability to read texts closely is essential if learners are to become functional readers. For example, they will need to be able to follow written instructions or read the small print in credit agreements.

We introduce here four activities that encourage close reading: cloze, sequencing, text marking and text restructuring.

These activities are most effective when worked on by a pair or small group as the discussion of possibilities leads to a closer look at the text.

Cloze

Cloze involves giving learners a text with individual words removed and asking them to fill the gaps. It helps them to:

- pay close attention to the meaning of each sentence
- choose a word that fits grammatically
- use their existing knowledge of the topic
- work out likely answers from the rest of the text
- work out what will fit with the style of the text – for example, whether a word has already occurred in the sentence
- attend to the whole sentence by reading and re-reading.

Do:

- organise the learners into pairs or small groups
- allow sufficient time to complete the task. However, it is the process that matters more than the completion of the task
- acknowledge alternative answers if they make sense
- review the reading strategies they used, for example re-reading, reading aloud, trying alternatives, predicting.

Don't:

- give the first letter of the missing words. Research shows that learners do not read the whole text when this is done
- give a list of the missing words. This simplifies the task and the reader can complete it without reading closely. They have to discuss alternatives and try them out
- focus on the missing words alone, especially when giving answers, rather than the meaning of the whole paragraph or text.

Sequencing

Sequencing involves cutting a text into sections and asking learners to put it back together. It helps them to:

- practise reading and re-reading

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- pay close attention to the structure of the text
- pay close attention to link words
- hunt for the logic or organising principle of the text, eg chronological order
- draw on their previous experience and earlier reading.

Do:

- choose the text carefully and anticipate how much time it will take to complete
- arrange that learners work in pairs
- encourage re-reading of the reconstructed text. Many learners are not in the habit of re-reading.

Don't:

- cut the text into so many pieces that it is too difficult to reconstruct
- divide a text up into the most obvious sections, for example by leaving connectives such as 'then', 'next' and 'finally' at the beginning of sections. The learner may not read the text but will use these clues to put the text back together like a jigsaw.

Text marking

Text marking involves underlining, annotating or numbering the text to show relevant points and sequence. It helps learners to:

- skim and scan to find specific information
- differentiate between different categories of information
- decide which information is relevant
- find the main idea(s)
- question the information presented in the text.

Do:

- encourage learners to work as individuals, pairs or small groups
- be very clear in your instructions about exactly what learners are looking for or they will mark too much of the text, which defeats the object
- ask for a combination of highlighting and annotation containing some explanation
- provide a sufficient variety of pens in different colours. Learners can use different colours to highlight different points, even in the same piece of text
- review by marking the text together in shared reading
- provide written instructions as well as telling them what to do. Learners often lose focus once they begin reading and they need to be able to check their instructions

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- recognise the value of incorrect answers as they can be used to point out misconceptions.

Text restructuring

Text restructuring involves reading and then putting the information into another format, for example flowcharts, diagrams, Venn diagrams, grids, lists, maps. It helps learners to:

- identify what is key and relevant in a text
- apply what they know in a new context
- remodel the content and the format of the text
- read critically
- summarise and prioritise.

Do:

- have a completed version to hand
- be clear about the task and demonstrate if necessary
- use ICT to construct graphs and charts (this saves time)
- point out to learners the number of texts that use a combination of writing and diagrams etc to make meaning.

Combining techniques

To improve the learner's choice and use of reading strategies:

- first teach a variety of close reading techniques in shared and guided reading sessions
- show explicitly, by modelling and by underlining pieces of text, what you have done and how you did it. This makes the invisible visible, so that your thought processes are made explicit as you say aloud what you are doing and why
- make your reasons for selecting a particular strategy clear and show how the task is completed successfully
- devise activities that require the learner to identify the strategies they would use independently
- encourage working in pairs and small groups so learners can debate their choices.

Resources: There is more useful material on close reading strategies in *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Making a claim

Obtain copies of guarantee documents that are relevant to learners – they could for example be for a mobile phone, iPod, mountain bike, or a piece of sports equipment. Begin the activity by discussing as a whole group the kinds of loss or damage they might experience.

- Divide the group into pairs (or threes with one person acting as observer). Give each pair a guarantee document.
- One person in each pair devises a scenario for a claim that they might need to make. The other person will be from the claims department of the supplier or manufacturer.
- Each person reads the guarantee. They could use text marking to highlight those parts of the guarantee relevant to the claim.
- The person making the claim then tries to convince the other that their claim is valid. The other looks for flaws in their claim. They both quote from the guarantee.
- Debrief as a whole group. What reading strategies helped? What kinds of things should they look out for when studying a guarantee?

Note making techniques

Close reading techniques help learners to identify the relevant points quickly. An equally important part of the process is making notes. Learners often note too much or miss out the important detail such as the page or web address that they will need to find the information again. Learners often copy out chunks of text because they are not sure what to leave in and what to leave out.

You can encourage learners to try out a variety of note making techniques. These can include:

- listing and using bullet points
- creating spider diagrams
- concept mapping
- using grids with category headings such as 'know', 'don't know'.

As learners develop their independent reading strategies, they should be able to choose the note making technique that is appropriate for a particular task. Learners often have a particular preference for either a textual or a pictorial representation – encourage them to develop the technique that suits them best.

Learners often find it difficult to identify the main points in a text. They find that all the information is relevant to the subject but they fail to identify what is relevant to the task. Ways of helping them include:

- modelling different note making approaches during shared reading. As you make notes you explicitly describe what you are doing and why.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- asking them to cross out words in a text that are not needed or that repeat an idea that has gone before. They can then highlight the main points that are left or capture the ideas in a visual way such as a zig-zag outline.
- playing a game where learners quickly identify main points. For example, write a short statement and ask the group to decide which words to keep and which to delete. They have to choose the key words and phrases but keep the meaning.

Resources: There is more useful material on supporting note making in *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). There are also 'How to...' sheets (Key Skills Support Programme) on linear notes and mind maps. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Supporting Entry level learners

Learners working at Entry 1 to 3 often lack confidence and self-esteem when confronted with learning challenges they have encountered and found difficult many times before, particularly when they have literacy difficulties. You need to:

- show them how to do things through demonstration or modelling – all the techniques we have looked at (shared and guided reading, text marking, questioning) can be used
- break down learning into small steps, often using concrete examples so that learners can fully understand and experience the meaning and the reason for doing something
- provide frequent opportunities to tackle those aspects of reading that they have yet to master
- give them appropriate challenges, for example planning an activity that moves from the concrete to the abstract.

Entry level learners benefit most if you work in the following ways.

- Be specific about the learning outcome you want from a particular task or activity. The outcome needs to address the quantity and more importantly the quality of the work to be produced. The learner is then clear about what they are learning, what you are looking for and why.
- Offer immediate feedback on their work and praise for success to improve self-esteem and confidence. Set tasks frequently that give opportunities for success. This does not mean over-simplifying but breaking each task down into small steps with success recognised at each stage.
- Ensure they have the chance to improve their work and correct mistakes. They need to see and understand where and why they went wrong and how to put it right before moving to the next area for development. Make the learning secure and revisit often to remind them of key areas.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- Encourage learners to work with a partner. All learners benefit from the opportunity to discuss possibilities but for Entry level learners it provides the opportunity to explore and check out approaches with the support of a partner. This helps build confidence.
- Make sure that much of the learning is related to real life. Seeing the relevance and application of a skill motivates the learner to achieve it. This is especially true for learners who are already working in a particular vocational sector.
- Use games and competitions to motivate learners and make mundane tasks 'fun'.

Instructions and directions

One way in which Entry level learners can learn to read functionally is by following written instructions. For this activity, write out a set of directions relevant to your learners – for example:

- to a location in the school or college
- to deliver an item to another part of the workplace.

Begin by discussing the purposes of written instructions and the fact that they have to be clear, accurate and easy to follow.

Then send the learners out in pairs to check the instructions and revise them if necessary.

Ask them to write a set of instructions for another pair to check in the same way.

A variation is to make this activity a treasure hunt where learners have to retrieve a number of items as they follow the route. This adds instructions for collection to the directions and extends the task. It also adds an element of competition.

3.4 Applying reading skills

Learners may need to apply their reading skills in a wide variety of ways.

- They may be asked to **research information** about a topic – for example about an aspect of their work, or in preparation for a potential purchase.
- They may need to **summarise** a document or documents – their manager may ask them to read a report and present the main implications at a team meeting.
- They will need to be able to 'read between the lines', for example to **detect bias** in a newspaper article or advertisement.
- They may need to **respond** to what they read – for example, to reply to a letter of complaint.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

These activities are central to being a functional reader and are reflected in the Level 2 reading component of functional English, as follows.

Skill standard: Compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions.

Coverage and range:

- select and use different types of texts to obtain relevant information
- read and summarise succinctly information/ideas from different sources
- identify the purposes of texts and comment on how effectively meaning is conveyed
- detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias
- read and actively respond to different texts (for example, reply to each point in a letter of complaint)

in a wide range of texts for different purposes, on paper and on screen

In the real world reading is likely to be one part of carrying out a task, taking a decision or solving a problem which may also involve speaking and/or writing and/or mathematics and/or ICT. The activities in this section will help learners to practise and apply these skills.

Researching information

Examples of functional research activities include:

- in health and social care, finding out about how clients from different cultures differ in how they communicate or their dietary needs
- in art, finding out about a particular artist or movement
- in leisure and tourism, researching trends in visitor preferences
- in history or geography, consulting primary and secondary sources
- in citizenship, investigating leisure facilities or council spending in the local area.

There are four key stages in undertaking a research task.

- Stage 1 – Establishing purpose. At this stage learners need to think clearly about what they already know, what they need to find out, how much, who for, and what they will do with the information.
- Stage 2 – Locating information. Accessing large amounts of information is not difficult. Indeed, it is often the large amount available, especially on the internet, that creates the challenge. Learners have to master the skills of selecting the relevant and rejecting the irrelevant. In particular, they will need to:

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

- skim a text to get an overall impression and main points
- scan a text to pick out specific information.
- Stage 3 – Interacting with the text. They may need to:
 - select relevant information
 - summarise accurately
 - make notes effectively.
- Stage 4 – Shaping and communicating information.

Resources: There is more on researching information in Unit 13: Developing reading in *Pedagogy in practice* (Secondary National Strategy). There are also 'How to...' sheets (Key Skills Support Programme) on the specific skills. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

The next activity suggests one way of doing this.

Structuring a research task

This activity involves an individual learner or small group in collecting and selecting information.

Agree a topic with the learner(s). This should ideally relate to their subject or vocational area. Place a strict limit on the amount of information required to prevent the download of numerous (largely unread) pages from the internet.

- Firstly, the learner(s) identifies what they want to find out and how they are going to do it.
- The learner(s) chooses sources of information, eg newspaper, magazine, website, television. Ask them to give reasons for the selection.
- The learner(s) selects, within the limit given, the relevant information and records references and main points or extracts. They may need reminding about using a note making technique.

The learner(s) then present their findings to the whole group covering where they found the information, the decisions they made about selection and relevance, and the problems they faced. This can be done using PowerPoint (which makes a link with ICT), a collage of material with written notes, or a talk to a group.

Bear in mind that learners may need to research and give a presentation in a range of subjects, including applied courses such as art, textiles, and design and technology, and work-based or work-related learning. This is a good opportunity for an English teacher to support staff in other departments to make sure learners benefit to the full from practising and applying their English skills.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Summarising

Effective summarising is the ability to select the main points from a text and present them in a concise and ordered manner. This involves collecting information, sorting and classifying, and sequencing. In the process learners must learn to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of the information and become confident in making judgements.

Examples of functional summarising tasks could include:

- summarising a recent report or piece of legislation and its implications for a care home or equivalent organisation
- summarising a chapter about Hitler's foreign policy for an essay
- summarising a series of articles about recent local crimes for a citizenship group.

You can help learners develop this skill by following a sequence of:

- helping learners to use effective note making techniques
- demonstrating how to edit text
- asking learners to use text marking to highlight key words and phrases
- asking learners to write a summary with a given word limit.

Barbados and beyond

This activity is designed for Levels 1 and 2 learners in travel and tourism, though it may be of interest to learners in other subjects as well, or could easily be adapted for other vocational sectors – for example, for researching different hair-styling techniques in hair and beauty, or different car manufacturers in motor vehicle engineering. You could use it with individuals or groups.

- Begin by asking learners (as individuals or in pairs/trios) to identify a holiday destination. They will read about the destination and prepare a fact sheet for customers.
- Discuss where they might obtain reading material about the destination – for example, travel brochures, travel guides, newspaper articles, the internet. Discuss any issues in interpreting the material – for example, travel brochures are likely to be written persuasively.
- Learners then obtain material, read and review it – is it accurate, current, and relevant to customers?
- Finally, learners prepare a fact sheet for customers with ten top tips.

Resources: This activity is adapted from the Key Skills Support Programme *Teaching and learning pack* 'Inside travel'. There are further relevant resources in this pack and ideas for similar activities in the other packs in the series. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Detecting bias

A crucial aspect of functional reading, which is specified in the Level 2 functional English standards, is being able to question and judge the accuracy, relevance and status of the information we read. In particular, learners need to know how to recognise biased, persuasive or misleading information. For example:

- recognising bias in a newspaper article
- being aware that an advertisement is using persuasive language
- recognising the use of selective statistics to support an argument.

Looking for bias requires close reading, including the small print, and then judging whether the statement or claim is justified. Learning to base judgements on evidence, and to cross-reference when in doubt, is a skill that all learners need to develop.

The following activity is relevant to Level 2 functional English as it asks learners to compare a variety of texts rather than concentrating on just one.

Looking at audience and purpose

Identify (or ask learners to obtain) a variety of documents relevant to their interests, subject or vocational area. Choose texts from magazines and other sources that have different audiences and purposes, eg to entertain, to inform, to persuade, to instruct. Include advertisements and difficult writing such as instructions that are hard to follow or in small print.

- Ask learners to work in groups of three. Give each group four texts.
- Ask each group to match each of the texts to categories – entertain, inform, persuade, instruct.
- Ask them to identify the audience for each text. You can either give them cards with possible audiences identified or ask them to write on blank cards the age, sex and interests of the audience they think each document would suit.
- Ask each group to make notes on the features of the text, such as the use of language, images and font, and to explain how each of these features suggests a particular audience and purpose.
- Then ask each group to identify criteria that they will use to judge the success or failure of their texts, eg reading level (vocabulary and sentence length), appeal of content, clarity of instructions, human interest, colour and layout.
- Finally, ask the groups to use their criteria to decide how successful and suited to its purpose each piece of writing has been.

Adapted from *Leading in Learning. Developing thinking skills at Key Stage 3 Handbook for teachers* pp.49–50.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Responding actively to texts

Reading functionally goes beyond reading and understanding a text into taking action based on what we have read and understood. Level 2 functional English expects learners to 'read and actively respond to different texts'. For example:

- deciding how to respond to a design brief in engineering or design
- replying to a letter of complaint in business administration or customer service
- in everyday life, following instructions or directions.

Activities like these call for the decision making and problem solving skills that are central to functional skills. Such problem solving tasks offer opportunities to link to real life and thinking skills as well as to the other English skills of speaking and listening, and writing.

There is a close connection between analysing and understanding texts and writing an appropriate response. The learner can draw upon the models they have read and used in order to follow the conventions and construct their own.

Dealing with a complaint

This activity should be based on a real complaint from a customer. In work-based learning or on work experience this could be a complaint to the learner's workplace. In other contexts, obtain (or ask learners to obtain) a suitable letter to work with.

Firstly, ask the learner to read the letter and make sure it is clear. Are there any points where they may need to seek clarification?

Discuss possible ways of responding to the complaint – there may be company procedures to follow. Learners have to learn that real-life situations often require more than one response, eg following up a customer complaint may involve a letter responding to the points in the original text, a phone call or even a visit to resolve a situation.

Actions could include:

- making a record of the contact and keeping the record of the complaint up to date so that actions taken are logged for future reference
- writing or emailing the customer to acknowledge the letter and promise that you will deal with it
- checking with another colleague – working in pairs helps learners to learn to ask for critical opinion and help
- informing colleagues or a manager by email, memo or phone call as necessary
- making a formal response to the customer once everything is clarified.

There are several possible responses to a letter of complaint but the important point is whether the learner has read the letter carefully and understood the message. This will determine whether the action taken is appropriate and whether the emails, letters, etc are appropriately written.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

Finding opportunities to apply reading skills

A central requirement of functional skills is that the learner demonstrates mastery by showing that they can decide which skills and approaches to use to respond in real situations or to tackle meaningful activities. Handling a complaint, as previously described, is a typical example of selecting an appropriate response for a defined purpose.

Context-based activities should be meaningful and relevant to learners.

They can be:

- related to a course of study, eg GCSE or NVQ
- work-related, eg producing a report, responding to enquiries
- related to life, eg consumer knowledge, citizenship, sport.

Effective functional reading activities:

- encourage active learning
- provide opportunities to develop, demonstrate and master functional English skills
- encourage critical thinking and reflective learning
- develop application of a range of reading strategies in meaningful contexts
- demonstrate the relevance and importance of functional English skills
- demonstrate the close connection between reading and writing
- raise the quality and standard of learners' understanding
- enable learners to make links between the reading skills in the subjects they are studying and the skills needed for work and life.

Examples of activities that require the application of a range of reading skills include:

- assessing how well the UK is meeting its Kyoto targets (in geography)
- planning and carrying out market research for a company or product (in business or travel and tourism, and many other vocational contexts)
- researching life in the trenches in the First World War (in history)
- product analysis and evaluation (in design and technology or manufacturing)
- carrying out a risk assessment (in all vocational contexts)
- identifying a new supplier (in many vocational contexts)
- buying a car, computer, etc (in daily life)
- organising an outing (in health and social care)
- finding out about jobs in a vocational sector.

Teaching and learning functional English: 3. Reading

For each activity, you have to decide how much support to give learners with reading, adjusting the level of challenge and complexity of the text. Learners who are working towards Level 2 should need minimal support; others will need more help with identifying and using sources and choosing appropriate reading strategies.

Learners have to realise that there is not necessarily one correct way of approaching a task and there may be more than one correct response. Choices have to be made but they must be justified.

There are several ways of going about this.

- You can ask learners to identify real problems and situations with speaking and listening, reading and writing they encounter in their life, work or work experience.
- You can talk to vocational or subject specialists about the kinds of challenges in functional English that learners may face in those contexts.
- You can look through existing sets of materials – for example there is an extensive range of key skills assignments on the KSSP website, many of which are relevant to functional English.

Resources: There is a range of valuable ideas for assignments from the Key Skills Support Programme, eg the *Teaching and learning packs*. There is also useful material in *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

4. Writing

Contents

4.1 Introduction

- Writing in functional English
- Progression through the levels
- Using this section

4.2 Audience and purpose

- What writing do you do now?
- Awareness of audience
- The purpose of writing

4.3 Types of document

- Taking messages
- Sending emails
- Filling in forms
- Writing instructions
- Writing short reports
- Writing more complex reports
- Writing letters
- Persuasive writing

4.4 Checking written work

- How to proofread your work

4.5 Improving writing skills

- Analysing a learner's writing
- Writing in sentences
- Spelling
- Punctuation

4.1 Introduction

Writing in functional English

As people progress in their careers their ability to write clearly and accurately becomes more important. As they move into positions of responsibility the demand for writing will increase. This means that developing learners' functional writing skills is not just about the here and now – it is about preparing them for the challenges they will face in the future.

Learners are likely to write in a range of contexts. For example:

- Life: forms, messages, notes, emails and letters – both personal and official
- Work: job applications, records, reports, business letters, emails, etc
- Learning: notes, essays and assignments, science reports, etc.

A piece of writing gives a powerful first impression – and not only of someone's writing skills. Many people will form an overall judgement of an individual just on the basis of what they have written. So what makes the writing 'functional' is that it is fit for the intended purpose and audience. This means that learners will need to be able to adapt their style to fit the context.

Technology has meant that many people are writing more than ever before. Email, texting, msn, MySpace and Facebook all involve composing text.

Employers also have expectations of a potential employee's writing ability. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report (*Working on the three Rs*, August 2006) concluded that many people fell short of the standard required:

'The ability to put together a piece of writing that conveys meaning clearly and accurately is an essential functional skill. The inability [to do this] has serious implications for those seeking work or thinking of changing jobs.

'... spelling and grammar... are widely seen as weak. A functionally literate employee should be expected... to observe basic rules of grammar, be able to spell everyday words correctly, use capital letters and basic punctuation properly, and use a writing style appropriate to the situation.

'(as) some forms have to be completed by hand in most organisations, and these may potentially be called in evidence in legal proceedings, a functionally literate employee should have handwriting that is sufficiently well formed that others will be able to read the text with confidence.'

Teaching functional writing

Functional writing is about applying writing to real examples, situations and tasks. Learners should produce realistic documents that are meaningful for them.

While some learners may need help with specific skills such as spelling or punctuation, the focus of teaching writing in functional English is on applying these skills to a real document rather than teaching them in isolation. So, for

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

example, opportunities for improving spelling will be identified from a learner's actual writing and may include specialist vocabulary relating to a subject, occupation or programme of study.

Because writing features across all curriculum areas, English specialists should ensure that every teacher contributes to the development and improvement of learners' writing ability, providing support and advice where necessary. Other teachers, employers or vocational tutors can help the English teacher by suggesting relevant writing tasks. There are also clear and explicit links between writing in functional English and the ICT functional skill; the functional English curriculum should capitalise on this.

Resources: For more on supporting reading across a learner's programme see *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy) – there are details in section 5, 'References and resources'.

Progression through the levels

'In writing, length, level of detail, awareness of purpose, adaptability and complexity are the key indicators of progression.'

(Functional skill standards: English)

The table below shows the skill standards for writing at each level.

Entry 1	Write short, simple sentences
Entry 2	Write short documents with some awareness of the intended audience
Entry 3	Write documents with some adaptation to the intended audience
Level 1	Write documents to communicate information, ideas and opinions using formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience
Level 2	Write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively

In terms of the technical skills, each level of functional English builds on and includes the previous one. The standards at Level 2 say 'punctuate accurately using commas, apostrophes and inverted commas'. This does not mean that these are the only types of punctuation which must be accurate; Level 2 includes the punctuation required at all previous levels such as capital letters, full stops and question marks.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

In practice, therefore, you should be aware of all the levels, not just the one you may be focusing on with a particular learner or group. Each learner will have individual strengths and weaknesses spread both across the three components of functional English and within each component.

Resources: See section 5, 'References and resources' for information about the *Progression maps* (Secondary National Strategy) which can help with planning progression for your learners.

QCA has produced *Amplification of the functional English standards*, which includes progression grids, as well as *Functional skills English exemplification*.

Using this section

The content of this section is based on five sources of information.

- Skills not currently a focus of GCSE English but which form part of the functional English standards; for example, while letter writing is taught and assessed in GCSE, the focus is on content rather than layout or format, which is a key issue for functionality.
- Weaknesses in writing identified by employers, for example in the CBI Report *Working on the three Rs*, referred to in the introduction to this section.
- Common weaknesses that were found in the functional English assessment trials, many of which echoed weaknesses in previous key skills assessments.
- Use of English in higher education; for example, the CBI's *Employment Trends Survey 2006* showed that 23% of employers were not satisfied with graduates' basic literacy and use of English.
- Areas identified by Skills for Life practitioners as being particular obstacles to progression, in particular when considering progression from Entry 3 to Level 1.

The topics covered are:

- **Audience and purpose** – the importance for learners of clarifying who they are writing for and why
- **Types of document** – focuses on the kinds of functional writing that learners will need to undertake in their lives and work, from sending emails to writing reports
- **Checking written work** – looks at how to help learners to proof-read their work
- **Improving writing skills** – introduces some of the main techniques for helping learners become better writers.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

As you work through the section, it is worth bearing the following points in mind:

- Talking about writing is important and makes the skills involved in writing explicit. Writing can be seen as a solitary task, which will make it more daunting. Using discussion to share ideas and formulate oral text can act as a useful rehearsal for writing.
- Practice is essential – the most effective way for someone to improve writing is to write as much as possible. This can pose a problem for learners who lack confidence with writing and who will try to avoid it as much as possible. The role of the teacher is to build confidence through small and achievable tasks.
- Good quality, comprehensive feedback that provides learners with clear targets is an essential feature of assessment for learning and underpins progress. This means more than marking a learner's work. Oral and written feedback aid understanding and teachers should comment on what has been done well, and why it is good, as well as suggesting improvements.

This all adds up to the need for a personalised approach to learning that is based on the individual learner's needs, the contexts and the writing demands they currently face.

Successful writers

The following provides a brief, but comprehensive overview of what is involved in being an effective writer. It is taken from the introduction to *Pedagogy and Practice; Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools, Unit 14: Developing writing*, but is appropriate to all learners of functional English, whatever their context.

'Writing is probably the most complex task we undertake. In order to be successful, we need to know who we are writing for, what we should write and how we should write it. We also need to know how to spell and how to punctuate so that our meaning is clear to the reader.'

'Successful writers:

- know where they are going and where the writing will end
- can hear the writing inside their heads and make judgements about it so that they can edit it
- use reading to inform writing
- have a range of styles and text types to choose from
- are aware of the needs of the reader
- rehearse and re-read
- concentrate
- attend to their known weaknesses.'

4.2 Audience and purpose

The audience and purpose for writing are central aspects of functional English. An increasing awareness of audience is important as learners progress through the levels and are expected to write for a wider range of people including increasingly unfamiliar audiences.

- At Entry 1, learners are not expected to adapt their style of writing for different audiences. It is expected that they will be writing for a known audience such as others in their class, their workmates, and their friends. Therefore, teachers can tell learners who they are writing for and indeed support them to write appropriately for that audience.
- At Entry 2, learners need to develop 'some awareness of the intended audience'.
- At Entry 3, learners are beginning to extend awareness of audience and to consider the impact this has on language and tone.
- By Level 1, there is greater emphasis on writing for unknown audiences and setting writing in more formal contexts. Activities would still be mainly straightforward.
- By Level 2, learners need to be capable of writing documents that are intended for an unknown audience and a variety of different purposes, all of which they should be capable of identifying. They should be confident in selecting appropriate formats to employ and the tone, register and style in which to write them. There should also be evidence that they fully understand the purpose and effect of what they write (eg subjective/objective, ability to persuade).

What writing do you do now?

A starting point for talking about writing in functional English is to ask learners to think about what writing they have to do at the moment and how they feel about it. Depending on their context the writing demand is likely to vary a great deal. For example:

- a learner at Key Stage 4 will be expected to do a great deal of writing for coursework and homework for a wide range of subjects; these will involve a range of types of writing
- a work-based learner, such as an apprentice, will be involved in writing related to their occupation. So, for example, a care worker will need to write care plans for clients and to keep records, while a motor vehicle engineer will need to prepare service reports
- a college-based learner studying for a Diploma will need to write assignments and reports, using specialist vocabulary linked to their programme
- an adult learner may be more focused on writing in everyday life and will need to write letters, complete forms, etc.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Functional English is not just about the 'here and now' of writing. It is about preparing learners for the demands that will be made on them in the future.

What do you write?

Ask learners to make a list of the things they have to write now. They could categorise these in terms of work, study or personal life.

- What writing do they find difficult or try to avoid?
- Why do they think this is the case?

Move on to ask learners what they think they will need to write

- in the future
- in everyday life
- in further study
- in work.

Extension work could include describing the job or career they are aiming for and to think about what they will need to write in the future.

Awareness of audience

There are clear links with reading here (see pages 65–90) and it is helpful to encourage learners not just to consider audience in terms of what they are writing but also in terms of what they are reading, ie they become the audience.

Collect a wide range of different types of text – reports, adverts/leaflets, newspaper extracts. In small groups, ask learners to identify:

- Who is the audience for this?
- Why has it been written?
- How do the audience and purpose affect the content and how it has been written?

Another way of developing awareness of audience is to ask learners to match up two sets of cards. On one set you can print a range of notes or messages, and on the other set a range of possible audiences. Ask learners to match the message to the audience. You can also ask them to consider how different language might affect different readers.

Learners can then apply this to planning their own writing, perhaps by using a checklist like the one in Figure 4.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Figure 4

Audience analysis checklist	
Ask learners to conduct a detailed audience analysis before they start to plan and draft a document.	
Characteristic	Notes
Who are the reader(s)? (eg customer, manager, teacher, public, friend)	
Why will they be reading what you write?	
How much do they already know about the subject?	
How old are they?	
Are they women, men or both?	
What is their literacy level?	

The purpose of writing

Learners need to be absolutely clear about the overall purpose of any writing task they are set. It helps if you can define this with them. The main text types are:

- instruction
- recount
- explanation
- information
- persuasion
- discussion
- analysis
- evaluation.

The text type also influences the overall structure and the kind of sentence required. Learners at Entry levels will be using a more limited range of text types, but those at Level 2 will need to be proficient with all of them. It helps to discuss these with learners and to be explicit about which may be needed for a particular task you have set. They may also need to combine a number of text types in one document; knowledge about the various types will help them with this.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Resources: *Literacy across the curriculum* (Secondary National Strategy) provides detailed descriptions of the text types. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

At Level 2, it is also worth introducing the concept of register. This is more than just the vocabulary used but about the whole way in which the writer addresses the audience. The growth of email and texting has resulted in a danger of informal register carrying over to formal writing.

4.3 Types of document

The types of document learners could be writing are listed in the coverage and range at each level of the standards. These are examples of the type of writing learners may do, and should not necessarily be seen as comprehensive or exclusive. For example, Entry 1 mentions 'documents such as forms, messages, or notes' but this should not prevent learners composing emails if this is relevant and achievable for them.

Completing official forms, passing on written messages and composing short emails or memos are skills essential for any young person entering employment or continuing with education or training, and as a citizen. Most of these straightforward activities require learners to read or listen to instructions and then write down what is required in a legible and understandable way.

Documents may be informal – for oneself or a familiar audience – or formal. Whether a written communication is formal depends to a great extent on the audience and purpose, as well as the type of document. So, an email can be formal (if it is for a business communication or to an organisation), or it can be informal (if it is being sent to a friend or relative). This table gives examples of the main types of document:

Informal documents	Formal documents
Messages Emails Notes Personal letters Lists (eg shopping)	Messages Emails Notes (eg lecture notes) Log books (eg work experience) Business letters, job application letters, letters to official bodies/organisations Forms Directions Instructions Reports Essays Procedures and experiments Minutes of meetings Portfolios, records of achievement

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Encourage learners to think about the differences between formal and informal contexts. For example, you can support them in using email for a variety of work-related activities such as submitting assignments. Ask them to consider the differences between these and the informal emails they write to friends.

This section looks at the main types of document in greater detail.

Taking messages

Taking messages and passing them on to another person is something that most people have to do at some time, both in personal life and at work.

Messages are part of the writing standards from Entry 1.

Learners can benefit from practising capturing the main points of a message and noting these down. There are a number of short activities that can be built around message-taking that learners will find interesting and enjoyable.

Pass it on

You can read out a verbal message, at normal speaking rate, and ask the group to make a note of it. They then compare what they have written.

You can record a range of 'voicemail' messages and ask learners to make notes of them, working individually or in pairs.

Taking messages involves listening skills – see the message-taking exercise in the Speaking and listening section for more ideas (page 52).

Sending emails

Emails are specifically introduced at Entry 3 but simple emails could provide learners working at lower levels with the chance to communicate with a wider range of people. This is particularly true for those for whom handwriting is difficult.

At work, email is now one of the main methods of communication with colleagues and customers. Learners are often quite adept at writing emails to peers and feel confident that messages can be understood. However, they have to be aware of audience and the (mis)use of texting language in particular. Because learners may have developed their use of email in their personal life, it is important to discuss the differences between an informal email and a more formal one. It is sometimes the case that a work email is written in an inappropriate tone and register, or that young workers communicate at work in the same way as they would with familiar audiences, such as friends.

Spend time looking at email etiquette. For example writing in CAPITAL letters is like shouting and symbols, such as smiley faces, should not be used in a formal email. Ask learners how they think they should start and end an email. Should it be 'Dear...' or 'Hi'? A common way to end emails respectfully is 'Kind regards'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Many people do not check emails carefully enough before sending them which makes it more likely that they will contain errors. Encourage learners to read any email before they send it, pointing out that it is often harder to check work on screen.

If you want to explore these issues further, an internet search will result in a range of sources. The following is taken from www.dynamoo.com/technical/etiquette.htm:

‘It can be normal day-to-day email messages that can cause the most problems, with their offhand remarks and unguarded comments, thoughtless turns of phrase and careless wording. Care must be taken both when sending an email message, and, perhaps more importantly, when reading it. Try not to be too harsh if there’s a chance that you might have misinterpreted the sender’s meaning.

‘One problem with less formal email is missed signals – the written message doesn’t come with facial expressions or gestures that you would get in a face-to-face meeting, and there’s no tone of voice to interpret as you could over the telephone. A great deal of human communication comes from these non-verbal signals and traditionally they help to make the message more clear. For example, irony and humour can be difficult to express in a mail message.’

The site also contains a useful list of tips and do’s and don’ts for email.

Writing on screen

Learners are required at all levels to write documents on paper and on screen (eg emails). This is an opportunity to capitalise on the strong links between writing and the ICT functional skill.

Using word-processing, along with the ‘write–review–edit–redraft’ model, allows learners to redraft without the physical effort involved in using pen and paper. However, it introduces other risks, including typos, errors when cutting-and-pasting, omissions and over-reliance on the spellchecker. Many professional editors find it helpful to combine the two methods, ie to print a hard copy of a document, edit and improve it by hand, then key in the corrections on screen.

Some teachers may require writing to be completed quite quickly – one piece a week is often a minimum requirement in English programmes. Teachers should take account of the fact that writers deliver at different speeds; some are prolific while others take ages over a single piece. Writing in functional English is about quality rather than quantity, and learners should be able to work on a piece until they are satisfied with it.

If we step back a bit we can give learners time to dwell on their written work. This allows the writing process to be more natural and the learner is not under pressure of time. The redraft is then not ‘extra work’ – it is simply the work for today or tomorrow. It should happen as part of a calm and thoughtful process of editing, incubation and revision.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Filling in forms

We all have to fill in forms. Even people who have good writing skills can be daunted by official forms – often because some forms are badly constructed or ambiguous. Functional English provides an excellent opportunity to help learners at all levels to cope with form-filling. Forms are mentioned in the functional English standards from Entry 1.

Forms, forms, forms

It should be easy to get hold of a wide range of forms to give learners practice with this often tedious, but essential, task.

Most forms will be too complex for Entry level learners and you may consider preparing a very simple one that asks only for information such as their name, address, date of birth, etc.

Encourage learners to work in groups to complete forms and discuss them.

Learners at Levels 1 and 2 might also like to review forms critically and suggest how they could be improved. This will develop useful skills for those who are, or will be, required to produce questionnaires as part of their study or work.

Encourage learners to read the instructions on the form carefully before they start to write on it. Most of us will have had the experience of starting to fill out a form before we notice, for example, that we have to complete it in capitals or black ink.

Forms are also one of the occasions when we may have to use handwriting, although an increasing number of forms are done on screen. Learners should also be given opportunities to practise both methods.

Writing instructions

Learners may need to write instructions in their work and lives. For example, many organisations ask their staff to write up procedures as part of a quality manual so that other people can carry out a task successfully.

Writing instructions can provide really useful and interesting activities which can be fun, relevant to a range of levels and provide stepping-stones to more demanding writing tasks. Instructions can also remove some of the fear of writing because:

- the step-by-step format of instructions provides a scaffolding for the writing
- learners are likely to have a clear idea of the context and content of what they are writing.

Follow this

Ask learners to work in pairs. One person writes some instructions for the other and then watches them try to follow the instructions. They then sit down together to review the instructions and reflect on how they might improve them.

You could take this further by asking learners to look at instructions for household or work equipment and try to improve them.

Writing short reports

Reports are probably the most common type of more extensive document at work. They are usually written at the request of someone else. There are many different types of reports including:

- a report which has been written to record something which has happened, for example an accident report
- a regular requirement, for example a progress report
- investigating a particular issue, for example use of the school library
- reporting on new information, for example a research report.

Many learners may be expected to write short informal reports for their programme such as a scientific report or a report on a project for a Diploma. This is a good opportunity for English teachers to work closely with staff in other departments.

A report is one of the most formal kinds of writing that many people have to produce. Reports are sometimes written for, and read by, people whom the writer does not know. Therefore, they should be written in reasonably formal language using a formal register and tone.

It is particularly important that reports are well structured; some learners may have difficulty with this. The material in the Reading section on text restructuring and note making is helpful here (see pages 80 and 81). Another useful technique is the use of writing frames.

Helping learners with structure – using writing frames

Writing frames are popular and effective in the support of writing. The principle is simple enough – a page with a series of boxes containing suggestions for writing offers a scaffolding within which the writer can build the text. The teacher contributes the suggestions as appropriate.

In the simplest form, each box contains ideas for a given paragraph of the final text. Thus a weak writer can be shepherded through the writing by being given detailed guidance in the form of ideas or a structured writing plan which can be added to at will. A stronger learner might be given a frame providing less support.

In this way, frames can be used to personalise teaching and learning. Moreover, using frames for introducing a new type of writing is particularly helpful as the technique can help to provide the structure which is often an important element of the new type of writing.

Many organisations have a 'house style' for reports, setting out how to present the title and sub-headings, whether to use numbered sections, or a contents page to help readers find what they want quickly. The key to the format has to be to help the reader find the particular information they need as easily as possible.

Short reports often have a pre-set format, as in a report form that requires certain information to be entered under given headings. If no headings are supplied, then it makes sense to use an overall title or main heading, indicating what the report is about, followed by sub-headings showing key sections.

- Introduction (for example, who asked for the report, why it is being written)
- Findings (for example, an explanation of what happened, when, where, why)
- Conclusion (for example, what needs to be done, who needs to know)

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Jigsaw report

This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

- Begin by discussing the kinds of reports that learners have experienced. Younger learners may have experienced only school reports but older learners may mention accident reports, insurance claims, care reports, research reports, or reports of action taken at work. It may be helpful to provide a selection of report forms, eg from insurance companies, vets, police, school/college/workplace, templates from science subjects, before you continue the discussion. What common features do they have?
- Give learners a report 'cut up' – or ask them to cut one up themselves. Ask them to re-assemble the parts into a clear and logical report and decide which section each part should go into.
- Ask learners to reflect on the devices that make reports easier to follow, such as clear headings, numbered sections, appendices for background information.
- Ask them to look at the language, tone and style used in a sample report.

Writing more complex reports

Learners at Levels 1 and 2 will need to produce more detailed, longer reports. You may want to introduce them to some of the terminology for reports which they will meet in industry or higher education such as:

- **Title, date and author** – this may be at the top of the report or on a separate front sheet
- **Terms of reference** – what the report-writer was tasked to do and report on
- **Executive summary** – a brief summary of the report
- **Procedure** – how the information was gathered
- **Findings** – the main part of the report. Often with further sub-headings, bullet points, progressive indentation, and numbered sections and sub-sections (eg 2.2)
- **Conclusions** – key points summarised from the findings
- **Recommendations** – suggestions as to what should be done, if requested
- **Appendix/Appendices** – additional information referred to in the report which is useful, but not essential, information. This would include copies of any questionnaire used, list of contributors or people consulted

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Some useful guidance for aspects of report writing include the following.

- Titles of books, magazines, plays and albums should be in italic type or inverted commas.
- References to sources of information should give enough detail for the reader to be able to find the original. Check that you have given titles of publications, web addresses etc accurately.
- Tables, diagrams and illustrations may need to be numbered if there are several of them and you want to refer to them in the text. Check that they are numbered in the correct order, that any cross-references are accurate and that captions are clear.
- Numbers in a table should add up correctly, for example percentages should total 100%.
- Abbreviations and acronyms should be given in full the first time they are used, for example World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Write a report

Encourage learners to produce real reports by commissioning them to do so. Examples include:

- a report of a risk assessment in school, college or the workplace
- a report about the dietary needs of children or elderly people (health and social care)
- a report about jobs in the sector or industry they are working in or would like to work in
- a report about a holiday destination (travel) or hair treatment (hairdressing)
- a science report.

You can encourage group work by asking members of a group to contribute to different sections of a report; this will help to emphasise the need for impersonal language.

School and college students could link this with work they are doing in other subjects such as science, or an aspect of their course such as a service user report in care, while learners at work could look at the reports written by their company, either for internal or external circulation.

Resources: A range of resources to support learners in developing report writing skills are listed in section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Revising a report or other extended document

Any report or longer document should be reviewed by the writer before it is submitted, and not just for accuracy. Most people writing longer documents will not write them straight off, in one go. They will draft, redraft and refine and learners should be aware that this is normal; it is not about making mistakes.

This is done much more efficiently with an electronic file. It is easier to work electronically to move text around, especially when dealing with larger 'blocks' of text. It can support the teaching of planning and drafting as well. However, see 'Writing on screen' on page 101.

Plain English

In the functional English standards, the coverage and range at Entry 3 includes 'use basic grammar including appropriate verb-tense and subject-verb agreement...'. At Level 1, there is also '... correct and consistent use of tense'. Reports can provide an opportunity to introduce learners to the passive tense as many organisations expect reports to be written impersonally. This is because it is not who wrote the report that is important but what the report says.

However, there is an increasing awareness by organisations of the value of writing in what is known as 'plain English'. Writing in plain English is not about oversimplifying your message or patronising the reader. It is about getting your points across in the most accessible and straightforward way. Everyone prefers to read a document that is easy to follow, whatever their reading ability.

Writing in plain English is not easy; it takes practice but it is a valuable skill. Some people earn their living by simplifying documents for companies, government departments, lawyers and so on. However, there are a few basic rules that you can introduce to your learners and give them practice with.

- Where possible and appropriate, address the reader as 'you' rather than using the third person.
- Keep sentences short, with one idea to a sentence. Look at sentences and count the words – if a sentence is more than 20 words long, can it be split into two?
- Use active verbs when appropriate. Not only does this make the writing more direct, it avoids the need for some complex clauses.
- Consider vocabulary carefully. This means two things:
 - using shorter, simpler words such as 'show', rather than 'demonstrate' or 'and' rather than 'additionally'
 - but also using specialist terms relevant to your audience.
- Look for words, phrases or sentences that can be deleted without reducing your message; you may be surprised by how many there are. For example 'in order to' can usually just be 'to'.
- Make good use of lists and bullet points.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Keep it simple

Explain the basic rules of plain English to your learners.

Give them a range of documents that are not written in plain English and ask them to review them in groups and comment on how they might be simplified.

Ask learners to rewrite a short piece of writing into plain English.

Encourage them to read documents they come across in the light of the plain English rules (including material provided by teachers, their school/college or workplace) and to bring these in for discussion. They should look for both good and bad examples.

Encourage learners to consider the difference between the active tense and the passive tense (with its emphasis on what was done or discovered).

Encourage discussions about the effect of words on their audience, eg compare 'Students were reluctant to use the refectory at break time because of the lengthy walk involved', with 'I watched the students and it was pretty obvious that they were simply too lazy to make the effort to walk to the refectory at break times'.

Resources: There is a wealth of guidance on the Plain English Campaign website (www.plainenglish.co.uk) including 'How to write reports in plain English' and an 'A-Z of alternative words'. The material is copyright (select 'Legal issues' on the home page) so you will need to ask for permission if you want to print or photocopy it. However, they are happy to respond to requests from teachers. Individual teachers and learners are free to download documents for their personal use.

Writing letters

With the growth of email and texting, informal letters are becoming less common. However, there are still times when it is necessary to write an informal letter, for example to someone who lives some distance away and does not have a computer or someone who prefers to keep in touch by post.

With informal letters, it is expected that the writer and recipient already know each other. Learners at Entry 1 and 2 may particularly benefit from practising writing informal letters where they need to include only simple information such as:

- their own address on the top right-hand side
- the date the letter was written
- starting the letter with 'Dear' and the name of the recipient
- ending the letter in an appropriate way, for example 'Yours truly', 'Best wishes', 'Love from'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Learners should also practise writing the address on the envelope legibly and in the correct position.

Informal letter writing can also be an opportunity to practise handwriting, although learners should feel free to use a computer if they prefer.

Writing formal letters

Most learners will need to write a formal letter at some point. The most common example is a job application, which is crucial for presenting a good first impression. Other examples include letters to confirm appointments, letters to school and complaints. This is another good opportunity for English teachers to work closely with staff in other departments.

For business letters, there is a set of conventions which must be followed.

- It is easy to remember that where a letter starts 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' it should always end 'Yours faithfully'. If it begins 'Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms...' or 'Dear David', it should always end 'Yours sincerely'. The sender's signature must come after this close. As this is the only place the sender's name should appear on a letter, it is important that the sender also prints their name below their signature.
- A letter will sometimes have a subject or topic heading beneath the salutation, briefly describing the focus of the letter. This can be very useful to help organisations prioritise responses or to direct the letter appropriately. For example, a letter sent to the Human Resources Manager, with a heading 'Application for the post of part-time checkout assistant' could be very helpful in ensuring that the letter reaches the right person, particularly if the company is recruiting for a lot of positions at the same time.
- An addition at the end of a letter might be 'Enc' (meaning Enclosed) indicating that something has been sent with the letter and to remind anyone passing the letter on that they need to check it is still there (for example, an application form being sent with a letter of application or a cheque being sent with a letter).

Encourage learners to make sure that formal letters are well laid out on the page and are not cramped. This will assist the reader and help to make a positive first impression.

There are a number of different acceptable layouts for formal letters, for example blocked or indented, left or right aligned, but all must contain the essential information listed above to ensure functionality.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Format for a formal letter

It is important not just to make sure that learners are aware of the conventional format as indicated above, but that they practise this in a range of real-life contexts.

Give them example letters where the format is incorrect in one or more respects and ask them to discuss what problems this might cause the recipient and/or the sender.

Encourage learners to write 'real' letters related to their course, centre or own lives, for example:

- letter to editor of local newspaper in response to criticism of young people recently published (as part of GCSE English work)
- letter to local council about lack of recycling facilities (citizenship)
- letter of complaint
- letter applying for part-time employment in response to advertisements, or letter applying for work experience or thanking them following work experience (PSHE or Diploma)
- letter responding to complaint from customer (NVQ or employment)
- letter accompanying a quotation or estimate (NVQ or employment).

Resources: There is an example of an appropriate layout to use for a formal letter on page 40 of *Teaching and learning communication* (Key Skills Support Programme). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Persuasive writing

At Level 2 the functional English standard says that learners are expected to write 'persuasively'; at Level 1 they must 'communicate... opinions'. Learners often find it difficult to identify techniques of persuasion and to use them effectively. It is useful to use an activity such as writing an estate agent's description of where they live, accentuating the positive and omitting the negative.

- Learning the skills of selecting language to persuade helps the learner to detect bias when reading documents or listening to speeches or debates (see also page 87).
- To communicate an opinion and justify it means being able to select words and phrases or information that will persuade a reader or listener.
- Using persuasive writing can be applied to writing a letter of application when the learner needs to present themselves as an applicant worth interviewing, but at the same time not to over-embellish their skills and attributes.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

- Experience of writing persuasively, as well as reading biased texts, enables the learner to become aware of the intended impact an author has on them as a reader.

4.4 Checking written work

Strictly speaking, 'proof-reading' is a professional skill that is used to check publications before they are printed. In the context of functional English, it refers to learners checking the accuracy of their own written work. Learners may not have a lot of experience of checking their own work and may not see the need for it. It is helpful to stress the importance of this in the real world. Employers have stressed how vital this functional skill is in business where poor spelling, punctuation and grammar in public documents (let alone in internal communications) can not only reflect badly on a company but ultimately could lose them business.

Checking their written work is an essential skill for learners as they move along the continuum from Entry 3 to Levels 1 and 2 and is mentioned specifically at Entry 3 and above. They need to recognise the importance of written text being accurate, and they must be able to identify and correct any errors.

The ability to proof-read and check accurately requires practice and consolidation. Asking learners to work on text other than their own can reduce any initial resistance. The teacher can create text that includes deliberate mistakes.

Peer review of work

One of the best ways to help learners develop their proof-reading skills is to ask them to check one another's work, rather than their own. This avoids the problem, which we all experience when looking at our own writing, of reading what we think we have written, rather than what we have actually written. This is a quote from a Year 11 student about the value of peer reviewing both for developing proof-reading skills and for helping with improvements to their own writing:

'It is hard to read through your own stuff, it is better to read through your partner's and tell them any improvements. If I'm reading my own work I already know what it says so I almost skim read it and do not pick up on the minor mistakes. If you read through your partner's it helps your overall understanding of writing when you're identifying the problem. I look at spelling, if sentences don't work and if they lost the point of what they're saying.'

If you do use peer reviewing you will need to help learners understand how to give feedback in a way that is constructive and not demoralising for their partner. You may also need to think carefully about how you pair learners.

How to proof-read your work

Learners are often just told to 'check their work' without being given much guidance about how to do this. The following checklist will help them to look out for corrections and amendments needed.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Proof-reading checklist

'Proof-reading' is the task of reading and correcting your written work. It is best to proof-read a hard copy of what you have written, such as a printout or handwritten version, rather than checking on screen. This is because it is very easy for your eyes to stray when you are looking at a document on the computer.

If you can, give yourself a bit of a break between writing and proof-reading your work so that you come to it with a more objective eye.

You need to concentrate to do your proof-reading. Take a copy of your work, your notes or rough version, and a coloured pen or pencil and find yourself a quiet place where you will not be distracted.

1. Layout

First, scan through your work to check the overall document and make sure that your layout is neat and clear.

- Mark anything that looks a bit odd. If the work is word-processed, are there any strange spaces, peculiar colours or wrong typefaces that strike you immediately?
- Make sure that you have used paragraphs and that these are laid out consistently with consistent spacing and/or indentation.
- Check that headings are clear and, if word-processed, that they use a consistent font and spacing.

2. Content and structure

Next, read through your work looking at content and structure.

- Make sure that there are no pages missing and refer to your notes or rough version to check that you have included everything you meant to put in (including title page or list of contents if these are needed).
- Is the order logical and do the headings help to sequence the writing?
- Make sure you have started a new paragraph where you have introduced a new topic or idea.
- Check that you have included any illustrations or tables you need, that they are where they should be, and that they are correctly numbered. They will usually be close to the text that refers to them or possibly at the end of the document. Check titles and captions.

3. Checking in detail

Now you need to begin the really slow, careful and detailed part of proof-reading your work. You might want to put a ruler or piece of paper below the line you are reading to keep your eyes on that line. Read every word and every letter of every word. Whenever you make a correction, always read through the whole sentence again: it is easy to spot and correct an obvious error and miss something else nearby, or to 'correct' something carelessly.

Sentences

- Make sure each sentence makes sense and conveys a complete idea.
- Sentences should be clear and concise. They must not be misleading, ambiguous or obscure, or contradict anything that is said before or after.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

- Each sentence should start with a capital letter and end with an appropriate punctuation mark, such as a full stop or question mark.
- Check that you have used the correct punctuation within sentences. Look out for unnecessary commas and check apostrophes.

Spelling

- All words must be spelt correctly. If you are unsure of the correct spelling of a word, look it up in the dictionary. Do not rely on your spellchecker.
- Where there are alternative ways of spelling a particular word, eg organise/organize, focused/focussed, judgement/judgment, decide which you will use and make sure that you are consistent.
- Some words sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings (homophones), eg there/their, to/too/two, where/wear. Make sure that you have used the right word for your intended meaning – a spellchecker will not pick these up.
- It is particularly easy to miss spelling mistakes when a typing error has changed one word into another perfectly good one, eg learner/leaner, compiled/complied, where/were. Look out for these.
- Be consistent with hyphenation, eg e-mail/email, co-operate/cooperate.
- Make sure that you have spelt all proper names correctly and used capital letters where they are needed.

Cross-references

- Check that all cross-references to other parts of the document, such as illustrations or tables, are accurate. For example, if you have said ‘See Table 4 on page 6’, make sure that Table 4 really is on page 6.

Quotations

- If quotations are in inverted commas, check that you have used either single (‘) or double (“) consistently.

References

- If you have a list of references at the end of your document, make sure that it is complete and accurate, and that references are correctly linked to the main text.

And finally...

- When you have made all the corrections and improvements that you have spotted, always read through the complete piece of work one more time, just to make sure that you have not missed anything or introduced any other problems, such as bad page breaks.
- If you have a contents list, check that it contains accurate headings and that the page numbers of the final version are correct.
- If you have time, ask someone else to read through your work.

The *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (OUP) is particularly useful for checking the spelling, capitalisation and hyphenation of frequently used English and foreign words, terms, abbreviations, names and proprietary terms.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

4.5 Improving writing skills

The specific skills involved in writing functional English are contained in the coverage and range statements in the standards. Functional English is about applying these skills to real writing tasks. This means that, rather than teaching the skills in isolation, they are developed and applied in the context of the work that learners do, both in English and in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers of functional English will already be familiar with many of the techniques to help learners to develop their writing skills. The materials featured in section 5, 'References and resources' provide further guidance and ideas.

It may be helpful, however, to look at the specific requirements at each level for grammar, spelling and punctuation (Figure 5). Remember that each level includes the standards for the lower levels.

Figure 5

Level	Grammar	Spelling	Punctuation
Entry 1	Construct simple sentences	Spell correctly some personal or very familiar words	Use capital letters and full stops Use upper and lower case
Entry 2	Construct compound sentences using common conjunctions	Spell correctly a range of common words	Use capital letters, full stops and question marks
Entry 3	Use basic grammar including verb-tense and subject-verb agreement	Spell correctly	
Level 1	Use correct grammar... including correct and consistent use of tense Ensure written work includes accurate grammar	Ensure written work includes accurate... spelling	Ensure written work includes accurate... punctuation
Level 2	Use a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences		Punctuate accurately using commas, apostrophes and inverted commas

In addition, from Entry 2 onwards, learners must be able to produce legible text.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Analysing a learner's writing

In order to get a rounded picture of how someone actually writes, you need to look closely at a complete piece of writing. In schools, such a piece of writing will probably be available. Where a learner is new to the centre, ask them to write a short piece about a topic that will show a range of writing skills and is easy for them to write about. Ideally, the topics should be 'functional'. For example:

- a description of a holiday resort
- arguments for and against staying on in education/training
- instructions for a routine everyday or work task (NB this should not be just a list of points).

The adult literacy core curriculum has a literacy model which you can use to analyse this piece of work. It identifies three dimensions to writing:

- text focus: logical sequencing, style, suitability for audience, overall meaning
- sentence focus: use of complete sentences, correct grammar, punctuation
- word focus: spelling, appropriate vocabulary.

Here is an example piece of writing, taken from the Key Skills Support Programme's *Initial assessment toolkit* (KSSP, 2007):

I left home at 8 oclock. I had to rush because the bus comes at 5 past 8 and I didnt want to miss it it was packd! The traffick was terrible it was after half past when I got off. then I had to walk to the centre witch takes at least 20 minutes and its up a hill so my legs realy hurt when I got there. I was ready for a cup of coffee.

It is important to look for strengths first. At first glance you might think that this piece of writing contains a lot of errors. However, there is much more that is right than wrong.

Text focus

The piece is written in one paragraph but this is appropriate. Information is arranged in a logical order. More detail could have been included; this could have provided an opportunity to include more paragraphs.

Sentence focus

There are a number of correct sentences. There are two instances when a new sentence should have been started.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

No punctuation other than full stops is used. Capital letters are not always used at the beginning of a sentence. There should be three apostrophes but none have been used.

There are two main areas for development: sentences and apostrophes.

Word focus

Nearly all common words are spelt correctly (left, home, bus, to, legs, was). There is accurate use of the silent 'l' (half, walk). Other words that are not phonetic (minutes, ready, centre) are spelt correctly.

Five words are spelt incorrectly: packd, traffick, terrible, witch, realy. All of these, however, have been spelt phonetically, so this learner clearly has no difficulty with phonics.

- packd – it might be worth focusing specifically on the -ed suffix, giving other examples of how it is added to words so that the learner learns the rule.
- terrible – this should be learned as an individual spelling but it could be extended to other forms using the same base, such as terror, terrify, terrifying, terrific.
- traffick, realy – these should be dealt with as single spellings.
- witch – it is good that the learner has included the 'h'. It might be a good idea to look at the difference between 'which' and 'witch', pointing out that -itch is the more common ending (as in pitch, bitch, ditch, hitch), but that there are other words where the same sound is spelt -ich (such as rich).

This example shows how a relatively simple activity can help reveal lots of information about the strengths and weaknesses of a particular learner. It also suggests learning and practice that will help to plug the apparent skills gaps.

Writing in sentences

At Entry 1, learners need to be able to combine words accurately to form sentences. At this stage it is important to build up to simple sentences, giving lots of positive feedback, rather than focusing on the use of upper case, tenses or full stops to separate sentences. Sentences become more complex at higher levels with compound sentences (Entry 2) and more complex issues of sequencing writing at Entry 3 and paragraphing at Level 1.

Learners often make mistakes either by writing incomplete sentences (eg omitting a subject or a finite verb) or putting two sentences together, separated only by a comma.

It is not necessarily helpful to explain what a sentence is through traditional teaching of grammar. Try to get learners to get a 'feel' for sentences for example by:

- giving them incomplete sentences to rewrite

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

- using oral as well as written approaches to teaching sentence construction as this can help the development of 'sentence sense' without the intrusion of physical writing.

Following on from work on sentence structure at Entry 1–2, learners should be introduced to the use of connectives in joining short sentences. At this stage, learners are often aware that a sentence should be longer or more complex and may mistakenly use commas to do this. Fluent writers vary how they construct sentences, particularly in terms of how they start them. It is worth making learners aware of this through examples.

Connectives

By using words such as 'and', 'but', 'although', 'because' and 'so', learners can become more confident in their ability to write in complex sentences.

Connectives can fulfil a range of functions such as:

- adding – eg and, also, too
- emphasising – eg above all, in particular, especially
- comparing – eg in the same way, like
- illustrating – eg for example, such as, for instance
- contrasting – eg alternatively, on the other hand
- qualifying – eg however, although, apart from
- cause and effect – eg because, so
- sequencing – eg next, then, first, second, third

Correct subject/verb agreement

Using correct subject/verb agreement such as 'we were' is expected from Entry 3. Errors in subject/verb agreement are often caused by learners not identifying what the subject of the sentence is or by writing as they speak, using colloquialisms or regional dialects. So, for example, a learner from Yorkshire may say, 'I were going home'. Although this is acceptable in informal conversation, it is not appropriate when writing a letter, essay or report.

Consistent use of tense

By Entry 3, learners must also ensure consistent use of tense. Issues over inconsistent use of tense arise through learners switching from, say, present to past in a written text for no apparent reason. This can be related to a lack of proof-reading the finished document or to colloquial use of language in spoken English such as 'I went to the bus stop and old Mrs Jones says to me that she'd been waiting for the last half hour'.

Developing awareness of sentences and tense

Work on the correct use of capital letters and full stops in sentences could include learners being encouraged to read out their work and pausing at the end of sentences, to help them get a feel of what is a complete unit of sense. Encourage learners to write sentences which deal with only one topic. Encourage the use of short sentences, in particular at Entry level, and until understanding of sentence construction is secure. Help learners to see that short sentences are often the best way to show clear thinking. Use concrete examples and physical activities to help with an understanding of past, present and future tenses. For example, ask learners to face one wall. Place posters saying PAST to the left of the wall, PRESENT on a poster in the middle and FUTURE on a poster to the right. Read out some sentences that are clearly set in each one of these and ask learners to turn or point in the right direction.

Paragraphs

At Level 1 learners also need to be confident in their use of paragraphs and understand the reasons for their use. Help learners to recognise the part that paragraphs play in creating a structure that enables readers to follow and understand a finished document. Some learners may use a paragraph for each sentence (as in tabloid newspapers); others may not use them at all. Breaking down some written text into different types of paragraphing can highlight the effectiveness of using the most appropriate form for a particular type of document.

Spelling

Accurate spelling is vital to employers, universities and others and is fundamental to functional English. What type of words are expected to be accurately spelt depends on the level and rises from personal or very familiar words at Entry 3 to a wide range of words in non-specialist contexts and familiar technical terms at Level 2.

For functional English, 'everyday words' refers to words that learners are likely to use in education, training, employment and life in general and which follow standard rules and conventions. The type of words expected to be 'mastered' by Level 1 may include:

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

argument	caught	height	performance	sincerely
atmosphere	definite	interesting	physical	skilful
beautiful	disappear	knowledge	possession	strength
beginning	explanation	material	preparation	success
believe	February	necessary	receive	unfortunately
business	health	original	safety	weight

As well as helping learners to correct spelling errors in specific words in their documents, you should look to see whether there is a pattern to their mistakes which could be addressed, such as double letters or consistent misuse of a suffix or prefix.

Some learners have difficulties with spelling because they do not have a range of strategies for remembering how to spell words. They may have become over-reliant on just one technique such as 'look, cover, write, check' and may not know others such as those listed below.

Techniques for learning spelling

Learners may need to revisit the strategies for learning spelling that were covered at previous Key Stages in their education, and be introduced to others. These could include:

- mnemonics
- understanding the roots of words
- breaking words into syllables
- rules (eg, i before e except after c)
- prefixes and suffixes
- the visual shape of words.

Learners may be more motivated to learn to spell specialist vocabulary or technical terms from their main subjects or their jobs. You could encourage them to keep a notebook of new words they encounter.

Resources: Many of these techniques are explained in more detail in *Supporting communication* (Key Skills Support Programme) and *The English Key Stage 3 Year 7 spelling bank* (Secondary National Strategy). See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Punctuation

Punctuation at Entry 2 and above includes the use of capital letters (for proper nouns and abbreviations, as well as beginning sentences), full stops and question marks. To identify when a sentence should finish with a question mark, learners could read their written work aloud and observe when they ask a question.

As with all skills in functional English, each level builds on previous ones so, at Level 2, learners would also be expected to use other forms of punctuation such as commas, apostrophes and inverted commas.

Although some learners may be competent in the use of apostrophes, others find them a mystery and are often unaware of their two uses – to indicate the omission of a letter or letters (for example don't, it's, wasn't, I'll) and to indicate possession (for example the boy's shoes, the workers' clothes). Many learners will either ignore the existence of apostrophes when writing or alternatively use one with every plural 's' that they write.

The teaching of this form of punctuation is essential. Time should be spent differentiating between the singular and plural of the possessive.

Apostrophes

A good starting point is to use examples of where the apostrophe is misused (eg 'Apple's £1.50 a kilo' – the 'grocer's apostrophe'). Once learners understand, they are only too willing to bring in examples of their own from local shops and signage.

There are several websites for abused apostrophes. Share these with learners – they could even email their own examples to a website.

Resources: The *English Key Stage 3 resources* (Secondary National Strategy) contain useful materials including a *Year 7 spelling bank*, *Year 7 sentence level bank*, *Transition and progression in non-fiction writing* and a *Key objectives bank*. There are also 'How to...' sheets on aspects of punctuation and sentence structure. See section 5, 'References and resources'.

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

Spellcheckers

The limitations, as well as the benefits, of spellcheckers should be highlighted to learners. The 'Spell chequer' poem below is an amusing way of looking at this.

Spell chequer poem

I have a spelling chequer
It came with my pea see
It plainly marks four my revue
Miss steaks eye cannot see.

Each thyme when eye have struck the quays
I weight for it to say
If watt I rote is wrong or rite
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two late
And eye can put the error write
Yes, I shall find it grate.

I've run this poem threw it
I'm sure yore pleased to no
Its letter perfect in its weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.

(Sauce unknown)

Teaching and learning functional English: 4. Writing

5. References and resources

In advance of the functional skills pilot, we have to draw on previous curriculum developments for useful resources. Many of the following resources come from:

- The Secondary National Strategy (SNS) – we give details of the relevant part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website where you can download these resources. You may also be able to order hard copies of resources from their Publications line on 0845 60 222 60, though in some cases these may no longer be available. The website is www.standards.dfes.gov.uk
- The Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP) – again some materials may be available for order from the helpline on 0870 872 8081. The website is www.keyskillssupport.net
- The Skills for Life Improvement Programme – you can order some of the publications via their website at www.sflip.org.uk

Access for All

Guidance for making the adult literacy and numeracy core curricula more accessible to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. In the section on speaking and listening, there are suggestions for teaching approaches and alternative strategies which could be used with these learners.

www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_literacy/ (Ref: A1211)

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum

The core curriculum clarifies the skills, knowledge and understanding that learners need in order to reach the Skills for Life national standards from Entry to Level 2. It contains many useful sample activities.

www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_literacy/ (Ref: A1041)

Amplification of the functional English standards (QCA)

This document gives fuller explanations of the standards, explains relevant terminology, and includes progression tables and a glossary. Available from QCA.

Developing Speaking and Listening Skills: A support pack for staff working with offenders

This pack considers the key issues in the development of speaking and listening skills for staff and offenders. There are five modules:

- Questioning and checking understanding
- Non-verbal communication
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language

Order from dfes@prolog.com or 0845 60 222 60 (Ref: S&L/PACK01)

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

English Key Stage 3

A range of resources to support the teaching of all aspects of English. Aimed at Key Stage 3 (approximately equivalent to functional English Entry 3 and Level 1). They include the *Year 7 English banks* with resources on spelling and sentence level, *Transition and progression in non-fiction writing* and a *Key objectives bank*. Resources can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

All the resources produced from 2001 to date are available. They are classified by subject. Some of the most useful for supporting the teaching of functional reading are listed below.

English Key Stage 4

A range of resources to support the teaching of all aspects of English. Aimed at Key Stage 4 (approximately equivalent to functional English at Levels 1 and 2). Resources can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage4/subjects/english/

To order hard copies of resources phone DfES Publications on: 0845 60 222 60

All of the resources produced from 2001 to date are available. They are classified by subject. Some of the most useful for supporting the teaching of functional reading are listed below.

ESOL Exemplars

A range of examples from the Skills for Life Improvement Programme which could be useful in developing English skills with learners for whom English is not their first language. Available (Ref: EXESOL) via the website at

www.sflip.org.uk

ESOL Pack – Learner Materials

Teacher pack containing both the teacher files and learning resources from Pre-entry to Level 2. Further information and how to order can be found on the Skills for Life Improvement Programme website: www.sflip.org.uk

Functional skills English exemplification (QCA)

This gives some examples of purposeful activities for developing learners' functional English. Some are context-based, some are topic-based, and various levels are addressed. There is also an example of a 'Detailed task brief' at Level 2. Available from QCA.

How to get more pupils from Level 3 to Level 5 in English (Parts 1 and 2)

These two course handbooks focus on helping English teachers to raise the performance of pupils working at NC level 3 (Entry 3 to Level 1). Part 1 summarises the characteristics, behaviours, needs and learning styles of these learners. Part 1, Session 2 gives basic, practical teaching strategies to raise pupils' performance. Part 2 contains case studies of how some departments

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

tackle low attainment. To access the resources (Ref: Part 1 – DfES 0264-2004 G; Part 2 – DfES 0003 – 2005 G) see:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

‘How to...’ sheets

A series of worksheets from the Key Skills Support Programme, containing explanations and exercises on aspects of English, aimed at Levels 1 and 2. Worksheets include topics such as:

- Preparing for discussions
 - Reading and understanding information
 - Use of commas and apostrophes
 - Avoiding sentence errors
 - Making presentations
- Available from www.keyskillssupport.net

Key-Line module: Developing learners’ communication and literacy skills

Key-line is an online resource offering self-study CPD modules for practitioners and managers to use to develop their professional skills. To download you will need to register as a member, which is free. Go to www.key-line.org.uk

Key objective banks

A practical resource that uses key objectives in the framework for teaching English, focusing on skills and understanding crucial to pupils’ language development.

Each booklet is divided into teaching:

- Word level objectives
- Sentence level objectives
- Reading objectives
- Writing objectives
- Speaking and listening objectives.

For each objective there is a section on:

- What to teach (ie what elements need to be addressed via teaching)
- Teaching approaches (how to teach in the context of reading, writing and, where appropriate, speaking and listening)
- How to assess with sample tasks
- Performance indicators (always, sometimes, never).

Resources can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

KeySkills4U

KeySkills4U is a blended e-learning package designed to help learners check, learn and apply their key skills in Communication, Application of Number, and Information and Communication Technology at Levels 1 and 2. It includes additional material for learners to support Level 1 learning in these key skills. There is audio and video cartoon content. The package aims to identify gaps in learning and to help learners build and develop the knowledge and skills required in Part A of the key skills standards.

It is available online either via the Key Skills Support Programme website at www.keyskillssupport.net or directly at www.keyskills4u.com

Learning and Skills Network

One of the two successor organisations to the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). Their website, www.lsneducation.org.uk, has many useful resources and links to other useful information and publications.

Leading in Learning: developing thinking skills in Key Stage 3

This is a very useful resource as it gives ideas and guidance to address some of the more challenging aspects of teaching the functional English standards at Levels 1 and 2.

- Following a line of argument
- Taking appropriate action as a result of reading and understanding at Level 1
- Skills of summarising succinctly
- The application of reading strategies with greater independence
- Comparison of ideas, arguments and opinions

It also supports the personalised learning agenda and highlights ten tried and tested teaching strategies to develop the thinking skills. The strategies are:

- Advance organisers (organisational frameworks that enable pupils to orient themselves at the start of a project/topic)
- Analogies (a teaching device that helps pupils to understand an unfamiliar context by comparing it with familiar objects or processes)
- Audience and purpose
- Classifying
- Collective memory (helping pupils to process and decode visual information from representations that are important for subject learning)
- Living graphs and fortune lines (strategies that support the active construction of real-world meaning from line graphs)

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

- Mysteries (strategies that encourage pupils to deal with ambiguity, to make links between disparate, apparently unconnected information and to fit them together and evaluate them)
- Reading images
- Relational diagrams (using overlapping, separate or subsumed shapes to show whether all, some, or none of the terms of a particular class belong to another class)
- Summarising

There is a strong emphasis in the subject-specific exemplification booklets on transferring these skills so that learning takes on a broader context across the curriculum.

Resources (Ref: DfES 0034-2005) can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

learndirect (University for Industry)

A Way with Words is an interactive series of courses (from Entry 1 to Level 2) which help learners develop their communication using everyday situations through games, puzzles and exercises. learndirect provides flexible online/on-screen learning. www.learndirect.co.uk

Level Crossing: progression from Skills for Life to Key Skills (Communication)

This publication from the Key Skills Support Programme aims to provide advice and support to practitioners on how best to move their learners through the transition from Entry 2 and 3 (Skills for Life) to Level 1 key skills. It is built around the challenges that learners at Entry 2 and 3 need to overcome if they are to progress and achieve in key skills. It contains approaches and activities to support skills development in speaking and listening, reading and writing with 15 'challenges' in Communication / Literacy. Topics include:

- Understanding the layout of formal business letters and reports and the use of formal/informal language
- Understanding the correct use of full stops, capital letter and question marks
- Proof-reading
- Understanding and identifying the different purposes of text
- Understanding the role of non-verbal communication in discussions
- Developing learners' spelling strategies
- Understanding the reasons for paragraphs

The resource (ISBN: 1 84572 462 0) can be accessed on www.keyskillssupport.net

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

Literacy across the curriculum

This resource supports literacy across the curriculum in all subject areas. It contains some useful strategies that will support functional skills teaching in different contexts.

- Active reading strategies – cloze, sequencing, text marking, text restructuring
- Reading for information and ways of reading – continuous, close, skimming and scanning
- Supporting research skills – including knowledge and skills required for independent research, ie establishing purposes, locating information, interacting with the text

The sections focus on the teaching strategies rather than examples of lessons.

Resources (Ref: DfEE 0235/2001) can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

Literacy and Learning

This resource has a specific section for reading called 'Learning from text' with three sub-sections:

- Developing research and study skills
- Reading for meaning
- Understanding how texts work

The focus is on teaching strategies rather than actual lessons although in each subject area the teacher is given guidance on what to teach and teaching approaches.

Resources (Ref: DfES 0651-2004) can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

Literacy in... geography, history, art and design, MFL, design and technology, music, PE and science

Each file explores practical ways in which speaking and listening, reading and writing skills can be developed in a specific subject area. All activities are contextualised and the literacy skills that are being developed are explicitly emphasised. There are additional tips on how those skills could be developed further. The DVD shows lessons being taught.

See:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

Literacy Pack – Learner Materials

This teacher pack from the Skills for Life Improvement Programme contains both the teacher files of learning materials from Pre-entry to Level 2 and the teacher notes. Further information and how to order can be found on the SfLIP website: www.sflip.org.uk

Literacy Progress Units

These were originally written for pupils entering secondary education who have fallen behind the national expectation and require further practice in specific skills in order to progress. They are designed in 20-minute sessions to be used with small groups. The lessons are scripted so that support staff and teaching assistants could deliver them. The reading unit that has proved to be the most effective has been *Information Retrieval*. It would be useful for learners working at Entry 3. It teaches the skills of skimming and scanning texts and selecting relevant information. The teaching approaches could easily be adapted for use in many other contexts.

Resources (Ref: DfES 0474/2001) can be accessed directly from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/subjects/english/strandpuben_/

Materials for embedded learning

These materials have been produced as part of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme. They use a range of media to provide a way for learners to develop subject/vocational skills and literacy, language and numeracy skills simultaneously and cover a wide range of sectors and subjects. In the 'Introduction and curriculum coverage' section at the front of each pack the resources are mapped to key skills and Skills for Life. Available from www.sflip.org.uk

Progression maps

The progression map for English is a web-based curriculum planning tool that can help you plan progression in reading and writing for your learners. The English progression map provides guidance, targets, ideas for teaching and supporting parents. There are downloadable lessons to address particular aspects of both reading and writing. The progression maps for English and mathematics went live in November 2006 and are easily accessed at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/progressionmaps>

There is also a detailed training module available at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/intervention>

Key skills qualifications standards and guidance

Gives vital underpinning information regarding levels and expectations in key skills. Also gives some practical guidance on appropriate activities for Levels 1 and 2. Available from the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

Secondary National Strategy

Information about the aims and purposes of the secondary national strategy and details of resources they have produced to support teaching, including the teaching of English, is available from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

The Starter Pack

The Basic Skills Agency (March 2007) Ref: 1 85990 439 4

This is a revised and rewritten version of an established resource, with new sections such as *Speaking and listening* and *Using ICT in literacy teaching and learning*. Tutors, both new and experienced, will find a wealth of teaching ideas, tips and also a personal professional development record.

The pack includes a CD-ROM containing all the materials, plus a wide range of links to further resources and relevant websites. Materials can therefore be customised to meet the needs of individual learners.

Details are available at www.basic-skills.co.uk. Select 'Resources'. Contents are as follows:

1. Developing learner autonomy
2. Speaking and listening
3. Developing reading skills
4. Extending reading skills
5. Developing writing skills
6. Be a better writer
7. Spell well
8. Using ICT in literacy teaching and learning
9. References and links

Study Plus English

Series of sample units for English for pupils entering KS4 below the expected level (ie at National Curriculum Level 4 or low Level 5) and who are predicted a D or E grade at GCSE. The intention is that these pupils take Study Plus as an option in Key Stage 4. The programme lasts for five or six terms for two lessons a week. There are approximately 20 English units; each unit lasts three to four weeks. Units are supported by clear lesson plans and resources set in motivating and interesting contexts.

English consists of the following units focused on reading:

- Information trail poster – finding and using information 1
- Up, up and away – finding and using information 2
- Reality reads – responding to whole texts 1
- Mind reader: on the psychiatrist's couch – responding to whole texts 2
- Text detective journal – reading between the lines 1

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

- Fingerprints in the dust – reading between the lines 2
- Computer game layout – understanding how texts work 1
- Murder and menace – understanding how texts work 2
- Wish you were here – understanding how writers use language 1
- Wish you weren't here – understanding how writers use language 2

Resources (Ref: DfES 0508 – 2006) are available from:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage4/subjects/english/

Supporting communication: Guide to good practice

Practical advice and guidance on how to develop a range of communication and literacy skills, mainly aimed at work-based providers. From

www.keyskillssupport.net

Teaching and Learning Communication

The guide provides practical advice and support for teachers who are delivering and assessing the Communication key skill at Levels 1 to 3. It would be equally useful for teachers delivering functional English. It serves as a source of teaching ideas and as reference. It is written both for the non-specialist who may be teaching functional English in the context of another subject and for the specialist teacher in a separately timetabled session. Available on www.keyskillssupport.net, ISBN: 1 84572 007 1

Teaching and learning packs

Resources from the Key Skills Support Programme to help learners develop key skills in ways that are directly relevant to specific occupations. Aimed at apprentices, mainly working towards Level 2. Packs include workbooks, worksheets and assignments. All promote active learning and some include games that promote group work and discussion. There are teaching and learning packs for Care, Child care, Hospitality and catering, Motor vehicle, Retail, Travel, Wood occupations, and Administration. From www.keyskillssupport.net

Teaching speaking and listening: a toolkit for practitioners

Extensive bank of resources for all aspects of speaking and listening, relevant to all contexts. From www.keyskillssupport.net

Teaching speaking and listening DVD

A DVD aimed at supporting more effective teaching of speaking and listening, aimed at English teachers in secondary schools, with an engaging self-study resource. It identifies key issues of speaking and listening, offers practical advice and is supported by video examples of classroom practice and other resources. From www.standards.dfes.gov.uk (Ref: 00025-2007DVD-EN)

Acronyms

BSA

Basic Skills Agency. The Basic Skills Agency has merged with the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and will work in alliance with Tribal. Its full name is now 'The Basic Skills Agency at NIACE'. See www.basic-skills.co.uk

CBI

Confederation of British Industry. A not-for-profit organisation, incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. It represents the business sector in the UK, provides membership services, conducts research and provides 'a voice for business' at national level. See www.cbi.org.uk

CEL

Centre for Excellence in Leadership. CEL's remit is to foster and support leadership improvement, reform and transformation throughout the sector. It serves the existing and future leaders of all providers through programmes, events, support services and bespoke consulting assignments. See www.centreforexcellence.org.uk

CPD

Continuing professional development.

DCSF

Department for Children, Schools and Families. Established in June 2007; successor organisation to DfES. Responsible for functional skills policy. See www.dcsf.gov.uk

DDP

Diploma Development Partnership. There are 14 Diploma Development Partnerships – one for each line of learning – developing content for each of the Diplomas. See www.qca.org.uk/qca_5400.aspx

DfES

Department for Education and Skills. In June 2007, divided into DCSF and DIUS. See www.dfes.gov.uk

DIUS

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Established in June 2007; successor organisation to DfES. Responsibility for key skills and Skills for Life policy. See www.dius.gov.uk

Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3

Entry levels in the adult literacy, adult numeracy, adult ICT and ESOL core curricula.

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

EFL

English as a Foreign Language.

ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages.

FLT

Foundation Learning Tier. The umbrella term for all provision below Level 2 that is taken by learners over the age of 14. It therefore encompasses what is currently categorised as pre-Entry, Entry level (split into Entry levels 1, 2 and 3) and Level 1.

ILP

Individual Learning Plan. Document used to plan and record a student's learning.

Jobcentre Plus

Government agency that provides help and advice on jobs and training for people who can work and financial help for those who cannot; helps employers to fill vacancies. Part of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). See www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/

Key Stage 3

Usually, the first three years of secondary education – Years 7, 8 and 9 – but sometimes condensed.

Key Stage 4

Years 10 and 11 of secondary education.

KSSP

Key Skills Support Programme. Delivered on behalf of QIA by the Learning and Skills Network consortium, consisting of LSN, Learning for Work and CfBT Education Trust. Supports the delivery and implementation of key skills in all post-14 settings. Provides advice, training, information and resources to learners, teachers, trainers and managers. See www.keyskillssupport.net/

LA

Local Authority, the education function of which is now incorporated into 'Integrated Children's Services'.

learndirect

The largest provider of e-learning in the world. Aims to enable adults without a Level 2 or Skills for Life qualification to gain the skills and qualifications they need to find a job or to achieve and progress at work. See www.learndirect.co.uk

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

LLN

Literacy, Language, Numeracy.

LLUK

Lifelong Learning UK. Responsible for the professional development of all those working in libraries, archives and information services, work-based learning, higher education, further education and community learning and development. See www.lluk.org.uk

LLU+

National consultancy and professional development centre for staff working in the areas of literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, family learning and ESOL. See www.lsbu.ac.uk/lluplus

LSC

Learning and Skills Council. Responsible for funding and planning education and training for learners over 16 years old in England. See www.lsc.gov.uk

LSDA

Learning and Skills Development Agency. See LSN.

LSN

Learning and Skills Network. Independent not-for-profit organisation launched in April 2006; took over some of the role of LSDA. See www.lsneducation.org.uk

NAA

National Assessment Agency. Launched in April 2004 to develop and deliver high quality national curriculum tests and supervise the delivery and modernisation of GCSE and A level examinations. See www.naa.org.uk

NCSL

The National College for School Leadership exists to help to make a difference to the lives and the life chances of children and young people through the development of world-class school leaders. See www.ncsl.org.uk

NIACE

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education – England and Wales. Non-governmental organisation working for more and different adult learners. See www.niace.org.uk

NVQ

National Vocational Qualification. NVQs are work-related, competence-based qualifications, accredited by QCA and included in the National Qualifications Framework. See www.qca.org.uk/14-19/qualifications/index_nvqs.htm

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

OECD

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD groups thirty member countries sharing a commitment to democratic government and the market economy. See www.oecd.org

Ofsted

Non-ministerial government department responsible for inspecting and regulating the care of children and young people, and education and skills for learners of all ages. See www.ofsted.gov.uk

QCA

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Non-departmental public body, sponsored by government. Maintains and develops the national curriculum and associated assessments, tests and examinations as well as accrediting qualifications in colleges and at work. Also regulates awarding bodies and exams to ensure they are fit for purpose. See www.qca.org.uk

QIA

Quality Improvement Agency. Non-departmental public body; successor to LSDA. Works across the entire learning and skills sector. See www.qia.org.uk

QTLS

Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills. Non-subject-specific qualifications that give qualified teacher status; effective from September 2007.

QTS

Qualified Teacher Status – awarded to a teacher who is fully qualified in terms of training, certification and experience.

Skills for Life

National strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills in England. See www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

SNS

The Secondary National Strategy for school improvement is part of the Government's major reform programme for transforming secondary education to enable children and young people to attend and enjoy school, achieve personal and social development and raise educational standards in line with the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. See www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/about/

SSAT

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust is the leading national body for secondary education in England, and delivers the Government's Specialist Schools and Academies programme. Is responsible for CPD for the Diplomas. See www.specialistschools.org.uk

Teaching and learning functional English: 5. References and resources

SSC

Sector Skills Council. SSCs are independent, employer-led UK-wide organisations licensed by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. See www.ssda.org.uk

TDA

Training and Development Agency for Schools: responsible for funding the provision of teacher training in England, and providing information and advice on teaching as a career. See www.tda.gov.uk

UFI

University for Industry. The organisation behind learndirect. It has a mission to use technology to transform the skills and employability of the working population, in order to improve the UK's productivity. See www.ufi.com