

# Communicate!

## 5 English challenges

### Practitioner Guide



# A participatory approach



These resources are designed to directly involve the learner in the direction and pace of their own learning. Learners are more likely to be motivated to improve their language and literacy skills through taking some control over, and responsibility for, their own learning.

This is reflected in the materials which are designed to be used together with the learner. This guide is aimed specifically at practitioners, tutors or facilitators, but the other resources are all designed to be used together with the learner.

The resources could be used in classroom settings, or one-to-one, or in a broad range of other contexts, including gyms, canteens, libraries and gardens. Other staff who work in those contexts can be encouraged to get to know the resources, and to interact with learners who have chosen a challenge related to their particular working context.

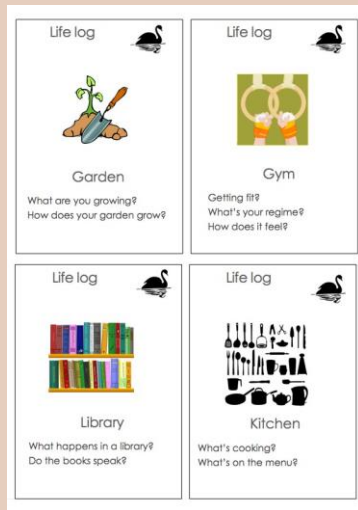
# Learners choose



Your first step should be to get to know the learner - their interests, ambitions, past experiences, hopes and fears. The challenge cards are designed to provoke and enable discussion, and you should allow enough time for you learner to discuss possible challenges before choosing one. In other words, don't rush in - it's important to choose a challenge that will mean something to the learner and which will motivate them: the tasks and challenges suggested in these resources can and should be adapted where needed to ensure that it is as motivating and meaningful as possible.

Once a challenge has been selected, you should still allow plenty of time for discussion before you set any writing or study tasks. So if, for instance, your learner has chosen to describe or give a recipe for a favourite meal, you should make sure that you discuss this subject fully first - you could ask about memories associated with food, great meals eaten, and share some of your own stories. You should also try to refine the challenge - what exactly will the learner produce?

# Personal and meaningful contexts



The challenge cards are designed to help you with this: you can use them to show the very wide range of possibilities. Your learner can come up with their own ideas too - there is no need to follow the exact tasks on the cards.

At this stage, you should be asking lots of questions to get discussion going.

It may be that an activity or task they are currently engaged in provides a good starting point: for instance, if they work in a prison garden or canteen, or if they attend the gym, they may be very keen to talk about these interests or activities. The challenge you settle on could relate to memories, hobbies, aspirations, ambitions, skills, relationships - anything that matters to the learner. It should be to do with something that the learner cares about enough to want to complete.



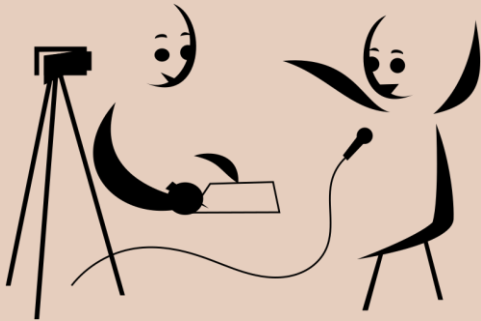
# Process over product



It is important to remember that the learning journey is often more important than the eventual destination: the value is often in what is discovered on the journey itself, and the new skills acquired along the way. For this reason, it is a good idea to allow learners to set their own pace, and to encourage them to reflect on and discuss the learning process as they go.

There is no set timescale for each challenge: you can negotiate and tailor this to the individual learner. Learners should be encouraged to work at a level that suits them, and could work on their challenge on their own, or in combination with others. They should also be encouraged to seek help from others, especially other peers or staff who are familiar with the context of their challenge.

# Challenge



The idea of 'challenge' runs through the resources. Learners can be encouraged to try using language for tasks which are meaningful to them, but which stretch their language and literacy skills.

Once your learner has chosen a challenge, they will need - with your help - to find out more about the format and language of their challenge. They may, for example, need to learn how a recipe or letter is laid out on the page, or what tenses are typically used in a story. The communication cards are designed to help you explore with the learner what they need to find out - and the 'communication resource grid' contains links to other helpful resources.



A very good idea would be to find lots of real life examples of the type of text the learner wants to produce (e.g. a formal letter / bedtime story / news article / radio interview) and to discuss and study the language and layout of these together.

# Active learning: a sense of achievement



Learners will gain a lot of satisfaction from achieving their challenge, especially if it leads to the production of something they feel is of value to them.

Example outcomes of a challenge could be, for example:

- a poster
- a scrapbook
- an item on prison radio
- a text (e.g. story) to send home
- a published article in 'Inside Times'.

Of course, that sense of achievement will only be greater if your institution also finds some way to recognise it: public acknowledgement or small prizes can be significant motivators!

# Appendix 1

## Resource checklist

1) Practitioner Guide (this document)

This guide shows tutors, facilitators and others who may be working with learners how to use the resources, and explains the learning approach. It is available in powerpoint and pdf formats. This should be looked at first.

2) Overview for users leaflet\*

This leaflet, designed to be used in collaboration with the learner, explains the learning process, and the learning resources.

3) 5 Challenge posters / handouts

These 5 pdfs can be printed as posters or handouts. Each gives a brief description of one of the 5 categories of challenge, and on the reverse side provides example suggestions for a possible language focus. These suggestions are not exhaustive, and an appropriate language focus will depend on the exact nature of the task the learner has selected. The posters or handouts could form the basis for an initial discussion with the learner about which challenge appeals most.

\*Double-sided printing: In order to align the two sides of the leaflet correctly, "long-edge binding" should be selected on your printer.



# Appendix 1

## Resource checklist (cont)

4) 5 sets of 'challenge' cards\*\* comprising:

- 1) Life log cards
- 2) Point of view cards
- 3) Storyboard cards
- 4) Skillshare cards
- 5) Send/receive cards

These cards can be used to suggest and discuss possible challenges with learners, and to support the personalised and collaborative approach taken.

5) Communication cards\*\*

Once a challenge has been selected, these cards can be used to explore, research and discuss the language and literacy characteristics and features that the learner will need to draw on.

6) Make your own cards\*\*

This is a set of blank challenge themed cards that can be used to produce personalised bespoke tasks and challenges.

\*\*Double-sided card printing: In order to align the two sides of the cards correctly, "long-edge binding" should be selected on your printer.

# Appendix 1

## Resource checklist (cont)

### 7) Communication resource grid

This grid, linked to the topics of the communications cards, provides links to further guidance and resources on features of language and literacy.

### 8) Excellence Gateway additional resources

- Practical techniques [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2139](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2139)
- Writing [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2142](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2142)
- Speaking and Listening [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2141](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2141)
- Reading [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2140](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2140)

# Appendix 2

## A participatory learning resource



The 'Reflect for ESOL' project website gives a lot more information about participatory approaches, and also has some very useful downloadable resources.

[www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol](http://www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol)

The Communicate! resources were commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation.

They have been developed and piloted by Learning Unlimited and Learning and Work Institute, in partnership with 5 prisons.

We would like to thank all the staff and learners who took part in the pilots for their time and contribution.

We would be grateful for feedback to help further develop the resources. If you have any suggestions, please email [leadership@etfoundation.co.uk](mailto:leadership@etfoundation.co.uk)

March 2016

The logo for The Education & Training Foundation, featuring the text "The Education & Training Foundation" in white serif font on a dark purple square background.

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The logo for the Learning and Work Institute, featuring the letters "L&W" in orange and grey, followed by the text "LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE" in grey capital letters on a white background.

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