UNLOCKING ENGLISH

A GUIDE FOR THE PRISON SECTOR

Contents

Introduction

People in our society need to be able to 'read the world' around them and this includes those in prison. They also need to express their ideas and views in order to navigate their time in prison and prepare for purposeful post-prison lives. For this reason, English language and literacy development sits at the heart of custodial plans for those in prison and underpins the development of their emotional, social and personal skills. By language and literacy we mean a person's ability to read and write and to speak and listen well to effectively to engage with those in their immediate and wider environments. Effective speaking and listening underpins the start of all learning and communication.

There are some excellent schemes used in prisons to encourage/ develop reading abilities, including: Turning Pages[1] (previously called 'Toe by Toe'), Reading Ahead[2] (previously called the 'Six Book Challenge'), prison reading groups[3] and Storybook Dads[4].

Education teams run English (literacy/ language/ ESOL) classes in every prison in England. There is some superb practice in the sector and you can see examples of resources throughout this document that have resulted from this work. A good place to keep up to date is the Excellence Gateway's Offender Learning Exhibition Site, which has a section dedicated to English and ESOL[5].

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[1] http://www.shannontrust.org.uk/our-work/the-reading-plan/
[2] https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quick-guides/reading-ahead/
[3] https://prison-reading-groups.org.uk/
[4] http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/
[5] http://offender-learning.excellencegateway.org.uk/english-esol

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Developing abilities to use English confidently cannot be the responsibility of prison English teachers alone. The success of education depends on learners' initial and ongoing engagement, so that they have a feeling of empowerment and a willingness to learn. Motivation, according to Vroom (1964[6]) depends on learners expecting to succeed and valuing their learning. Many learners in the secure estate, for various reasons, lack self-belief and motivation to learn. Learners may also have a learning difficulty or English may not be their first language. These barriers may affect their engagement which can result in alienation from formal learning and underachievement. All staff, not only English teachers, have a vital part to play in building prisoners' communicative confidence. As the manager of a cleaning team, for instance, you can reach out to a prisoner who struggles by tasking them to work with a new member of the team. This way, they will gain practice in explaining ways of working to a newcomer and can benefit from your encouragement and help in choosing the right words. Alternatively, you might work in a multi-skills workshop and be able to promote the importance of reading machinery guidelines with care. You might also have time at the beginning or end of the session to play some communication games[7] or complete more formal English tasks.
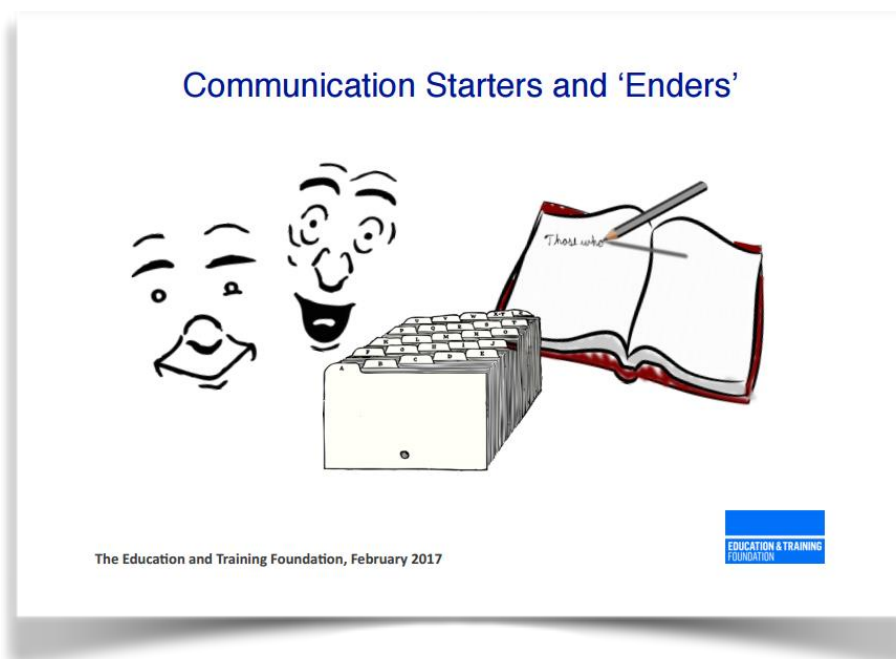
This guide is for everyone working in the prison estate, as it is everyone's responsibility to provide space and opportunity for prisoners to improve their lives through effective communication.

It is important to remember that nobody, whatever their assessed 'level' of English, comes with a deficit of knowledge and it is in peoples' collective wealth of experience that we find the starting point for all learning. In order to develop and progress, everyone must recognise, acknowledge and value what they know and can do already. Only then can they

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[6] Vroom, Victor H. (1964), Work and motivation. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
[7] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2517

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move forward and develop their abilities. This is a critical role that everyone can play in supporting English development: Each member of the prison team also has a role to play in engaging and motivating prisoners to improve their use of English, building on the abilities that they already have. Developing confidence and abilities in English must be positioned as part of a wider aim to improve lives beyond prison and, so, help to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Where does Unlocking English fit into your role?

Fred: I work in the chaplaincy and meet many prisoners who have difficulty in expressing themselves and their emotions. Sometimes it's about helping them find the words.	**Claire** – I work on the wings and often see prisoners struggling to read notices on the boards and filling in apps. Often prisoners need help with their reading and writing skills.	**Amina** - I am a prison officer and I supervise letter writing sessions for prisoners to send to their families. Often they need help with words or how to express themselves.
John: I'm a health worker and I notice prisoners having difficulty in reading care plans and medical information and leaflets. Often they have problems in describing symptoms and talking about illnesses.	**Zak**: I'm a librarian in the prison and I have to try and help prisoners research information and have to try and help simplify language to make it more accessible. I thought my job would be about helping people choose books!	**Eva:** I teach English and I have lots of learners with so many language needs at a whole variety of levels, that sometimes I don't know where to start.

How to use this guide

You can read the whole guide but it is more likely that you will want to use the contents page to enable you to dip into sections that interest you most or that relate to your role. You will find teaching tips, links to the Principles for Supporting Literacy/ Language (English) Development and suggested teaching and learning activities throughout the guide, along with practical teaching and learning activities. The activities range from detailed session ideas for prison English teachers, to short activities that you can embed into other prison work, support and training. There are tips for extension and differentiation, when appropriate.

Examples of tips and ideas listed throughout the guide

Activity: Using informal language to discuss topics of interest to the learners.
Help the learners to choose a topic they are interested in. This could be something currently in the news or a shared hobby or events /issues in the prison. Use the Wheel of English, pictures, newspaper headlines, quotes, letters, etc. as stimuli.

Teaching Tip: This activity will help learners to develop their vocabulary and introduce them to the concept of words being classified according to what they do.

CPD Activity: How many ways can you think of to say you are angry? Which ways would you use with different people for example your spouse or partner, your boss or a judge in court?

Please remember it is critically important not to judge an individual's way of using language as inferior to other forms of language use.

Principle 1: All varieties of the English language are valid in the appropriate setting and circumstances.

Self-assessment

How confident I feel on a scale of 1-5 about helping prisoners to improve their English

What English abilities/ knowledge I would like to see them improve

What main obstacles I encounter when trying to help them improve their English

How I try to overcome these obstacles?

Principles for supporting literacy/ language (English) development

Here are the principles that underpin effective practice in English teaching and learning[8]. Use them as a framework to help you support people to improve their confidence and abilities in using (English) language and literacy.

1. **All varieties of the English language are valid in the appropriate setting and circumstances.** This means that *knowing your purpose and audience and instinctively switching codes* (e.g. between written and spoken forms) are important skills.

2. **Being good at English involves being able to judge what is 'good' and how it could be better.** This means that people need to understand what good English involves, see clearly what steps they can take to get there and recognise when they have made improvements.

3. **English development should begin with people's own communication needs and practices.** This is partly because we need something to 'hang' new learning onto. It is also because it is motivating and respectful to build on what people can, want and need to do in their lives.

4. **English development depends on the inner need of a person to 'say something'. Therefore, language use is a form of identity.** This means that language finds its purpose and is motivating for learners when they are fully engaged with the outcome.

5. **Language enables expression of thoughts and feelings and empowers people to deal with a range of situations and make appropriate choices.** This means that people must be able to select appropriate language for their purpose and must also listen to other people's responses and learn from them.

6. **English is a tool we use to navigate our lives, including work and study.** This means we need to develop language practices as part of learning new work and life skills.

7. **Language is dynamic, in a constant state of flux** and we are always learning.

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[8] Education and Training Foundation, 2016

English - the improvement process

People will develop their English skills effectively only when they engage in a process of continuous, self-regulated improvement. To do this they must be encouraged at all times to:

- value what they know and can already achieve.

- understand how improved English can better empower them in the world.

Principle 6: English is a tool we use to navigate our lives, including work and study.

- recognise that all adults continue to improve their language skills throughout their lives and that this quest for improvement is something to be proud of, irrespective of the starting level.

- read and listen to a rich variety of English in use.

- assess examples of, and models for, applied English and identify when and why it works successfully, depending on context and audience.

- evaluate their own work in consultation with others.

- identify their own learning goals and improvement steps.

- implement agreed achievable improvements.

- celebrate the improvements they make and take pride in their overall achievement, irrespective of level.

- engage in regular developmental English practice for fluency and confidence

By providing positive feedback, all staff who engage with prisoners can play a part in facilitating assessment for learning. Having 'feedback' discussions, which may be as simple as saying; 'That was a really good way to explain how to use that machinery' or 'How well do you think you will remember these instructions next session?' helps to make their own judgements about how good something was (in the above examples in speaking and listening). They can also then take more ownership of their own learning goals and take achievable steps to improvement. By providing feedback and recognition of things that have been achieved, you can build motivation and confidence. Negative comments should usually be avoided, e.g. a misspelling is not 'wrong'; it is merely an area for improvement which the learner can own, address and then count as a point of achievement.

Principle 2: Being good at English involves being able to judge what is 'good' and how it could be better.

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English - a question of confidence

Belief in your own ability is fundamental to sustained engagement with learning. Statements such as "I can't spell" and "I don't read" abound in society and can be used as a reason not to try. This is particularly so with people who did not achieve at, or regularly attend, school and prisoners feature highly in this group. It is therefore critical to build peoples' confidence, as they may have long abandoned all belief in their own English abilities.

It is important that we use every opportunity to help people to recognise and value their existing knowledge and abilities to use English. Some of these are quite obvious, such as communicating with family and friends. However, people often do not realise that the skills they routinely use are transferable and can be built on. It is very important to provide opportunities to raise this awareness and encourage people to accept the value of the sophisticated abilities they already possess.

Principle 3: English development should begin with people's own communication needs and practices.

It is essential that everyone working with prisoners avoids reinforcing any sense of failure or inadequacy. All efforts should be recognised and rewarded as part of a process of continuous improvement. All people, at all levels, continue to improve their English throughout their lives as a matter of course. Only if people feel respected and confident that they will not be ridiculed or belittled in their use of English, will they gradually willingly engage with continuous practice and improvement.

English development outside the English classroom

Work and training

All activities relating to training and future work include elements of (English) language and/ or literacy. Vocational instructors are, therefore, ideally placed to empower, encourage, motivate and help prisoners to develop their English and provide credible reasons why this development matters, e.g. by drawing on their own industry experience. Below are some practical activities that can be done in training and work environments:

- **Vocabulary** – help prisoners to read and understand the meaning of new vocabulary related to the work or vocational area.

Try having word walls/ lists, making matching card activities, to match terms to definitions/ images (for those for whom English is a second or other language).

- **Spelling** – people will often only get two or three letters wrong in a word.

Try writing new words on a flip chart/ board and eliciting from people which parts are hard to spell. Highlight the letters and show people they can spell a high percentage of the word. Model ways to remember the difficult letters, e.g using mnemonics (e.g. a**cc**o**mm**odation = 'cosy cottages, marvellous mansions' or rhythm = 'rhythm has your two hips moving').

- **Speaking** – Highlight times when you speak English in different ways, e.g. at work or with friends. Discuss how our communication practices change when we talk to different people and focus on communication in social situations, like work or during a parents' event at a school.

Try asking people to think of words/ phrases that someone living in 1916 (or 100 years before now) would have been confused by. How would you explain their meaning? E.g. 'To text', 'a chat room', 'that's wicked'. Say that dictionary publishers have to make difficult decisions about which words to keep in dictionaries and which to exclude because space is limited (discuss if this will be true in the future with more line dictionaries). .Ask people to pick three words they think should be added to the dictionary (they will need to check if they are there currently) and three words they think could be cut out to make more room.

Principle 7: Language is dynamic, in a constant state of flux and we are always learning.

CPD Activity: Think of a word you know learners have difficulty spelling. Which letters cause the problem? Can you think of a mnemonic to demonstrate how you remember the spelling?

- **Listening** – listening skills are crucial in most social situations and occupations.

Try asking pairs to sit back to back and one to describe an image or item (without saying what it actually is) and the other to draw it.

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- **Reading** – Think about the texts prisoners read on a day to day basis. They may not consider themselves 'readers' but there are words almost everywhere and it can be helpful to focus on the reading that they do in their work or training - information they need to carry out tasks etc to help to motivate and encourage them

Try printing out some instructions, e.g for using a piece of equipment or carrying out a task. Now cut it into strips. Task is to arrange them, working in small groups or alone, into the right order. Focus on how they did this; perhaps by recognising key words and say that we don't always have to understand every word to understand the general meaning of a text and we can often guess what a word might mean by reading the whole sentence.

- **Writing** – People can feel particularly sensitive about writing, especially in front of others, sometimes because they don't like their own handwriting or they struggle with spelling or punctuation. People can also have difficulty thinking of things to write, their writing may lack order or cohesion and they might not know how to differentiate between more and less formal styles. There are a number of things you can do to help prisoners improve their writing abilities outside an English classroom:

Try providing models to copy from, e.g. if you are running a multi-skills workshop and have 'handover' sheets or 'job records', have some completed examples to share. Discuss the style (perhaps quite factual or informal) and give people template to write into, so they don't have to worry about layout or how much they should write.

Further support tips

- Use vocational / workshop experience as a stimulus.

> **Resource idea**: if you are using and adapting vocational materials to support test development, www.hse.gov.uk provides an extensive range of copyright free information to explore health and safety issues relating to a wide range of vocational areas and work places. It is very accessible as a level 1 resource and texts can be easily linked for comparison and extension for level 2 skills. There are links from this site to reports, guides and studies in a range of formats.

- Talk and discussion supports and expands learning and is always a great starting point.

- Record skills learned in the workshop in diary form.

- Compare products used in the workshop from information in a trade directory.

- Design an advert to encourage others to work in your workshop and follow this up with an information guide to your work area.

- Using an existing instruction leaflet for a piece of equipment in your workshop, simplify the details /make a poster / add text.

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- Identify three work place hazards and write a report on how workers can be kept safe.

- From a brief, design an accident report form and fill it in.

- Create a glossary of specialist words used in your workshop.

- Write about your first day in the workshop.

- Create a report: What happens if safe working methods are not used in your work place?

- Write an email order for products.

- Write a formal letter to make a complaint about …….

- Design a risk checklist for the workshop.

- Review and/or rewrite a health and safety guide.

- Employability …. Write a job description, apply for a job, write your CV using the skills you've listed in your workshop diary.

- Compare and summarise health and safety reports

- Summarise information on using a piece of equipment verbally and in writing.

- Visit the library and find a non-fiction book about your work area to read.

- Research associated jobs to your vocational area available outside of prison.

- Prepare a talk about your vocational area to encourage others to try it out.

Personal and Social Development and Emotional Literacy

Recent research[9] has shown that Personal and Social Development with prisoners has supported their pathways to more formal education by enhancing their self-belief, confidence and self-esteem. This, in turn, has been shown to help them access more formal education by breaking down the barriers created by mental health issues, learning difficulties and disabilities and substance misuse that manifest in low confidence, low self-respect and low self-esteem. Improving the social and communication skills has also been shown to help address negative behaviours and improve relationships within the prison community.

Principle 5: Language enables expression of thoughts and feelings and empowers people to deal with a range of situations and make appropriate choices.

Research into 'Emotional Literacy', the ability to understand and express feelings, has also provided interesting results. People may not have the experience, language or ability to express their feelings and emotions and the opportunity to express such, in words and language, can help and support them on their journey through prison.

Emotional Literacy involves having self-awareness of your own feelings and knowing how to manage them. This can support the ability to stay calm, learn how to manage stress and anxiety and develop levels of self-discipline.

Emotional Literacy also encourages and grows empathy with others. This is an essential skill to have in a prison environment and builds and develops good communication skills that can enhance relationships at a range of levels.[10]

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[9] The Impact of Personal Social Development Learning for Offenders Emily Jones and Ama Dixon - http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/t/h/the_impact_of_personal_social_development_learning_for_offenders.pdf
[10] Read more about this at: http://www.specialeducationalneeds.co.uk/emotional-literacy.html

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The term was first used by Claude Steiner (1997) who says:

'Emotional literacy is made up of 'the ability to understand your emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathise with their emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively. To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and improves the quality of life around you. Emotional literacy improves relationships, creates loving possibilities between people, makes co-operative work possible, and facilitates the feeling of community.'

Steiner breaks emotional literacy into 5 parts:
1. Knowing your feelings.
2. Having a sense of empathy.
3. Learning to manage our emotions.
4. Repairing emotional problems.
5. Putting it all together: emotional interactivity.

The concepts explored through personal and social skills and emotional literacy are often described as 'soft skills' and some Personal and Social Development work is supported in prisons through education contracts.

This section contains some learning activities that you can do in Personal and Social Development sessions with prisoners, which will help them to develop their English abilities.

"Some 50% of prisoners may be classified as having some form of mental disability or learning difficulty or may simply never have had the level of education to understand the basic rules of effective communication or numeracy skills. That deficit cannot simply be addressed by narrow specialist classes. An unrestricted diet of literacy or numeracy will not provide the motivational hook to start an offender on their journey to becoming a more responsible citizen."

Building peoples' emotional literacy through personal and social development goes hand in hand with developing language practices; similarly, better outward communication of thoughts and feelings aids social awareness and personal empowerment. All prison staff should therefore support prisoners in the development of their 'emotional literacies' through effective language use. This requires the supporter, prison officer, teacher or trainer to know their prisoners and consider the relevance and suitability of each activity for particular groups and individuals. The impact of developing emotional literacies through language with prisoners can make a difference to prisoners' personal growth and this, in turn, supports pathways to education and employment.

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Principle 6: English is a tool we use to navigate our lives, including work and study.

The following short activities can be used by prison officers, trainers, teachers and other supporters with groups and individuals. They have been tried and tested in prisons but you may wish to adapt them, depending on the individuals you work with.

Activity: How I'm feeling today

This can be used as a stand-alone activity or as a useful starter activity with individuals or groups. If used to begin a session, then set a time limit. This can be a regular 10 - 15 minute activity at the start of the session to clear the air and prepare prisoners for work: It allows prisoners to express how they are feeling at that moment and get anything 'off their chest' before the session begins. People can choose one or two emotions that describe how they are feeling and share them with others (if they want to talk about it). You can discuss the feelings individually at the end of the session, if this is appropriate. You could use 'emoticons' like those below to introduce vocabulary for different emotions

Principle 4: English development depends on the inner need of a person to 'say something'. Therefore, language use is a form of identity.

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Teaching Tip: This is an excellent activity to help learners develop their vocabulary.

Activity: Describing emotions

Try to match the four paintings below to the emotions of anger, joy, sadness and calmness. Ask: 'How does this picture make you feel?' 'How do you think the artist felt when painting it?' 'Do you associate certain colours with anger?' 'Are some colours more calming than others?' Look at each painting in turn and discuss it. There may be different cultural interpretations of colour; red might be interpreted as anger by some, while for others it might have very positive connotations such as passion List some of the words used to describe emotions on a board or flip chart paper.

Activity: Expressing feelings clearly: acrostic activity

Model writing a name on the board/ flip chart paper and ask people to think of words and statements to describe this person in the acrostic style (there are two examples below).

I wrote this about my teenage son.

Who do you think this is?
Has a famous grandmother
Army training
Red hair
Royalty
Younger brother of William

Rarely gets up before noon
Occasionally makes his bed
Best sense of humour
Eats like a horse
Really good runner
Thin!

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Ask people to write an acrostic for themselves describing their skills, feelings and ambitions. To help them further, ask people to list words to describe themselves first before trying to write the acrostic, using a grid of words like the one below to help with ideas[11].

How do you feel today?
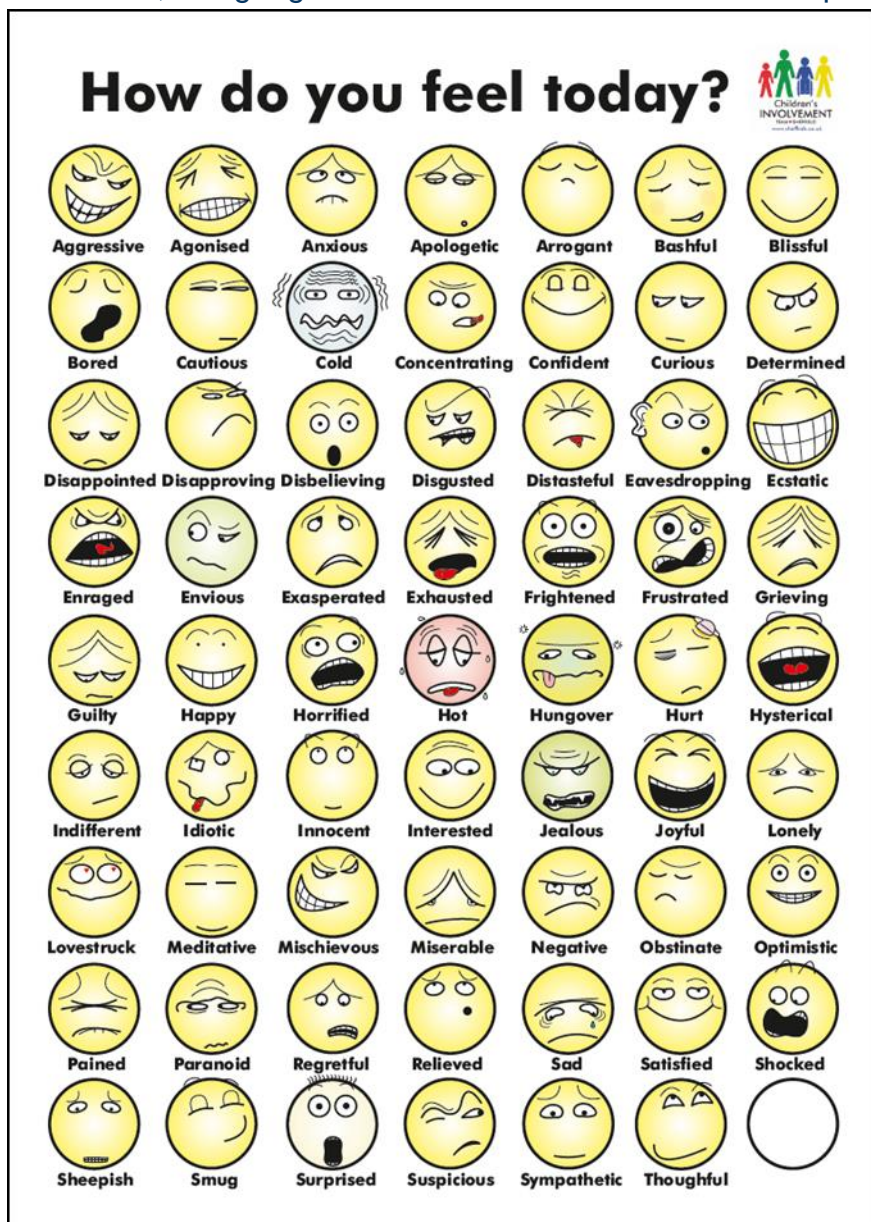
Now, consider what types of words they have used, and record them in a table:

Adjective	Noun
red	hair
famous	grandmother
good	runner

Teaching Tip: This activity will help learners to develop their vocabulary and introduce them to the concept of words being classified according to what they do.

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[11] From Sheffield City Council's 'Sheffkids' (www.sheffkids.co.uk), free downloadable worksheet

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Extension ideas

- Discuss the use of adverbs of frequency – often, rarely, never, etc

- Develop words and phrases into full sentences. Ask; 'What do you have to add to each phrase to make it a complete sentence?'. For example; 'Has a famous grandmother' to 'He has a famous grandmother.' (Add a subject to the sentence.)

- Develop the acrostic into a paragraph about themselves.

- Discuss the suitability of the paragraph to go into a job application or an application for bail: What would have to change and why. Consider purpose of text and audience.

Putting it all together: emotional interactivity

Allowing people to think, talk and write about getting along and interacting with others can help them to assess and reassess relationships and help make meaning.

Activity: My Circle of Friends

Activity: My Circle of Friends

Who is in your circle of friends inside the prison? What makes them your friends? What do they do that makes them friends?

What makes someone a friend? What are the qualities you look for in a friend?

What are the things a friend would not do?

Jot some ideas down on the diagram below.
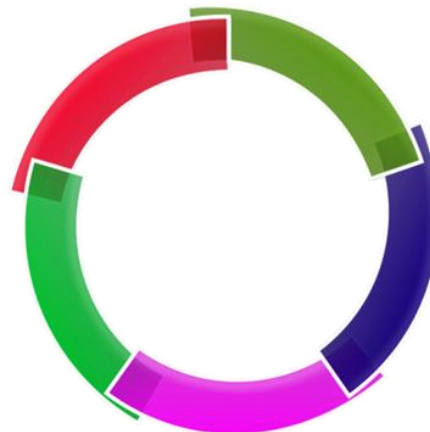
What friends do   What friends don't do

Differentiation 1 - Telling people about myself

Elicit vocabulary for positive and negative qualities or support prisoners by providing and guessing the meaning of words, e.g. honesty, caring, jealous. This can also provide opportunities to consider audience by looking at slang words and finding more formal ways to describe people or emotions. Use a word sheet like the one below[12] to support vocabulary development. You may need to simplify it for some groups. You could choose 6 positive words and 6 negative words.

Extension ideas

Discuss what information people are happy to share with others about themselves. Ask what you might share if meeting someone for the first time.

Differentiation 2 - Sharing information with others (more able/ confident written communicators)

Using the acrostic approach above, ask everyone to revise their sentences, first for a job search website, then for an interest group online (e.g. about gaming). Now ask them to write about a friend, again based on suitable words in an acrostic, which could be used in a birthday card. Talk about how language changes to suit purpose and audience. Model changing adjectives and verbs and discuss the impact. Discuss the merits of different versions. Use questioning to stretch learning by asking people to provide explanations for their choices.

Differentiation 3 - The suitcase activity (less able written communicators)

Ask everyone to write four things about themselves that they are comfortable to share on a piece of 'luggage' (a cardboard page to represent one)

People introduce themselves to another member of the group, sharing the information on their cases. They then swap cases.

People go to the next person and tell them who the case they are holding belongs to and what they know about them, using the information on the case.

At the end of three minutes, stop the activity.

People then try to reunite the cases with their original owners.

In turns they tell the group what they can remember about the people in the room they spoke to.
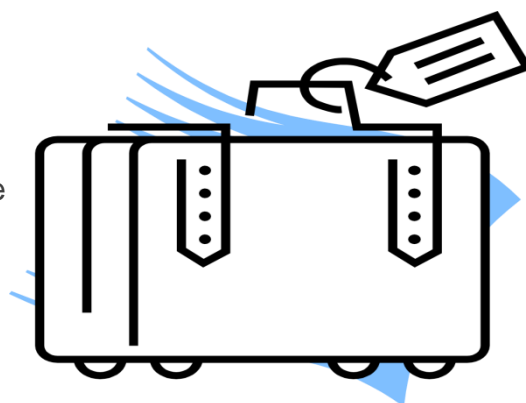
Principle 5: Language enables expression of thoughts and feelings and empowers people to deal with a range of situations and make appropriate choices.

English used in daily life and work

Language underpins everything we do in life and work, starting with our childhood family relationships, then our friendships and, later, the social relationships we form beyond our immediate environment. Without effective language abilities, we can struggle to function as members of society. Effective language use, therefore, empowers individuals. There are lots of resources to support prisoners' language development on the Excellence Gateway, including a guide called 'Supporting communication - practical techniques for vocational trainers'[13] and several 'How tos' for speaking and listening[14], writing[15] and reading[16]:

How to

…contribute to a discussion

Discussions happen all the time at work. They include:

- talking with your supervisor about a particular job
- discussing your work with a colleague
- talking to your trainer
- being involved in team meetings.

Being prepared

You are likely to find discussions easier if you know what you might need to say and are well prepared.

Try this!

Next time you meet your trainer or supervisor, ask yourself:

- What might I need to say?
- What questions might they ask me?
- Do I know the answers?
- Do I need to find out more?

How formal will the discussion be?

Chats with a workmate or friend tend to be informal. Discussions with your manager, work team or customer may be more formal.

Try this!

Which of these statements would be OK in a formal discussion?

1. 'Come off it, mate.'
2. 'I'll talk to the catering manager tomorrow.'
3. 'Oh ****, we're wasting loads on meals.'
4. 'We had 10 per cent wastage on paperwork last week.'
5. 'Please could you put that another way.'
6. 'I didn't understand a word you said.'

In a formal discussion:
- you may need to dress smartly
- you will need to be polite and business-like
- you avoid slang and swear words
- you avoid nicknames
- there are rules or an agenda
- you may be involved in only one part of the agenda.

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[13] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2139

[14] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2141

[15] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2142

[16] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2140

Activity

Ask people, in pairs, to think of things they have done over the last 24 hours. Then ask them which of these things included speaking and listening, reading or writing. Now say that we sometimes don't think about using English, we take it for granted, but it is only from what we do that we can start to work on improving, e.g. our writing or speaking abilities. Introduce the wheel of English below, which provides a range of possible tasks people do that are 'English rich'. It can be used as a prompt for planning learning or a resource that prisoners can choose from to engage in assessment or development activities, e.g. a topic for an informal discussion or a prompt for planning a piece of writing.

Principle 3: English development should begin with people's own communication needs and practices.

A wheel of English
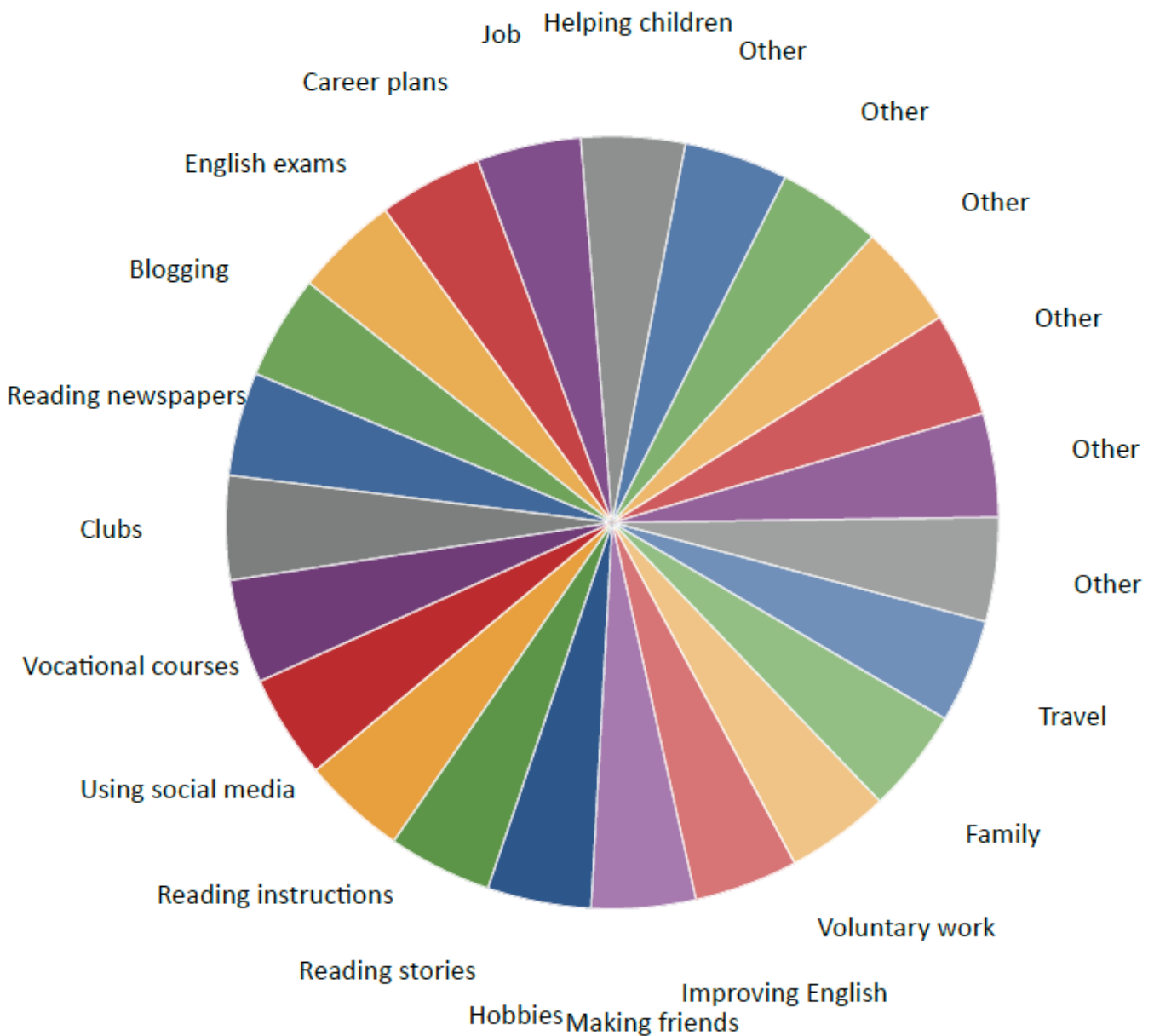
Speaking and listening in daily life

Prisoners need to be able to speak and listen effectively in order to communicate with the whole prison community, including prison officers, other prisoners, teachers, health workers and instructors. Effective speaking and listening helps them to build and maintain relationships in prison and with the outside world. The confidence that results in improving these abilities can support more formal education and employability skills development.

For most people, speaking and listening abilities are shaped during early childhood, by observing and copying people around them. If an individual does not experience a wide range of speaking and listening scenarios using rich vocabulary at this early stage of development, it is likely their future communication abilities will be adversely affected. For people who missed out on early learning experiences, or for whom these experiences took place in another language, it is necessary in adulthood to return to some aspects of English speaking and listening that many of us take for granted. For everyone, however, when encountering new contexts, communities and situations, new types of speaking and listening are required, so **developing speaking and listening abilities, is something all of us need to do at times**.

CPD Activity: Research some ex-prisoners who have succeeded in life using effective communication skills.

Tip: some may speak on behalf of prisoners or may have written books.

Speaking and listening abilities can be developed by hearing effective communication in English. 'Effective' means different things to different people but includes:
- being able to get your point across;
- listening to other people's views; and
- asking clear questions to clarify understanding.

It is important that all prison staff act as role models for effective communication using 'appropriate' language for the situation. It is also important that prisoners are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and communication practices (e.g. talking one-to-one and in small groups, with peers and with people in different positions of authority).

I say what I think!

A key part of developing spoken English confidence and abilities is developing awareness of audience and adjusting language accordingly. Prison staff can help by modelling best practice, for example, by avoiding the use of swear words in 'workplace' interactions or by explaining processes without using too much jargon.

I just never know what to say.

Principle 1: All varieties of the English language are valid in the appropriate setting and circumstances.

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Promotion and development of effective speaking and listening approaches should be included throughout vocational training, work and during personal and social development sessions. In these situations, tutors/ instructors can use the subject or topic to highlight different aspects of speaking and listening in use and provide opportunities to discuss different approaches and the associated outcomes. For example, in a vocational workshop, instructors could include support for discussing orders with clients or listening to a supervisor's instructions. It is crucial to help to develop speaking and listening in context, so they can see the relevance and draw on their knowledge of the world.

CPD Activity: In your role in prison think of 3 practical examples where you can encourage prisoners to work together to develop language and understanding between each other.

Questions

Questions can help people to think for themselves and engage actively in learning processes. They can be great starting points for discussion and can encourage prisoners to develop problem solving and critical thinking techniques, as well as the practical skills of spoken English. Use open questions wherever possible. They can be a positive way of developing speaking, listening and discussion skills whilst building the confidence in speaking to the wider community. How effective are your questioning techniques?

"Do you understand?"

Closed question

"What we have just learned? Tell me in your own words."
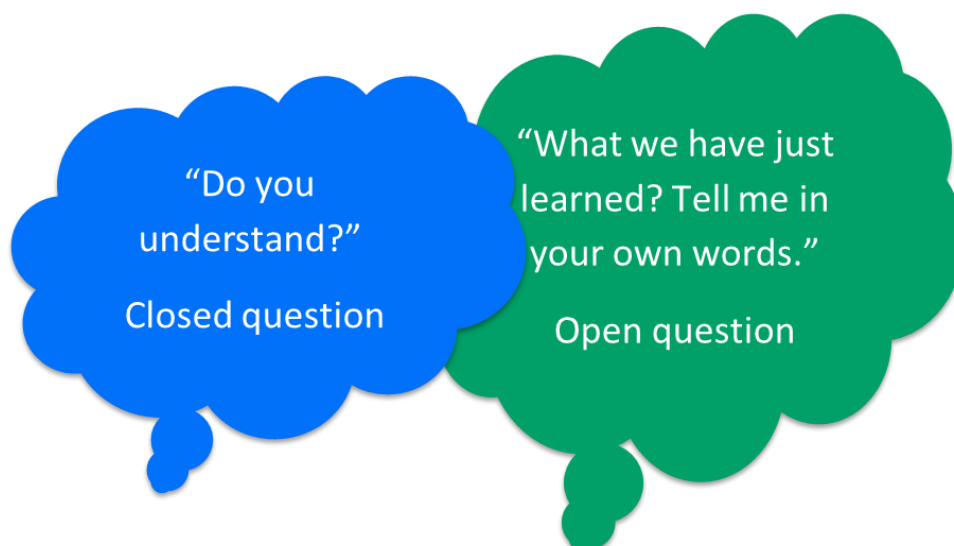
Open question

Asking questions is a skill. It important to try to ask open questions that require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer and that you probably know the answer to anyway.
For example: 'Have you been to the gym today?' will only have one right answer –'yes' or 'no'.

How you ask the question

When asking questions consider the following:

- ☐ Do the words you've chosen give the listener the best chance of a positive response – How well are your questions worded?
- ☐ Does your body language encourage effort and engagement?
- ☐ Does your tone encourage effort and engagement?

Waiting for the answer

Allow enough time for people to answer questions. Often silences in conversations can be uncomfortable and the questioner will break the silence with another question or the response they are expecting. However, people need time to think about their response and formulate a reply. The time you allow gives them a space to consider their response and the confidence to reply. It is especially important to allow for thinking/ processing time if someone has dyslexia. Build confidence by asking for a valid opinion or response people can attempt. Finally, value and respond positively to build confidence and motivation to engage further. Do not tell people they are wrong and do not dismiss their responses.

You could ask **open questions** such as: How was the gym today? What kind of training do you do when you're there? How do you think gym training helps you? How could it help others?

See the 'Developing Speaking and Listening Skills[17]' guide for tips on how you can develop your questioning skills.

Reading in daily life

Some people may say they do not read, as they have an idea that reading is something that other people do, who read books and other texts for work or pleasure. However, there are situations in everyday life where everyone needs to read, even though some may not be consciously aware of these situations or may not value them as reading experiences requiring reading skills. For example, choosing items from the canteen sheet requires detailed reading, as well as scanning for key words. Even where people are unable to confidently read words

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and sentences, they will recognise the shape of commonly-used words and use images and other 'clues' to guess whether something is a tin of baked beans, for example, or sweetcorn. It is important to highlight these practices, so that prisoners recognise the abilities they have already.

Even where prisoners identify themselves as 'readers', they might be passive readers, as opposed to active. To understand what 'passive reading' means, imagine reading a text that is written backwards, like the example below:

Reggae

Reggae is a music genre that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s. While sometimes used in a broad sense to refer to most types of popular Jamaican dance music, the term reggae more properly de-notes a particular music style that was strongly in-fluenced by traditional mento and calypso music, as well as American jazz and rhythm and blues, espe-cially the New Orleans R&B practiced by Fats Domi-no and Allen Toussaint, and evolved out of the earli-er genres ska and rocksteady.

You might find this possible to decode, if you concentrate, but it is likely that you had to stop and really think about what some words were. This slowing down, focusing on what a word says, interrupts the 'voice in your head' that, e.g. questions what you are reading or agrees with points made. This type of 'decoding' reading is therefore sometimes called 'passive', even though it can be very tiring. We need to try and help people become 'active readers'. Prison staff can help people do this by asking questions about things they have read and talking about key points. Also, if you know some people have insecure reading skills, think carefully about the amount of written text you present them with, as it is better that they read *and understand* a short extract than passively read (and don't really understand) a longer one.

It is also important to find out what individual's reading preferences and experiences are. You can do this in the same way you would chat to your peers about what you have read in the newspaper, a notice you have seen or how you find certain forms difficult to understand. These types of conversation help people to see reading as a normal daily activity and the issues they may have are experienced by many.

Prior reading experience

Do you know what reading activities prisoners have undertaken before going to prison? If not, you could use the Wheel of English to stimulate discussion. Valuing their prior knowledge and experience and getting them to recognise their existing skills and knowledge is an important part of the learning process and is something which all prison staff can do to some extent.

Reading in the outside world – prior experience and preferences

- Reading at work – instructions, health and safety notices, customer orders, invoices, payslips
- Reading out and about – directions, road signs, shop notices, public notices, posters and advertisements
- Personal reading – Facebook, texts, twitter, newspapers, magazines, recipes, interest journals, websites, novels and biographies

Reading in the prison environment

- Informal letters and cards from family and friends
- Formal letters from solicitors and others in authority
- Health and Safety notices, for example what to do in the case of fire
- Rules and regulations
- Menus in the canteen
- Books from the library
- Newspapers and magazines
- Classes and courses
- Timetables for different functions or activities

Reading in the future – after release

- Job advertisements and descriptions
- Formal letters
- Job descriptions, roles and responsibilities
- Work related instructions and correspondence
- Newspapers, magazines, online material including emails, blogs and social media, books

CPD Activity: What reading do prisoners have to do when they are with you? How can you support their development?

Consider how often you say to colleagues "Did you see that in the TV about ******?" Are there ways you can engage prisoners in similar discussions?

CPD Activity: Look around your environment and see how many things there are to read including leaflets, notices, newspapers as well as books. What clues help you to read and get meaning from them?

Strategies to support reading

- Normalise the idea that as readers we all can improve our skills at all stages of our reading journeys.

- Draw prisoners' attention to written language and model reading it and allowing them to follow the print as you do so.

- Demonstrate and allow practice of using images, headlines and sub-titles to predict meaning.

- Provide texts with good 'readability' (e.g. plenty of space around words, use of plain English - see Campaign for Plain English at http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/).

- Use upper and lower case letters. Text with all capital (upper case) letters is more difficult to read because you don't see the shape of the word e.g. SHAPE v shape.

- Introduce a glossary of key terms to refer to.

- Familiarise the prisoners with using a dictionary and thesaurus.

- Demonstrate how to read on to see if the surrounding text can help when guessing the meaning of an unknown word.

- Boost confidence by showing they read more often than they think

- Identify and promote the reading activities they do with you in your role, whether it's filling in an app or reading a health promotion flyer.

- Encourage people to think about the ways they can help themselves to support reading skills such as: joining the library, jotting down new vocabulary and asking for help.

- Ask prisoners about what they read and their personal reading environments – where and when they read.

- Talk about the reading skills **you** need in your prison role and why reading is important to you. This all helps reading become a part of everyday life for everyone, everywhere.

Resource links: There are two good lesson plans on the [British Council Nexus Offender learning site](#)[18] that provide a staged and differentiated approach for the initial encouragement of readers. They are written for ESOL learners but they provide an excellent starting point for all prisoners to use the library and begin a reading journey. More information about the approaches below can be found on the Reading Agency website[19]. This website also provides information about Quick Reads. These are short books by famous authors, designed to be easy to read. They are the same as mainstream books in most respects but are shorter and easier to tackle for adults who are less confident in their reading abilities.

- [**Encouraging and Developing Reading**](#)[20]
- [**Six Book Challenge**](#)[21]
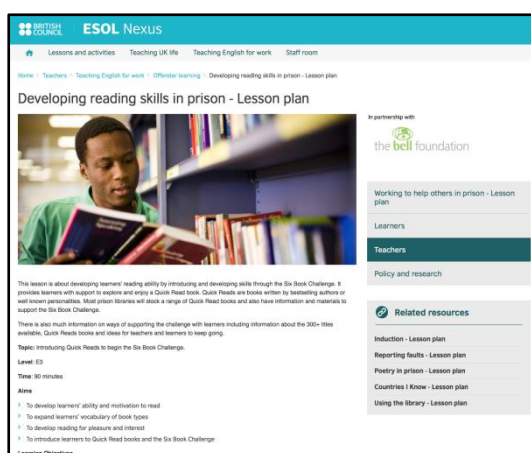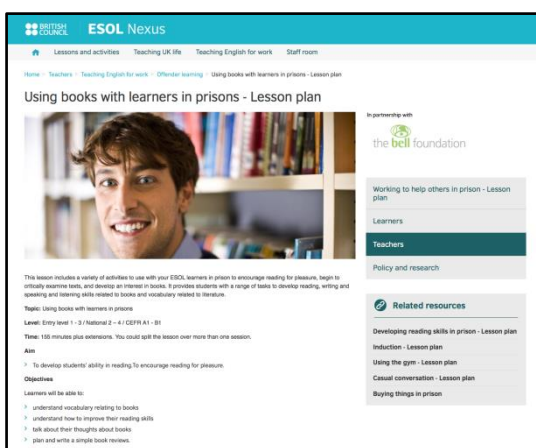
Readability

There is a very useful [guide to readability](#)[22] that can be downloaded for free from the Learning and Work Institute (previously NIACE). The guide contains lots of ideas and information to help you produce accessible reading materials. It's a useful document if you are producing notices, forms and documents for readers of all abilities.

Writing in daily life

Prisoners may not have written anything at length or for a range of purposes in the recent past, so simply expressing the view that writing is an everyday activity can help change their thoughts about the subject. They need to write for a variety of reasons:

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[18] https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-for-work/offender-learning

[19] https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quick-guides/

[20] https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/using-books-learners-prisons-lesson-plan

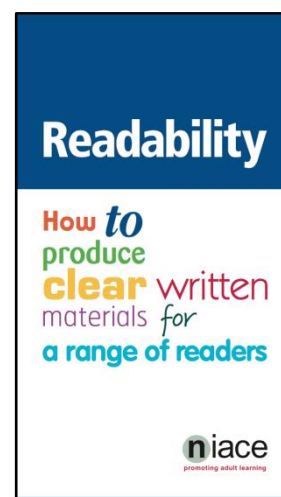[21] https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/developing-reading-skills-prison

[22] http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/R/e/Readability.pdf

- ✓ Job applications and writing at work

- ✓ Writing to family and friends

- ✓ Official forms, for example applying for housing

- ✓ Private notes, lists or diaries

There are a range of approaches you can use to make a huge difference to attitudes and approaches to writing but one of the most important is finding out about a person's current literacy practices. Where people feel negative about their writing abilities, it is often to do with handwriting, spelling and grammar. These 'technical' aspects of writing are also public, in so far as people can judge you based on *how* you write, perhaps even more so than *what* you write. This, at times, is unfair and people can be judged, and judge themselves, as 'stupid', even though our abilities, e.g. to spell words, have no connection to our intelligence.

Similarly, poor handwriting skills often leave writers feeling disappointed in their results and, while word processing is an immediate fix to the problem, access to a computer in prison is likely to be limited. Digital literacy skills are very important, as we will explore later in this guide, but if someone's perception is that 'being good at' English rests on being able to write neatly, then that is a valid technical skill for them to practise and develop.

How can you support writing?

Use some of the suggested writing games and activities in the 'Starters and Enders' resource[23] as fun interludes or time fillers.

Also, try to talk about writing whenever you can. This may be in a more formal workshop setting but may be in association with others, in letter writing, in cells or on the wing. Talk about the writing you need to do in your role in prison and in other areas of your life. Share the things *you* find challenging and demanding (many novice writers think that confident writers just put pen to paper and get it right first time).

Principle 2: Being good at English involves being able to judge what is 'good' and how it could be better.

Support writing by using writing frames. Writing frames are structures that break writing activities up into smaller sections to aid success. The example below is a writing frame for

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[23] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2517

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report writing. There are many more examples available via the Skills Workshop[24] (just search for writing frames).

Explore ways of expressing ideas; collect different ways of saying the same thing. Try and get prisoners to make rough notes and jottings to get some words on the paper. If appropriate, get prisoners to share ideas – Ask: 'What would you write?' 'How would you express this?' 'What words would you use?' What vocabulary is needed? You can help prisoners build a vocabulary book with new words, spellings or both.

It is very helpful to build writing activities out of discussion, so that people have a chance to consider what they want to say, not just how they will say it. A 'quick write' can be a very good way of getting started. To do this, tell people that they will have two minutes to write everything they can about a certain topic and that it does not matter how they write it or if their writing is accurate. Don't over correct; in the early stages of building confidence in writing skills, production is more important than accuracy.

Report Writing

Purpose: to provide factual information, e.g. a report on a new car model

TITLE: THE NEW FORD

Classification:
The new Ford _____ is a hatchback/saloon/people carrier

Description:
It is compact/roomy/fast/sporty

The options available are _____

It also has _____

Summary:
The _____ is _____

Further writing prompts If you are asked for help with more formal or more creative writing activities, then the following session plans will be of interest to you:
- Legal issues[25]
- Using poetry in prison[26]

The following pack helps prisoners to set their own writing challenges:
- Communicate! 5 English Challenges[27] – guidance and resources

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[24] http://www.skillsworkshop.org
[25] https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/legal-issues
[26] https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/poetry-prison-lesson-plan
[27] http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2470

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Digital literacies

Casey and Bruce[28] define digital literacy as:

> "the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesise digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media"

There is little doubt that digital technologies are increasingly needed in almost every aspect of our lives. As Dame Sally Coates noted in her 2016 report on prison education[29]:

> "If prisoners are, on release, to secure employment, continue to study, or otherwise contribute to society, they must be given the opportunity to use and improve their digital skills while in prison."
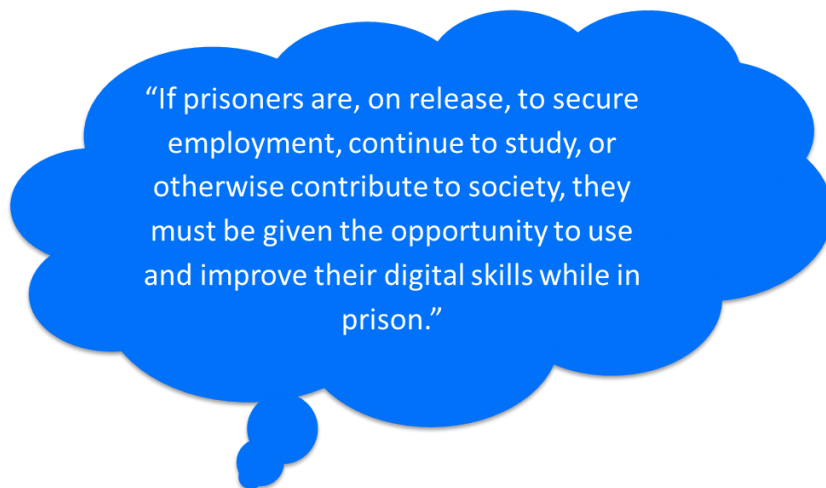
Despite the clear importance of providing prisoners with access to digital skills development, the challenges of doing so are significant and include:

- Infrastructure (security issues about access to the internet, access to rooms with ICT equipment, etc.)
- Staff confidence/ abilities
- The rapid rate of progress in digital technologies.
- Access, offline for security, to digital tools/ resources

Principle 7: Language is dynamic, in a constant state of flux and we are always learning.

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[28] (2010), as cited in Plunkett (2015)

[29] Dame Sally Coates, 'Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison', May 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524013/education-review-report.pdf

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Dame Sally Coates made some clear recommendations for the future development of ICT that supports learning in prisons to help address issues about infrastructure and access. This will take time to implement but it is important that work continues in prisons to ensure prisoners are not left behind. Here are some ideas for how you can support prisoners' digital literacy development even before improvements have been made, e.g. to 'in cell' access and the use of secure tablets.

Supporting digital inclusion

1. Talk about digital tools and approaches you use in your life. For example, describe the use of social media and include language like 'to Google' and 'to tweet' in your interactions with prisoners. The 'starter/ ender' activity below is designed to do this.

Activity

Ask people to imagine they are composing a tweet. Explain/ elicit what this is and how Twitter is used. (Tweets have to be 140 characters or less (a character is a letter, symbol, number or space). Say that that 'correct' spelling and punctuation might be a disadvantage in this activity. (Distribute paper and pens so people can count their characters.)

Version 1 - 'Tweet' to explain a process people have done/ been part of in your workshop/ training session.

Version 2 - 'Tweet' to say something you learned today.

You will need...

2. Find ways to practise the type of reading and writing you need to navigate the internet and other digital repositories. Look at the example web page below (you could print off a page from a site, such as 'Universal Job Search' or the CAB, that you think will be useful for prisoners to navigate around) :

excellence gateway — Offender learning
Exhibitions >
Supporting the workforce

| Home | About | News and events | Working in the sector | Teaching and learning | Leadership and management | Employability |

Welcome to the Excellence Gateway's offender learning exhibition site

This site brings together some of the most effective materials available on the Excellence Gateway, as well as brand new material that will be of interest to you as teachers/ instructors, managers and leaders across the offender learning sector.

Resources are grouped under the key themes that you as sector providers have identified:

- Working in offender learning
- Teaching and learning
- Leadership and management
- Employers and employability

Our aim is to work together with you and our team of sector experts to spread effective practice and improve learning delivery across the sector.

New resources

- Offender learning management development ebook
- Offender learning - a career of choice
- International perspectives on prison education: reducing reoffending
- Supporting communication - practical techniques for vocational trainers
- Distance learning and Open University learner journey
- Maths and English levels chart
- Exploring active learning and peer mentoring for maths videos
- Unlocking maths guide for the secure estate

News and events

Keep up to date on the latest news and events. Join our mailing list.

The Education and Training Foundation today (18/05/16) welcomed the Coates Review into education in prisons. Read more on the ETF website.

View news and events ›

Working in the sector

Resources related to the challenges of working in the sector.

View working in offender learning sector resources ›

Teaching and learning

Resources to support teaching and learning including assessment, motivating learners, teaching and training in the classroom and workshops.

View teaching and learning resources ›

- Would you read this from beginning to end? Where would you start? What would your eye look for? What would make you 'click on' to read more? What do you expect to find by clicking on the menu items across the top?
- What kind of writing might you do on a site like this (think about functions like searching and entering information).

3. Facilitate discussions about changes taking place in the world around us. For example, typing skills may not be needed as much as they have been over the last few decades. People are more and more interacting with computers/ mobile technologies by talking to them directly - what does this mean for the development of speaking and listening skills? What kind of work will robots be doing in the future? Discuss the need for more coders and programmers in the workforce as a result.

Supporting English development in the English classroom

Below are some practical English learning activities that you can use to motivate and engage, grow confidence and develop abilities. They are, however, only examples and they must be practiced regularly with a range of activities and resources to help prisoners develop competence in their use of English. Each activity models effective English teaching, learning and assessment. The activities are holistic, in the sense that prisoners will be able to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing throughout. The activities are designed to be used with mixed ability groups. However beginner readers/ writers and ESOL prisoners, with very basic speaking and listening abilities, will need access to specialist support before they are able to undertake these tasks.

Principle 3: English development should begin with people's own communication needs and practices.

Activity 1- Using informal English to motivate and engage learners

Time	Activity	Resources
5m	**Introduction** Help learners to choose a topic they are interested in. This could be something currently in the news or a shared hobby or events /issues in the prison. Use the wheel of English as a stimulus if needed (see page 20). 	Wheel of English (1/ 3 people)

10m	You are going to set up a discussion. Note that discussion in pairs and small or larger groups provides an excellent opportunity for prisoners to assemble their thoughts, choose appropriate words, gain confidence and fluency and engage in active listening. Elicit from the learners some rules for the game, such as: taking turns to speak, avoiding interruptions and not dominating the group, showing respect for others even when their opinions are different from yours, thinking of something you really want to say, showing enthusiasm. Once the rules and the topics have been chosen, tell the groups, or let them choose, what is to be achieved in terms of a conclusion and how they are going to feed back to the rest of the class, e.g: by presentation, answering a series of questions, etc. Then give them a fixed time for their discussion.	
(Decided by the group)	At the end of the predetermined time, ask the learners to feed back to the class on the main points of their discussion and encourage other groups to ask questions. When this comes to its natural conclusion – nobody has anything else to say - move on to the next group. The emphasis in this activity is on meaning and ideas and not on spoken grammar or vocabulary range. When the task is completed (see Plenary below), you can focus on particular aspects of the feedback and list them or repeat them, using more standard forms of grammar, for example, or more precise vocabulary in a way that comes naturally and not as a corrective technique. The prisoners will them get used to hearing their comments expressed in this different style.	
During the discussio n	A very useful way to focus the learners and to validate what they have said is to act as a scribe recording their ideas in the final feedback session. You can then display their ideas in writing or present them with their thoughts formally assembled the next time you see them. They can then see how discussion can form the basis for further debate or written work. As you scribe, you can also help them to develop their suggestions by effective use of probing questions*.	
10m	**Plenary** Ask the learners how it felt to have the class's undivided attention. Have they ever been in that situation before? Was it the same or different? Why? Ensure you allow time for full exploration and that learner contributions are valued. This could lead to a further topic for discussion in the next lesson.	

| Extension (15m) | As learners' confidence in the value of what they have to say grows, you can start to introduce an awareness of varieties of English, judgements about what is 'good' and the empowerment of choosing the appropriate language for a particular setting. This process needs to be handled carefully. You are not saying anyone's language variety is 'wrong', merely that it is one variety of many, all of which have social practices and power relations wrapped up in them. As discussed earlier "this requires the ….teacher or trainer to know their prisoners and consider the relevance and suitability of each activity for particular groups and individuals." (page 15) A helpful discussion activity, if handled sensitively, can be to ask people to rank some accents (including, e.g, Estuary English, Geordie, Received Pronunciation, Brummie, British Asian, Cockney, etc.) in terms of what they like / dislike the most. It is fascinating to see how readily people attend to this task, and shows how we attach value judgements such as 'better than' and 'like' to different language varieties. A continuation of this discussion would be to consider power relations - are there some varieties of English that have more 'power' than others? In what situations can this imbalance of 'power' play out? What can we do when we consider this as part of our social practices? Do we reinforce this by conforming to this social norm, e.g. by using a 'telephone voice'. Is this about conforming (or choosing not to) or is this a way of ensuring you can be clearly understood? | |

* You will find Module 4 'Managing Group Discussions' in 'Developing Speaking and Listening: A support pack for staff working with offenders'[30] an excellent resource.

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[30] https://api.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/import-pdf:16946

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Activity 2 - Recognising different forms and styles of English

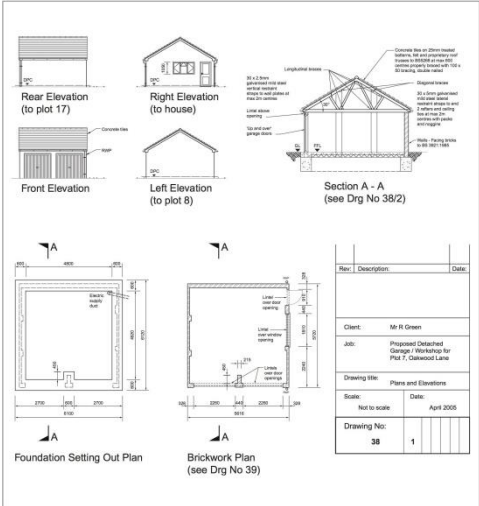| Time	Activity	Resources
25m	**Listening task** This activity focuses on developing greater awareness of the different forms of English that groups of people use. Play audio or video clips* of a selection of comedians from different geographical regions, ethnic backgrounds and genders. For example, you could use a clip from Peter Kay (Bolton), John Bishop (Liverpool), Omid Djalili (Iran), Henning Wehn (Germany), Reginald D. Hunter (Black American), Miranda Hart (Devon) and Michael McIntyre (London). Explain to learners that the comedians represent different people speaking English in different ways, with different messages for different audiences. Ask them to listen once. Then, using RAG (red, amber, green) rating cards / mini whiteboards encourage learners to listen again and vote against the following criteria: • would like to hear more of. • would never choose to listen to. • found easy to understand. • couldn't understand at all. • they think most people would like to listen to. **Alternative clips you can use to generate discussion about different forms of language** • Part of a football commentary. • Clips of ordinary people being interviewed on the news about a hot topic. • A television presenter such as David Attenborough. • A fly-on-the-wall clip of some young people coming out of secondary school or of a group of older friends queuing in a canteen. ** There is much work taking place in the secure estates to make it possible for you to use clips of this nature with learners. If you are not able to use a clip downloaded from the Internet at the moment, try and get comedians' DVDs cleared for this activity as this will enable prisoners to practise their listening approaches, as well as generate discussion/ laughter.*	Clips of comedians doing stand up acts*
20m	**Discussion** Ask learners if they would describe the content of any of the clips as 'bad' or 'inappropriate' and get them to focus on the importance of the question: 'who is the audience?'. Keep the discussion focused on the fact that, if the speakers are speaking in a form of English that is easy and accessible for their audience, then it is legitimate, it can be described as 'good' English and is not, unless nonsensical, 'wrong'.	

Time	Activity	Resources
30m	**Moving from speaking into writing/ co-creating success criteria** Give learners a picture of each comedian. Then ask them to imagine that they are writing a review for their local magazine or writing a promotional piece for a website, advertising one of the comedians coming to a theatre nearby. Before the activity begins, work with learners to co-create some success criteria for the writing task (e.g. a website advert needs to use positive language, be readable for a wide audience, be visually appealing, etc.). Write the agreed criteria on the board with space at the end for more to be added as the task progresses. Now ask learners to privately rank themselves in terms of their confidence to, e.g. produce visually attractive texts from 0-5 against each of the success criteria. During the session, continuously refer to this list, and add to it if necessary. Next either ask learners to work individually to draft their adverts/ reviews or, if appropriate, ask them to design them in small groups. Use the success criteria for the learners to judge the quality of their own work and set themselves improvement targets to continuously improve their drafts (with you or, if possible, peer support). Give learners time to re-rank themselves at the end of the task and you/ they can refer to this information during 1:1 progress talks. If you collect learners' texts at the end of the session, make sure that your marking allows for learners to amend/ improve their work during the next session through 'dedicated improvement reflection time' (DIRT). You can find out lots more about this approach by reading blogs online. Its basic principle is that in your marking feedback you give learners actions / points to reflect on / changes to make, and the time to do this in class.	Pictures of the comedians used in the first part of the activity. Paper/ pens.

Extensio n task	**Discussion about swearing**
	Some of the comedians shown above may swear frequently in their routines, as many of us do in our daily lives. It is helpful to discuss social conventions around swearing with prisoners who can be penalised in prison for swearing at staff and in life in formal/ other social situations. You could discuss learners' views on swearing and help them practise speaking in more 'acceptable' ways. This is helpful for code switching in formal situations and avoids vilifying people for their natural repartees.
	
	Set up a discussion about swearing based on some of the key points above, e.g:
	    ☐ What are the consequences of using informal language/ slang/ swear words in different situations?
	    ☐ What views do you have about swearing?	

Activity 3 - Developing awareness of audience

Time	Activity	Resources
15m	**Developing aware of audience** Give learners paper copies of a range of texts written in different varieties / styles / registers of English. These could be song lyrics, a poem, an extract from a play, an extract from a story, a magazine article, an advertisement, etc. If possible (though this may be challenging) use a text that has an audio version, e.g. from BBC Radio 4, Youtube, or an audiobook, so learners can listen and follow the text. Find some texts using slang/ where words are spelled as they sound (as in the example opposite). Discuss the different text features and the impact they might have on different audiences (e.g. would someone from outside London feel excluded when Londoners used their local dialect in spoken/ written texts?).	Texts (with spoken version if possible) where non-standard English is used (e.g. http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/schools/worksheets/pdf/speechstyles.pdf.)
25m	Turn attention to the extract from Just William in the BBC text opposite. Ask how many examples of non-standard English learners can spot in William's description of the striped rat. Now ask learners to try turning William's speech into more 'standard' English, and reciting it using an accent they think fits with the more standardised form. Ask: What might the impact be on the audience? What different judgements might we make about people depending on the variety of language they use? Try to use the word 'judgement' in your dialogue about this piece, to reinforce the idea that prisoners are using their judgement about the text, as we all do when we make assumptions about people based on the ways they speak/ write.	http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/schools/worksheets/pdf/speechstyles.pdf.
25m	In pairs, ask learners to choose cards showing a range of identities – wing officer, peer mentor, solicitor, teachers, chaplain, work mates, etc. - people who they may need to talk to other than close friends and family. Get the learners to put them in order according to how easy or difficult it is to speak to each person. (Ask more able learners to make notes about why they find it easy or difficult to talk to different people.) Ask learners to review their cards and discuss why they find some people more difficult to speak to than others. Draw out the idea that different audiences require/ tend to involve different language approaches from the speaker.	Identity cards' (see opposite)
15m	**Follow-up** Return again to the transcripts of real language use (the subtitles on YouTube clips are a great source for this, though they will need to be extracted from outside prison if you are going to use them). Ask learners to circle the keywords /features of each text and explain how these help them identify the purpose/ audience.	Authentic text transcripts.

Activity 4 - Reading in context

Time	Activity	Resources
	Preparation This activity will help prisoners develop their awareness of how texts that we read are embedded in real world contexts and practices and how this influences language, style and content and other textual/ presentational features. Select some authentic texts for this task. For example, you might use a client record card from a hairdresser/ barber, a building plan (e.g. see below), DIY instructions, a medical observation chart and an article from a music magazine. (Obviously, be careful not to share anyone's private information.) 7 Oakwood Lane – drawing 38/1 	
15m	Distribute the texts to small groups and ask them to say what makes the texts easy or hard to read and how they would get better at reading them if they needed to. Ask why each text is laid out/ formatted the way it is. Elicit that our life experience makes some texts easier to read than others. E.g. a barber's client record card might use jargon/ abbreviations that only a barber would need to understand. Reinforce the fact that we are never finished learning how to read as new contexts throw up new types of language.	A range of authentic texts (see above)

Time	Activity	Resources
15m	Introduce the idea that different text types conform to different generic conventions (e.g. newspapers are often laid out in columns and have lots of headings/ subheadings/ images) but that these are not fixed (online newspapers now are laid out in blocks of text for ease of reading on screen). Stress the importance of using clues, such as layout, images and headings to help us read and understand a text. To illustrate this point, share the following text with the group (ask people not to call out if they guess what it's about, though it is unlikely many people will): "A newspaper is better than a magazine, and on a sea shore is a better place than a street. At first it is better to run than to walk. Also you may have to try several times. It takes some skill but it's easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it. Once successful, complications are minimal. Birds seldom get too close. One needs lots of room. Rain soaks in very fast. Too many people doing the same thing can cause problems. If there are no complications, it can be very peaceful. A rock will serve as an anchor. If things break loose from it, however, you will not get a second chance." Give people some time to guess the subject of the text before revealing that the title is 'Making and flying a kite'. Say that because there were no clues (like images or headings), it was very difficult to guess what this was about and say that confident readers make good use of clues so they can 'activate' their knowledge of the world to help them understand what they are reading.	Copies of the 'kite' text opposite.
20m	Distribute a range of texts, similar to the first part of the activity, but this time with clues such as headings and images removed. Give time for learners in pairs to add their own images and headings to the text and then compare them to the originals. Ask people to say how they decided, e.g. what headings and subheadings to use (they had to read carefully and draw out the key ideas).	A range of authentic texts with headings/ images removed

Activity 5 - Using DARTs to Promote Active Reading

Time	Activity	Resources
	Preparation This activity will help prisoners develop their active reading abilities using an approach called 'Directed Activities Related to Text' (DARTs). To prepare for this activity, choose a selection of texts that relate to prisoners' lives. E.g. you could use the canteen sheet from the prison, articles from newspapers/ magazines, DIY instructions, poems/ extracts from fictional texts, etc. If possible, include extracts from books, poems and articles written by other prisoners or ex-prisoners, for example *Invisible Crying Tree* – profits from which were used to set up the Shannon Trust which promotes peer mentoring to develop reading and writing in prisons. You will be using the texts to make DARTs activities - see the instructions below. You will also need a backwards text (there is one included in this guide on page 27 but you could also make your own).	A range of texts (see opposite).
10m	Distribute the backwards reading texts to read silently for a few minutes alone. NB// people are likely to try and 'cheat' by reading through the back of the paper… praise them for their coping strategy (!) but insist they persevere. Ask them if they can explain what their text was about after a couple of minutes reading. Discuss the fact that it is very hard to take 'meaning' from a text when you are reading only to decode. Say this is 'passive' reading. Ask what active reading might mean - what goes on in your mind? (E.g. asking yourself questions about a text as you read, thinking if you agree or disagree with the author, wondering if the author is biased, etc.). Explain that they will now practice active reading and, before they do so, you'd like them to think about how good they think they are at doing this (or of they sometimes read passively - we all do at times!).	

Time	Activity	Resources
10 - 45m	**DARTs Activities** DARTs are activities which get learners to interact with texts. Their aim is to improve reading comprehension and develop critical reading abilities. They can be done by individuals or in groups. **DART 1 - Sequencing** Using one of the texts you selected for this activity (see above), cut it up into different sections, depending on the text and your learners' abilities/ what specific aspects of language you want them to focus on (laminating the pieces makes this an activity you can use again). You can cut up words, sentences, paragraphs or sections. Now, with learners working in pairs/ alone, ask them to reassemble the texts and discuss how they are able to do this, e.g. by their understanding of spelling, grammar or layout conventions. **DART 2 - Matching** Find short texts/ extracts with headings/ subheadings/ pictures. Cut them off the texts and then ask learners to match the blocks of texts with the heading/ subheading/ picture. You can make this activity harder by using similar texts and headings, so learners have to think very hard about the right matches. Ask them how they decided on the correct matches? What clues did they use? **DART 3 - Diagram/ table construction** Using a text that lends itself to this task, ask learners to label a diagram/ / make a table/ draw a flowchart using information from the text. For example, the excellent Quick Reads books include an autobiography by John Bird, the founder of the Big Issue, called The 10 Keys to Success. John founded the Big Issue after having been to prison several times. He was awarded the MBE for 'services to homeless people' by Her Majesty the Queen in June 1995. Learners could create a timeline to show the key events in John Bird's life.	DARTs activities (see opposite)
Extension	Give learners an opportunity to choose a Quick Read from the library to read together. Hold group reading sessions where learners read silently then discuss the paragraph(s) they have just read.	

Activity 6 - Quick and slow writes

Time	Activity	Resources
20m	This activity will help prisoners develop their awareness that content is the most important factor when writing. It's something that you can do again and again to develop confidence and writing abilities. **Quick write** Explain that learners are going to undertake a 'quick write' exercise and choose a topic for them to write about. It could be their views on something in the news or their knowledge about a topics, such as gardening, mechanics or music (you need to decide on this based on your learners). Ask participants to write for two minutes (no stopping) on the topic. Say it is for their eyes only and they can write about whatever aspects most strike them. Stop the task after 2 minutes and ask people to share anything they would like the group to hear. Ask them to read bits of what they have written aloud. When this is finished, remind them that they have all just completed a writing task and draw out the following key points: 1. Content is the first most important aspect of written English. 2. A piece of writing is usually for readers other than yourself (unlike the Quick write) and must therefore show audience awareness, structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. 3. Sharing writing can make you feel exposed, partly because it can be personal but also because people judge others on the ways they write (and speak). 4. It is very rare that writers get it right first time; they have to draft and redraft, sometimes many times.	Pens and paper

Time	Activity	Resources
20m	This activity will slow the writing down and enable learners to approach each word, sentence and paragraph with care and attention. **Slow write** Tell learners they will be drafting rather than writing. Then give them a topic and ask them to complete a set of exercises. In his Blog 'The Learning Spy' David Didau gives the following example exercises (they can be simplified according to learners' abilities): 1. Your first sentence must starting with a present participle (that's a verb ending in 'ing') 2. Your second sentence must contain only three words. 3. Your third sentence must contain a semi-colon 6. Your fourth sentence must be a rhetorical question 5. Your fifth sentence will start with an adverb 6. Your sixth sentence will contain a simile Etc. Once they've finished, they need time to improve. Ask them to interrogate every single word and consider whether there might be a better word. They look at every sentence and ask, could it begin differently? Should it be longer or shorter? Are they absolutely sure it makes sense? Hopefully they will be busily scribbling all over their draft and putting the new ideas in the spaces around their writing (double spaced lined paper makes this much easier). Other Slow Writing ideas include: ● Put different sentence instructions into a hat and give everyone a random selection ● Giving learners lists of numbers and tell that the number of words in their sentences must conform to these numbers.	Pens and paper

Activity 7 - Communicate! 5 English Challenges

Time	Activity	Resources
No time limit	Communicate! 5 English Challenges is a set of resources to provide prisoners with challenges to develop their communication skills. The pack comes in two parts: the Guidance materials and Resources and they can be downloaded from the Offender Learning Exhibition Site on the Excellence Gateway (see opposite). The 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. **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?	Communicate! 5 English Challenges - Guidance and Resources - http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2470

Time	Activity	Resources
	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 learners are currently engaged in provides a good starting point: for instance, if they work in the 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. **The Challenge** 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.	

English assessment

Initial assessment tools are designed to help decide which class a learner needs to join to improve their English abilities. The levels range through 'pre-entry milestones' to Entry Levels 1 - 3 and Levels 1 and 2, the latter being equivalent to the level of work expected of a school leaver. You can see an overview of the levels on page 57. However, almost all of us have spiky learning profiles and a mistake we can make is to assign a level to a learner, when levels should only really be used to describe skills. To say that someone is an 'Entry 3' learner in English is to assume that all aspects of their speaking, listening, reading and writing conform to a set level. This is an important distinction to make for everyone. We can say; 'this assessment shows that lots of the skills you are confident in equate to Level 2' but we have to remember that the learner may perform beyond Level 2 in some aspects of language, but may never have had the opportunity to practise other aspects which will be where improvement work is needed.

Principle 2: Being good at English involves being able to judge what is 'good' and how it could be better.

Recently, there have been some growing concerns about the efficacy of initial and diagnostic assessment in English (and maths), as well as approaches to the creation and maintenance of ILPs. Learners undertake English (and maths) initial assessments, usually as part of their induction process. For many, this is an activity they have done many times before and it determines the plan they will work towards in prison and, in some cases, the prison work they can do. In 2016, the Education and Training Foundation commissioned CETTacademy to develop 12 effective practice guidelines (EPGs) about best practice in English and maths assessment and tracking. The guidelines were piloted with a range of providers, including prisons, and can be seen below:

Effective Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Tracking

The EPGs have some far-reaching consequences for the way that assessment is carried out. For example, the common practice of diagnosing all aspects of a learner's strengths and development needs is brought into question by EPG 6 'Limit assessment to what is necessary'. Furthermore, we may need to review of our language of assessment; for example, we might ask why diagnostic assessment is often linked in the same breath to initial assessment when diagnostic evaluation is intrinsic to Assessment for Learning at every, and all, points along the learning journey?

Example Assessment for Learning Strategies

- Use an 'Exit Ticket[31]' at the end of a session, to give learners an opportunity to comment on what they have learned today, what they would like to do more of and/or anything they did not like or enjoy. Then take them away to check learning and plan for the next lesson.
- Use a Traffic Light System, where learners RAG (red, amber, green)-rate 'success criteria' they have co-designed as they go through the session, giving you and them 'live' feedback on their learning in real time.

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[31] www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/exit-ticket

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Equality and diversity

To represent the diverse prison population and diversity in wider society, materials and topics you use to support English development should be inclusive and broad ranging. For example, prisoners can read about the Paralympics or topics about gender identity. They can write about successful role models for people with autism, or base writing on texts from diverse cultures, or texts written by other prisoners. Remember, examples should look for positivity, not a relentless list of obstacles. They should be inspirational and positively promote personal development and success.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Supporting the development of 'English for speakers of other languages' (ESOL) is a key aspect of the work done in prisons. It is important to note that people for whom English is a second or other language are not a homogenous group but a highly differentiated section of society, including people who:

- grew up in the UK but spoke a language other than English in the home
- grew up abroad in a country where English was spoken by some people and not others
- immigrated to the UK as adults or immigrated as children, with or without family to support them
- arrived in the UK as asylum seekers/ refugees
- immigrated for better life chances/ economic prosperity
- were brought to the UK against their will/ under false promises
- may not have spent any time living outside prison in the UK, as they may have been arrested at the airport.
- had an advanced level education in their first (or second/ third) language
- have limited literacy abilities in their first language/ had little prior formal education
- will not be allowed/ do not wish to remain in the UK; some may be deported straight from prison.

Therefore, ESOL prisoners, in particular, should not be viewed through narrow lenses. It is also important to remember that spoken or written abilities in English are not indicative of intelligence (this is true for 'first language' English speakers too). A helpful definition of an ESOL person is:

> Minority ethnic adults living in a different culture and learning its dominant language (Pitt, K. 2005)

Supporting ESOL learners is not simply a case of helping them to learn new vocabulary, grammatical constructs, etc. but it is also creating/ making the most of opportunities to take part in real practices. As John Sutter explains in the extremely useful 'Teaching Adult ESOL'[32]:

> "Two examples might be leave-taking and talking to strangers. Leave-taking, at the end of an informal conversation, or a telephone call, is not simply a matter of saying 'Goodbye': there are particular routines and features - both physical and linguistic - that characterise it in English. Final 'goodbyes' are usually preceded by phrases such as' ... anyway' '... OK ... well ...' that indicate the conversation is to be drawn to a close. Sometimes the intention to end the conversation is stated more clearly - though still euphemistically - with phrases such as '... I'd better let you go/get on'. These will probably, in the case of a face-to-face conversation, be accompanied by a small step or two away from the other participant(s), or small physical movements indicating imminent departure (e.g. picking up a bag)." (IBID, p.63)

As this example shows, language and social practices are inextricably connected or one in the same.

Principle 5: Language enables expression of thoughts and feelings and empowers people to deal with a range of situations and make appropriate choices.

Principle 1: All varieties of the English language are valid in the appropriate setting and circumstances.

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[32] Sutter, J. (2009) Second Language Acquisition (SLA) And The Contexts Of UK ESOL Practice in Teaching Adult ESOL, Paton & Wilkins (Eds)

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> **CPD Activity:** What are the elements of the social practice of job interviews that ESOL people in the UK would need to be aware of?

Supporting ESOL development

It would be possible to produce an entire guide for supporting ESOL development in prisons, which is not possible here. However, there are many useful guides that already do this, so here you will find some useful tips for supporting ESOL prisoners' language/ literacy practices as an introduction to this area/ recap on your knowledge. If you would like to know more, there is a link to the ESOL Offender Learning Nexus materials, which provide a comprehensive set of guidelines and resources for supporting ESOL prisoners for their lives inside and beyond the prison gates.

Some general guidelines for supporting ESOL prisoners are as follows:
- Always teach/ present language in meaningful contexts. For example, if you introduce a new word, give an example of it used in a phrase/ sentence.
- Do not introduce too many new words at the same time and give plenty of opportunities for prisoners to use them in real contexts.
- Allow ESOL prisoners to build up a bilingual glossary with equivalents and definitions in their own language (if their writing abilities in their first/ home language are good enough).

- Be aware of common misunderstandings, such as Turkey / Torquay, grade A/ grey day.
- Try to become aware of your role as a speaker/ writer when working with ESOL prisoners. For example, think about the phrase 'It's like Playschool' or 'Don't forget 1966!'. If you grew up in the UK, you may know Playschool to have been a children's TV show and the saying 'It's like Playschool' will probably mean to you that something is easy. Similarly, you might know that England won the World cup in 1966 but why would you know this if you didn't grow up here? ESOL people are often very happy to learn cultural references but you need to explain them first if you would like to use them.
- Be aware of different social conventions, e.g. looking in the eye can be considered rude in some cultures, whereas in the UK the opposite is often true ('she just wouldn't look me in the eye', can mean she is not to be trusted). Time and punctuality can also have different social importance attached to them. Finally, some people may have been brought up not to question people in authority or with an expectation that they should learn by rote.
- Find ways to activate ESOL prisoners' 'schematic knowledge' (or knowledge of the world) before you undertake a task. This means talking about the topic they are about to focus on, so that people have an opportunity to bring all their relevant life experiences (in their own language) and the related English vocabulary to the front of their minds.

Principle 3: English development should begin with people's own communication needs and practices.

Supporting ESOL prisoners' maths development

One area that is sometimes overlooked when supporting ESOL prisoners (and ESOL learners in general) are the challenges they can face when developing their confidence to undertake maths tasks in English. These include:

- the use of everyday words with everyday usage, for example 'and', 'divide', 'more than'.

- the use of everyday words with particular mathematical meaning, for example 'average', 'the sum of', 'multiply'.

- unfamiliar or culturally specific vocabulary, for example 'heads and tails', 'sleepers for use in gardening' (This is relevant when answering questions in context, for example, 'a sleeper is 3 meters long, 8.5cm high and 4cm deep' The bed is 10 feet long. Will it fit?')

- mathematical terminology, for example 'perimeter', 'probability'.

- more complex language structures, for example 'as x increases, y increases'

CPD Activity: Consider what you can do in light of the challenges faced above? For example, how would you support ESOL prisoners to develop their knowledge of mathematical terminology?

It is important to note that ESOL people's receptive skills (listening and reading) tend to be more advanced than their productive skills (speaking and writing), so they may be able to understand a problem but struggle to articulate how they have solved it or what the answer is. Also, note that many of the challenges faced by ESOL prisoners can also be encountered by prisoners whose first language is English. As such, approaches to support ESOL prisoners, e.g. in workshops will often benefit all prisoners in the group.

ESOL Offender Learning Nexus
The Offender Learning section of the British Council's 'ESOL Nexus' site contains sets of teacher's notes and activity sheets for learners, to help them communicate effectively in prisons. There are also audio and video resources available to download and online continuing professional development modules for teachers and other prison staff.

Learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD/SEND)

There are relatively few specific teaching techniques for people with Learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDDs). Instead, they need a broad range of activities and, sometimes, an additional objective, e.g. to complete a task and then review it against a set of success criteria. A good place to find out more is the LDD Navigator site[33], which focuses on LDDs in the justice sector.

There are over 200 learning difficulties and/or disabilities which it would be difficult to address here. However, you need to be aware of the main areas of need that impact on when and how to adapt materials and teaching approaches to support people with LDD.

The following guidelines can be adopted as best practice for all learners in all teaching and learning situations (not only with LDD prisoners):

- When teaching, be clear and explicit about the skills learners will develop before you begin. For example; "this activity will help me to …", "I will need to be able to …".

- Learners with social and emotional and mental health issues often have short concentration spans. To support them:
    o vary the types of activity.
    o allow "quiet time".
    o mix individual work in with group work.

- Learners with sensory or physical impairments need:
    o access to the materials – size of paper, font, colour, etc.
    o adapted the tasks to accommodate their needs. This is a legal requirement as part of the 2010 Equality Act (section 15).

- Learners with cognition and understanding needs, such as dyslexia* need:
    o to be consulted with about their specific needs, e.g. coloured paper. This is because "the best person to ask about how dyslexia affects them is the learner her/himself." (Ott, P. (1997) *How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia*. Oxford: Heinemann.)

- Learners with speech, language and communication needs (e.g. on the Autistic Spectrum) need:
    o to hear/ read things in plain English**.
    o opportunities to develop their language abilities.
    o clear 'carrier language' (e.g. instructions).
    o clear question language.

* See below for a full overview of dyslexia, which is a very common learning difference amongst prisoners.

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[33] www.lddnavigator.org.uk/

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** There are some excellent guides to using plain English at the Plain English Campaign's website[34]. You will also find the guide to readability[35] (referenced above) very useful.

Dyslexia

The British Dyslexia Association[36] (2007) defines dyslexia as:

> "...a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be life-long in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities.
>
> It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effect can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counselling.
>
> The following description is quoted in the BDA Code of Practice for Employers:
>
> "Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling and writing. It is a persistent condition.
>
> Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, short-term memory, organisation, sequencing, spoken language and motor skills. There may be difficulties with auditory and /or visual perception. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric and musical notation.
>
> Dyslexia can occur despite normal intellectual ability and teaching. It is constitutional in origin, part of one's make-up and independent of socio-economic or language background.
>
> Some learners have very well developed creative skills and/or interpersonal skills, others have strong oral skills. Some have no outstanding talents. All have strengths."

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[34] http://www.plainenglish.co.uk
[35] http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/R/e/Readability.pdf
[36] http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexic/definitions

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As well as facing challenges with short term memory, linear thought and speed of information processing, dyslexic people often have strengths, such as:

- Creativity
- 3 dimensional/ pictorial thinking
- Seeing the 'whole picture'
- Problem solving
- Making unexpected connections

You can find out much more about supporting people with dyslexia at the following sites:

- **http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk**
- **http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk**
- **http://www.dyslexia.uk.net**

Differentiation for dyslexia inclusion

Effective planning for differentiation includes carefully considering learner groupings. It is important to try and put learners into the same or similar ability groups for tasks and provide peer support in groupings. Learners may have highly 'spiky' ability profiles and this needs to be planned for carefully, e.g. ensuring that a learner who struggles to read something on paper has an opportunity to hear the information as well. Assistive technology can be very useful and should be available for learners, especially when they are using computers. It is also critical that you discuss with individuals what works for them and provide opportunities for self-assessment, being mindful that learners with LDDs will very often be experts in their own support requirements. Finally, make time and space for rehearsal and a provide a balance of speaking, listening, reading and writing in every session.

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Digital Technology

For learners with LDDs, technology is frequently used as no more than an electronic version of testing, i.e. selecting the right answer as determined by the tutor/ author. Instead we can use it to include more inclusive strategies that are known to raise standards, for example learners can:

- devise their own assessments and try them on others

- identify strategies that have helped them with a task rather than just focusing on the right answer.

- make video presentations, electronic paintings, compose music, etc.

Accessibility

- Verdana or Arial are the best fonts for screens. They are clear and crucially enlarge well. They are both good choices for readability for print. Do not use Comic Sans which is favoured by some dyslexia lobbies but is ineffective for visually impaired people and not suitable for writing a CV.

- Font point 12 offers optimum readability against inconvenience of large text.

- Text should be broken up and arranged into tables or other readable formats where appropriate.

- Subtitles can be quite distracting for visually impaired people.

- Most deaf people are happy with a transcript for short videos.

- Some visually impaired people will want to change colours, fonts and text size to their own preference.

Working towards accreditation in English

There is a range of qualifications that prisoners can work towards to demonstrate their abilities in English. These qualifications are pitched at different levels from the national

Maths and English Levels Chart

Levels		Maths - examples	English - examples
Survival level	**Entry 1 (E1)**		
	The learner has a very low operational level	Recognise and select coins and notes Count the correct number of drinks for visitors Key in a telephone number	Follow a one-stop verbal instruction Understand common signs in their local area of work, e.g. toilets, no smoking Write own name and address on an official form
	Entry 2 (E2)		
	The learner's level is causing concern and needs to improve for you to be comfortable having them operating in your work area.	Understand measurement and sizes on labels Use simple, familiar measuring equipment, e.g. tape measure Tell the time	Respond to a question and know when to ask for help Follow machine instructions on a vending machine Fill in a simple form
	Entry 3 (E3)		
	The learner's level of operating gives some cause for concern.	Understand price labels on pre-packed (pre-weighed) food Check the receipt and money when paying for one or two items Use a map to find a location	Obtain information or advice from a telephone helpline Read job adverts Write a short letter or email to family member or a friend
Functional level	**Level 1 (L1)**	Equivalent to GCSE D-G	
	The learner has a good score and you can be reasonably comfortable with this learner's level of operating.	Read and interpret bus or train timetables correctly Follow instructions to mix or dilute substances in proportion Estimate distances using scales printed on a map	Take part in an interview for a job or course Follow a straightforward procedure in a manual, e.g. first aid Fill in an application form including writing a personal statement
Operational level	**Level 2 (L2)**	Equivalent to GCSE A*-C	
	The learner has the best possible score. You can be comfortable with this learner's level of operating.	Can do a wide range of number calculations including decimals, percentages, area and capacity Can use and interpret statistical measures, tables and diagrams	Can read and understand most Health and Safety information, working instructions and quality guidelines Can complete accident report forms, and reports accurately with sufficient levels of detail and using suitable vocabulary

- It is possible for learners to have very different operational levels for maths and English.
- English includes reading, writing skills as well as speaking and listening.
- It is possible that levels of reading, writing, and verbal communication can be markedly different for some individuals who may struggle in some areas of literacy but be confident in others.
- Some individuals may think they can't do maths and feel very strongly it's a weakness but may in fact use maths confidently in everyday situations say around money, sport or DIY but don't see this as maths!
- From September 2015, GCSE grades will begin to use numbers rather than letters, with D-G grades being grades 3-1 and A*-C being 9-4. A good pass at GCSE will be regarded as a grade 5 or above.
- If in doubt - contact your Education department and ask about referral opportunities or find out more about which skills come under each level by using the Numeracy and Literacy Core Curriculum.

Developed by the Education and Training Foundation with input from the NOMS Maths and English Practice Development Group

literacy and ESOL core curricula (shown here alongside the equivalent maths levels):

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Achieving qualifications can be highly rewarding for prisoners, especially if this is something that they have not experienced in the past. The following are the most common English qualifications that prisoners can access at the time of writing:

- **Functional Skills** (English) - these qualifications are available from Entry Level 1 to Level 2 and cover all areas of English (speaking and listening, reading and writing). These qualifications enable learners to show they can apply English use to undertaking everyday tasks. Functional Skills summative assessments are either internally or externally assessed, depending on the skill and level.

- **Progression units** (English) - these units/ qualifications are extremely versatile because they enable people to achieve accreditation for aspects of English, such as 'Using Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling in Writing (Entry 3)'[37]. Summative assessments are portfolio based and internally assessed.

- **GCSE English Language** - These qualifications enable learners to demonstrate their abilities in speaking, listening, reading and writing, looking at the patterns, structures and conventions of written and spoken English, and how its variations relate to identity and cultural diversity.

- **ESOL Skills for Life** - These qualifications support speakers of other languages based within the UK to develop their English language skills for work, further learning or everyday life.

Preparing learners for tests

Many people may be anxious at the thought of taking tests, which may be due to barriers to learning and prior negative educational experiences, so it is important to build their self-confidence and self-belief that they can succeed. Introducing test practice in short, informal situations and building up to more formal test situations can help ensure learners achieve and gain confidence with as little pressure as possible. The following **tips and hints** can boost learners' confidence:

- start with learners working in pairs or threes to respond to test questions. This allows them to become familiar with the language and style of test questions whilst responding through discussion and with the support of their peers.

- discuss and explore test questions as a whole group allowing learners to suggest responses. Elicit vocabulary and sentences to build an answer to the set question. You act as scribe and give them the deep learning tasks of formulating the answers.

- use the many available practice tests from your chosen exam board to allow learners to become familiar with the format to build confidence and resilience.

- revision sessions directly prior to the tests can be useful for both anxious learners and those with memory disabilities.

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[37] Example taken from City and Guilds but most awarding organisations offer similar units.

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- as learners become ready for assessment it is important to work through **learner guidance** for the test so that learners are clear about what is required, how much time they have and what they need to do. Familiarising learners with this 'inside' exam knowledge allows them to become 'an insider' and raises their expert learner knowledge and confidence.

Most importantly, preparations for the test need to provide a rich and engaging content relevant to learners' needs and interests and the opportunity to continue mastery of English use.

Personal and professional development

For anyone wishing to gain deeper understanding of personal and professional development required for working in the prison sector, there is an excellent guide about this in the 'Working in the Sector'[38] section of the Offender Learning Exhibition Site called 'Offender Learning a Career of Choice'[39].
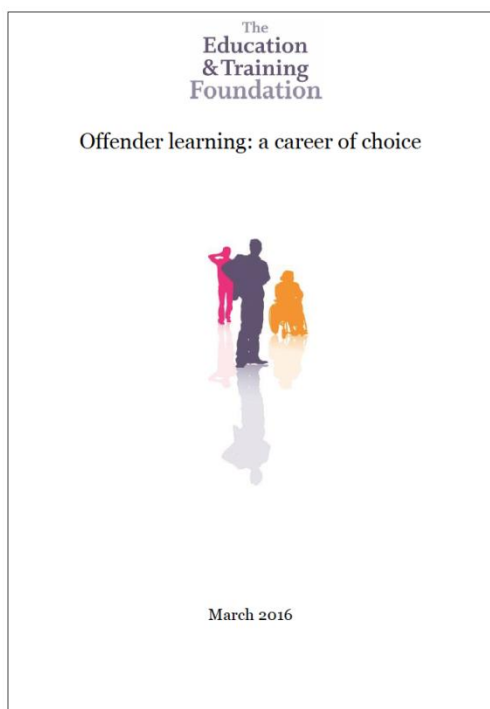
With regards to maths and English, each different role in the prison will have different needs but, generally, if you are working with prisoners in a supportive role, you should have a minimum of Level 2 abilities in your own maths and English and, ideally, you should work towards Level 3 as a goal.

There are some great CPD opportunities in maths and English (such as workshops to help you support prisoners in a 'vocational' setting) on the Education and Training Foundation's course booking pages[40].

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[38] http://offender-learning.excellencegateway.org.uk/working-sector
[39] http://offender-learning.excellencegateway.org.uk/working-sector
[40] https://booking.etfoundation.co.uk

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English on-line learning modules

The Education and Training Foundation have developed 11 modules to support teachers, trainers and all practitioners to develop their personal English confidence and abilities. The module titles are:

1. Grammar
2. Reading critically
3. Evaluating writing
4. Writing effectively and clearly
5. Writing for impact
6. Speaking
7. Listening and understanding
8. Planning and Developing Writing
9. Reading with Appreciation
10. Crafting your own Writing
11. Critical communication awareness

They can be accessed at http://www.foundationonline.org.uk, in the Maths and English section.

The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers

Professional values and attributes

1. Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners

2. Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs

3. Inspire, motivate and raise aspirations of learners through your enthusiasm and knowledge

4. Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn

5. Value and promote social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion

6. Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners

Professional knowledge and understanding

7. Maintain and update knowledge of your subject and/or vocational area

8. Maintain and update your knowledge of educational research to develop evidence-based practice

9. Apply theoretical understanding of effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment drawing on research and other evidence

10. Evaluate your practice with others and assess its impact on learning

11. Manage and promote positive learner behaviour

12. Understand the teaching and professional role and your responsibilities

Professional skills

13. Motivate and inspire learners to promote achievement and develop their skills to enable progression

14. Plan and deliver effective learning programmes for diverse groups or individuals in a safe and inclusive environment

15. Promote the benefits of technology and support learners in its use

16. Address the mathematics and English needs of learners and work creatively to overcome individual barriers to learning

17. Enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment, setting goals that stretch and challenge

18. Apply appropriate and fair methods of assessment and provide constructive and timely feedback to support progression and achievement

19. Maintain and update your teaching and training expertise and vocational skills through collaboration with employers

20. Contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others

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Self assessment

What particular English skills do prisoners use when they are with me?

How can I make my prisoners feel good about the English skills they use well?

What questions can I ask to help my prisoners improve aspects of their English?

How can I get prisoners to work together in pairs or small groups to improve their English?

On a scale of 1-5, how has this guide increased my confidence in helping my prisoners with their English?

Useful links and resources

Developing Speaking and Listening Skills for Offenders
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf1283

Developing Speaking and Listening : A support pack for staff working with offenders.
https://api.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/import-pdf:16946

Conversational skills with ESOL learners.
https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/casual-conversation-lesson-plan

Readability: How to produce clear written materials for a range of readers'
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/R/e/Readability.pdf

Quick Reads https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quickreads/

Using topics to engage learners
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/L/e/LetsTalkAboutMoney_1.pdf
www.hse.gov.uk
http://www.chlfoundation.org.uk/resources.htm

Encouraging and Developing Reading:
https://esol.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/informational-page/Using%20books.pdf

Reading Ahead
https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quick-guides/reading-ahead/

Using poetry in prison
https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-work/offender-learning/poetry-prison-lesson-plan

Setting Challenges
Communicate! 5 English Challenges – guidance and resources
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2470

Use of Exit Tickets www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/exit-ticket

Personal and Social Development and Emotional Literacy
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/t/h/the_impact_of_personal_social_development_learning_for_offenders.pdf

http://www.specialeducationalneeds.co.uk/emotional-literacy.html

Preparing Learners for Functional Skills Tests
There is no shortage of free learning materials to help you teach Functional Skills English and support all the set criteria. You may need to contextualise these for the prison setting and your particular group of learners.

You can find an extensive bank of materials linked to Functional Skills standards at:
http://www.skillsworkshop.org/category/literacy/functional-skills-english

Starters and/or plenaries:
Text type matching activity:
http://www.skillsworkshop.org/sites/skillsworkshop.org/files/resources/e3l1l2texttypesmatch.pdf

http://www.skillsworkshop.org/sites/skillsworkshop.org/files/resources/ll2purposeoftextcardgame.pdf

Boost Your Teaching: Tips on Plenaries
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQx9sN3GaZo

Exploring genre:
https://managementui.excellencegateway.org.uk/sites/default/files/Usinggenretodevelopreadingandwriting.pdf