

# Session 5: How Learning Works Tips & Tools

## Objectives of Session

Having completed this session, participants will have:

* Developed a good awareness of multiple intelligences and learning styles, including an awareness of Universal Design for Learning
* Recognised the shared benefits of Literacy-Friendly methodologies and Universal Design for Learning for the adult learner
* Tips & Tools for literacy accessible materials and an inclusive environment

## Session Content

* Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences
* Universal Design for Learning
* Learning Styles
* Reading for Comprehension
* Supporting Writing
* Digital Literacy-Accessible Design
* Plain English
* Mini-Materials Workshop

## Resources for this session

* Handout 5.1 Digital Inventory
* Handout 5.2 City of Dublin ETB Facbook Page
* Handout 5.3 FindGLocal Website search CDETB
* Handout 5.4 Fingal Training Centre Website
* Handout 5.5 CDETB Website
* Handout 5.6 CDETB Adult Ed Finglas Website
* PowerPoint presentation
* Session plan
* Zoom and Internet access

## Slide 1: How Learning Works – Tips & Tools

***2 minutes***

Welcome participants back.

Introduce session 5.

In our sessions so far, we have looked at some of the theories that are relevant to adult education, impacts and causes of unmet literacy needs, creating a literacy-friendly environment, and referrals and boundaries in adult education.

In this session we will be looking at how learning works but first we will take some time to share our ideas and questions from last week's extension activity.

## Slide 2: Extension Activity Feedback

***15 minutes***

Recap on the extension activity from session 4. We will be using a Menti to take some written feedback and there will be time for discussion then.

Introduce the Menti, which should take the format of an “Open Ended” Menti with the question **"Reflecting on your practice in the past, have there been instances where you felt unable to support a learner with unmet literacy needs? Are there any practical tips that you would take from this session that would inform your future practice. Can you give any examples?"**

Share the Mentimeter.com presentation on screen so that all participants can: (1) see the menti code to enter, and (2) see other participants' submissions.

As submissions appear identify emerging themes. Identifying themes, ask participants to elaborate on their ideas and to ask questions of the facilitators to deepen their awareness and practice in particular areas. Allow some time for discussion amongst the group.

There will not be time to take verbal feedback from every participant. Reassure participants that they can follow up with the facilitators after sessions.

## Slide 3: Session aims

***2 minutes***

In this session we will explore the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and get a better understanding of Learning Style, Universal Design for Learning, and Plain English.

We will be looking at how learning works and introducing some practical tips and tools for making our materials and environments literacy-accessible.

## Slide 4: Howard Gardner

***3 minutes***

We have inherited models of education for specific purposes. For example, some attitudes and approaches to education are focused on obtaining a third level qualification or entering the labour market.

Society can place different values on various types of competencies and intelligences. For example, the value placed on academic achievement towards qualifying as a medical doctor will ultimately be better rewarded financially than a trade qualification. In some cultures, for example Denmark, we can view how this value system is very different, where everyone pays 50% tax and there is far less disparity between salaries.

Howard Gardner developed his Theory of Multiple Intelligences in the early 1980s. He recognised that our formal, academic education system is biased in favour of limited aspects of intelligence, or ways of processing information. He posited that incorporating all types of intelligence in how we teach and learn will enhance teaching and learning.

His theory has met with criticism over its lack of empirical evidence. That said, it is useful to consider the variety of strengths and perspectives that individuals bring to a wider group, and how those strengths may be leveraged to increase engagement, learning, and collaboration.

It is important to understand that nobody has one type of intelligence, but rather that individuals will generally have strengths or weaknesses in one or more type of intelligence, or how their perceive and engage with the world.

## Slide 5: Seven Intelligences

***3 minutes***

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence originally consisted of seven types of intelligence (an eighth was officially added to the previous 7 Multiple Intelligences in 1999):

1. **Linguistic** the ability to understand both written and spoken language, e.g. Noam Chomsky
2. **Logical-mathematical** the ability to recognise patterns and relationships, and to solve problems through logic, e.g. Albert Einstein
3. **Spatial** the ability to create and manipulate mental images, and the orientation of the body in space, e.g. Leonardo da Vinci
4. **Musical** the ability to express oneself through rhythms and patterns, e.g. Nina Simone
5. **Bodily-Kinaesthetic** to be physically coordinated and dexterous, e.g. Venus Williams
6. **Interpersonal** the ability to communicate, work with and understand others, e.g. Oprah, Louis Theroux
7. **Intrapersonal** the ability to understand self (emotions, thoughts, abilities), e.g. Mahatma Gandhi
8. **Naturalistic Intelligence** the ability to understand the outside world or specific animals and the ability to sense patterns in and make connections to elements in nature, i.e. they are ‘nature smart’

## Slide 6: Overview of Learning Styles

***3 minutes***

In looking at the theory of multiple intelligences, we have touched on how people have different strengths of perception, or how they take in the world around them.

It can be very useful to have a good sense of not only our students' learning styles, but also our own. There is an online tool freely available at [www.vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/](http://www.vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/) where you can assess your learning style. Learning styles should never be considered as an exact science, but rather as a useful tool to reflect on how we take the world in and, consequently, our perceptive strengths.

Some people will be much stronger at taking in and producing information visually. Others may have a natural preference for auditory interaction. Kinaesthetic learning is where we learn by physically doing a task or trying things out in a practical way.

As outlined in the slide, visual learners will prefer to have information given to them in the form of images, charts, videos, etc. It may even help for these learners to visualise internally as they learn, using their visual memory to make sense of information.

For auditory learners, listening to content, engaging in discussions or questions and answers, or even playing music while learning can be really beneficial. Reading aloud can really assist their engagement with content.

The kinaesthetic learner may find that tapping their foot or "messing" with some blue-tack or playdo while learning will help them to concentrate on the content before them. Physically trying out a task is an excellent way for these types of learners to engage.

Are you aware of your own preferred learning style?

Are you aware of your learners preferred learning styles?

## Slide 7: Good Practice Cartoon

***1 minutes***

As we look at multiple intelligences and learning styles, we begin to understand the importance of creating learning opportunities and environments that are inclusive to everyone, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses.

We will now take a look at Universal Design for Learning, which builds on what we have already covered.

## Slide 8: Universal Design for Learning Film

***5 minutes***

Approx 4 mins. May like to have a few comments after this video

Play this four minute video outlining the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

Take time to discuss aspects of the video. Do any aspects of this approach resonate with participants, either from their own learning or in their teaching practice and delivery?

## Slide 9: Universal Design for Learning

***2 minutes***

The three key principles when we are considering Universal Design for Learning are that we provide multiple means of:

1. Representation,

2. Expression, and

3. Engagement

When designing the information we are delivering we need to keep all types of learner in mind and create materials and approaches that will tap into all learning styles within our group. It is important that students have the opportunity to use a variety of means of expression, for example, they may benefit from creating a video or audio recording in place of a written assignment. This should never negate the need for students to be supported to develop good reading, writing, and spelling skills, as these will be needed beyond the classroom.

## Slide 10: Breakout Room

***24 minutes***

***2 minute Intro***

***10 minutes in Breakout Room***

***3 minutes / group x max 4 groups***

Introduce the Breakout Room.

**Task:**

**What is your preferred learning style? Visual / Auditory / Kinaesthetic**

**Can you recognise any ways that your learning style affects your delivery?**

Group 3 or 4 participants to each room. You might like to get a show of hands for who considers themselves to be of each learning style and group people accordingly, including a "don't know" group. Groups should identify one person to takes notes and feedback from the task at the end.

Give 8 minutes for discussion, with 2 minutes countdown time for the breakout rooms.

When the breakout rooms close, give 3 minutes to each group to share their feedback and discuss new approaches and ideas encountered.

# Slide 11: Break 5 minutes

## Slide 12: Reading for Comprehension

***3 minutes***

Explore the tips for Reading for Comprehension on the slide. This is not an exhaustive list.

It is always easier to read when we understand the context and content that is written about. Giving time in advance of reading to discuss the content of the text, break it down into manageable chunk, or scaffold the content with visual or other media.

Ask participants for their input and experience in using any of these or any other approaches to support reading for comprehension.

## Slide 13: Supporting Writing

***3 minutes***

Explore the tips for Supporting Writing on the slide. This is not an exhaustive list.

It can be easy to assume that everyone is comfortable with writing or spelling. Participants should have a better awareness of literacy needs at this point and should be more confident in considering ways they can support writing within their practice.

Ask participants for their input and experience in using any of these or any other approaches to support writing.

## Slide 14: Digital Literacy-Accessible Design

***3 minutes***

Explore the tips for Digital Literacy-Accessible Design on the slide. This is not an exhaustive list.

We are increasingly creating content to be viewed on phones or computers. It is important that we adapt our production style to suit the digital mediums we are using to communicate.

When looking at digital design we need to consider the person first and foremost. On a very general basis, we need to keep in mind the individual's access to and ability to use devices. We will look at a Digital Inventory shortly.

We are then considering what content options are available for good design. For example, text-to-speech tools like Microsoft's Immersive Reader can be a fantastic tool for people who have difficulty reading. If there is text, can it be printed or provided as a handout? It may be possible to use a background tint to best suit someone with dyslexia. On some websites there are options to choose your own background colour and text size, for example, [www.ahead.ie](http://www.ahead.ie/). With regard to the variety of digital media that we can now create, it is becoming easier to incorporate videos, captions, and audio into our communications and materials.

Finally, we should always be clear about what platforms and tools we are using from the outset. It may be preferrable to choose platforms that the majority of people are comfortable with, or that are freely available. It is also useful to be decisive about what platforms we are using so that everyone is clear on what applications they may need to become more proficient in using.

Ask participants for their input and experience in using any of these or any other ideas for digital literacy-accessible design.

## Slide 15: Digital Inventory

\*Ref. Handout

***3 minutes***

It is a very useful to carry out a digital inventory with individuals that we work with, to understand the best ways that digital communication will work for them. This can be done through a relatively informal chat.

First find out a little about what type of phone the person uses, for what purposes, and if there is anything that they struggle with on their phone that they would like to get better at.

Secondly, find out about their digital skills and access. What kind of device(s), if any, are they using, for what purposes, and is there anything they would like to learn or get better at? Within the range of purposes we use devices for, find out a bit about whether they are a viewer of digital information or if they are a producer. For example, do they use social media but never post anything, or are they competent setting up a Zoom call and allowing others to join? Finally, find out about the person's ability with the more formal applications that we use computers for. Can they create, save, and find documents?

Last but not least, it is good to find out about the person's access to internet. Some people do not understand if they have access or not. This in itself will give you a picture of the individual's digital skills.

## Slide 16: Digital Literacy-Accessible Design

***3 minutes***

We have talked about utilising the theory of multiple intelligences, learning styles, and Universal Design for Learning to best support those with unmet literacy needs. These ideas all continue to apply when we talk about digital design. Here are a few more tips that should assist.

If using a website, check that it is mobile-responsive. This means that it should be designed to be viewed on a mobile phone first and foremost. This is very useful to keep in mind for any digital production. The smart phone may be the only piece of technology that is available to the person and is an incredibly useful piece of equipment, provided content is easily accessible on it.

Logins can be very challenging for those with unmet literacy needs. If possible, avoid requiring the person to have a login.

Thinking about User Experience, think about your own frustrations when digital content is not well collated. There are a few tips to keep in mind when aiming for a good user experience, as outlined above. It should take no more than three clicks to reach your online destination. Keeping the most important points "above the fold" means that you don't need to scroll down the page to view this content. The rule of seven plus or minus 2 refers to the capacity of our short-term memory. Don't overwhelm the person or the digital space with too much information all at one time.

If at all possible, integrate a variety of media to best cater to all learning styles and needs.

## Slide 17: Literacy-friendly practice for Educators

***3 minutes***

Literacy learners learn better when content is relevant their lives and is up to date. The items listed on the slide do not constitute an exhaustive list.

Posted lesson goals can help students know what they are working towards achieving. Alternative options for assessment could allow students create a podcast, a comic strip, or a video to show what they know.

If working towards certification, check first that your alternative assessment approach is allowed under your service's validation criteria.

Allow opportunities for students to work individually as well as in small and large groups. This variety in engagement and collaboration gives the person great opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, self-reflection, and testing and trialing new learning.

Feedback to your students regularly and in a positive and constructive manner. Students should be encouraged to reflect on the choices they made in class and whether they met the goals.

## Slide 18: Use Plain English in all your materials

***2 minutes***

Over time, various professions and areas of expertise have developed their own way of using language. It may be that there is a very formal or technical purpose for the language, or a particular vocabulary. For example, we use the term "legalese" when we think of how law is communicated in language. This use of language happens in all walks of life and can become a structure of power and exclusion.

Plain English aims to overcome this dilemma by speaking clearly and directly, explaining any necessary jargon.

## Slide 19: Top Tips for Plain English

***2 minutes***

Here are some top tips for using Plain English:

Write for your audience. Consider who will be reading your content, put yourself in their shoes, and communicate in a way that will best and most clearly speak to them.

Keep it simple. If there is a simpler word to express the same meaning, use it. If two short sentences make more sense than one long one, split it up.

Be personal and direct. It is always easier to engage and relate to content that speaks directly to us.

Define jargon and abbreviations. It may be necessary to introduce new vocabulary or use essential terms or acronyms. Be sure to clearly define these from the outset and avoid them where they are unnecessary.

Keep sentences short. It is worth bearing in mind the old adage, "If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter." It can sometimes take a little longer to view our writing through the lens of Plain English, but it is well worthwhile.

## Slide 20: Examples of Plain English

***2 minutes***

Here are a couple of simple examples of where content has been changed to be more "plain English". The first is particularly striking and serious in that it could affect the amount of medication a person takes.

Do participants have any examples of where they have been baffled or found it difficult to understand or untangle communications?

## Slide 21: Literacy-Friendly materials

***3 minutes***

Here are a few more tips for creating literacy-friendly materials. Run through the items outlined on the slide. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

It is important to note that tinted paper or coloured overlays may benefit people with dyslexia. Different shades can work for different people. If there is someone that you are working with who has dyslexia, ask them what works best.

A reading window can be a very simple and effective tool. You can buy them, but it is just as simple to make one up, or you can simply use a ruler or a sheet of blank paper. Take a piece of paper and cut out a narrow strip and place it over your page so that only one line of text is visible at a time. Our eyes will naturally jump up the page and this can be more problematic for some people who have dyslexia or other conditions. Anything that will block out unnecessary text, particularly that above the piece being read, will assist with focusing the reading task.

If using Microsoft Word, Accessibility Checker is a fantastic tool to check how literacy-friendly your writing is. There are many other tech tools that can be used. Check for these according to the digital platforms that you are using.

## Slide 22: Literacy-Friendly materials

***2 minutes***

Always keep the person in mind first and foremost when creating materials. Depending on their age and background, certain materials and methods may work better for some than others. Any content or materials created should be flexible to suit a variety of learning styles and should be user friendly.

## Slide 23: Breakout Room

\*Ref. Handout

***24 minutes***

***2 minute Intro***

***10 minutes in Breakout Room***

***3 minutes / group x max 4 groups***

Introduce the Breakout Room.

**Task:**

**Take either one sample texts/communication provided or equivalent material from your workplace.**

**Considering what you have learnt about Multiple Intelligences, learning styles, UDL, and tips for literacy-accessibility, how would you make this piece of communication more literacy-friendly?**

Group 3 or 4 participants to each room. Provide each group with a piece of sample material to utilise for the exercise. They may also choose to use something from their own work that they would like to examine. Groups should identify one person to takes notes and feedback from the task at the end.

Give 8 minutes for discussion, with 2 minutes countdown time for the breakout rooms.

When the breakout rooms close, give 3 minutes to each group to share their feedback and discuss new approaches and ideas encountered.

## Slide 24: Extension Activity

***2 minutes***

Introduce the Extension Activity to be practiced between now and the next session.

**Task:**

Reflecting on a lesson you have already created, consider how would you integrate the principles of good literacy practice and Univeral Design for Learning to make the delivery more literacy-accessible.

* Be creative about how the content is delivered.
* Allow options for assessment that can play to a variety of learning styles.

Remind participants to set aside some time for this practice. Suggest that participants may like to take some notes for sharing on our next session.