Assessing literacy and numeracy needs in your group: sample activity

**True/False discussion activity model\***:

The following is an adaption of exercises on the website: [*Language, literacy & numeracy in VET | Learning Lab (rmit.edu.au)*](https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/language-literacy-numeracy-tafe)

You have a new group of learners and you want to assess their maths ability. Set up a list of statements for learners to discuss in pairs/small groups but then answer individually on worksheet. The maths questions should have a basis in your content area (carpentry, cookery, knitting, hairdressing etc) The learners can answer with:

* Always true
* Sometimes true
* Always false

If the answer is false, request the learner provides an alternative true statement.

**Sample statements:**

* A 1 litre jug can hold up to 1000ml of liquid
* 6% of a kg is the same as 600g
* A cooking pot holds up to 5 litres of liquid
* ¼ of 800g is 250g
* Chicken should be cooked at 200c/gas mark 6
* A 1.5kg piece of beef to be cooked at 20 minutes per pound (450g) plus 20 minutes over will be in the oven for approximately 1 hour and 25 minutes

The teacher can listen in to the paired/group discussions, take feedback and queries. An exercise such as the above gives the teacher an early indication of gaps in a learner’s knowledge base for the course they are about to undertake. If a learner is struggling with basic mathematical concepts or reasoning, early interventions and supports can be put in place. It may reveal to the teacher that metric and imperial need to be explained or that a number of learners struggle with fractions or percentages. The object of the exercise is to hear the discussions and listen to the reasoning, it is also a non-threatening way to screen for numeracy difficulties.

This True/False discussion model can be adapted to suit a range of subjects.

*\* Based on an activity in Marr, B & Helme S. (1991) Breaking the Maths Barrier: A Kit for Building Staff Development Skills in Adult Numeracy. Canberra: DEET.*