

Disability Workplace Literacy Activity Guidelines

The Disability Workplace Literacy Activity is a tool for disability support providers. It enables an employer to gather information about potential and current employees' literacy and numeracy skills. This can help you see if their skills:

- Match the requirements of the position, or
- Require more development in the workplace, or
- Are not adequate for the position

The activity is best conducted one-on-one, after an interview or as part of a performance appraisal meeting.

If the employee has a vision impairment, before the activity you will need to:

- Let them know that they will be doing a literacy activity
- Ask them to bring their magnifier or AAC device with them
- Ask if they prefer to do the activity on a screen or on paper and make their preference available
- Use real objects in place of the photos, for example, use a bottle of medication to read the date from, provide a notice about opening hours from the phone book or online

Step 1. Prepare the workspace

The person will need:

- A quiet location
- Enough room to work
- Scrap paper to write notes or workings
- Access to a calculator (e.g. mobile phone)

Step 2. Explain the activity

Discuss things such as:

- The reason for asking the person to do the activity
- What you'll do with the result
- There is no pass or fail
- You can provide support to the person during the activity

Step 3. Give the person the activity worksheets one at a time

You can reduce the person's anxiety by doing the following:

- Give a one worksheet at a time.
- Be available to answer questions, but don't hover or be patronising. Ideally have something else to do close by.
- If the person can't successfully complete the task on their own, help them to finish it so they have a sense of completion. Then think about whether to give them a more complex worksheet or not.
- Make a note of the assistance you provided.

Step 4. Interpret the results

If the person completed all tasks to the standard you expect in the workplace, there is probably no need for follow up.

Writing

If the writing makes sense but wording isn't quite as clear as your workplace standards require, the person probably needs a little guidance and some supported practice. You could:

- Spend some time with them talking through the actual workplace tasks
- Explain the purpose of each written workplace task, what does the organisation do with the information provided
- Give the person some examples of completed work at the standard you are aiming for
- Create a word-list of commonly used terms that can help with spelling and use of appropriate terminology
- Spend a few 30-minute sessions looking through samples and helping to strengthen the documentation they complete using a supportive approach

If the person's writing is not in meaningful sentences and is difficult to understand their message, it will be best to get support from a trained literacy tutor.

Reading

If the person is unable to complete the tasks in the activity due to their reading skills level being lower than required, it will be best to get support from a trained literacy tutor.

Numeracy

There could be a couple of reasons why someone might struggle with the timesheet or budget tasks.

If they didn't understand the purpose of the task or the process someone will need to spend some time explaining your actual workplace tasks slowly and step-by-step. Understanding why we're doing something is often critical to being able to actually do it.

If they had difficulty adding or subtracting, you are best to get support from a trained literacy tutor.