Professional Learning Activity.

Assessment, Support and Planning for Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia.

Sean Connery Foundation Legacy:

Learning from the Dyslexia Initiative.

Dyslexia Scotland

Dyslexia Scotland Charity No. SC000951

Assessment, Reporting & Individualised Planning:
Strategies and resources for learners with literacy difficulties / dyslexia.

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PLA Content

1. Introduction
1.1 Overview & Learning Outcomes

2. Dyslexia and the Scottish Context
2.1 Inclusive Education
2.2 The Scottish Working Definition
2.3 Terminology

3. Diagnostic Literacy Assessment: A step-by-step guide of how to use this assessment tool
3.1 Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Overview, Administration, Considerations
3.2. Understanding the Learner: The Learner's Perspective
3.3 Reading**:** Phonic words, common words and non-words
3.4 Reading Non-words
3.5 Reading in Context
3.6 Spelling: Phonic and Common Words
3.7 Oral: Syllabification and Sequencing
3.8 Writing: Story Writing and Writing Sequences
3.9 The Running Record and Miscue Analysis
3.10 Pre-literacy assessments: Phonological Awareness

4. Reporting & Planning for Individual Literacy Programmes
4.1 Report Writing: Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) Report
4.2 Planning: Order of Teaching Phonics & Short-Term Plan
4.3 Individual Lesson Planning
4.4 Support Staff training
4.5 Reflection

5 Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources
5.1 Pedagogy and Planning for Effective Literacy Support
5.2 Handwriting
5.3 Revision
5.4 Common Word: Reading
5.5 Common Word: Spelling
5.6 New Sound Phonic Strategies
5.7 Dictation
5.8 Reading in context
5.9 Games for Overlearning
5.10 Phonological Awareness
5.11 Classroom Practice

1. Introduction

Back to content page

1.1 Overview & Learning Outcomes

Welcome to this free Professional Learning Activity (PLA).

Developed by the City of Edinburgh Council's Literacy and Dyslexia Support Team within Edinburgh Learns, this resource provides guidance and practical strategies for educational staff, and anyone interested in supporting learners with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

It is recognised that local authorities across Scotland have their own well-established professional learning programmes to develop the practice of teachers supporting learners with literacy difficulties and dyslexia. The intention of this PLA is therefore **not** to replace that work, but to share the approaches, resources, and strategies developed within the City of Edinburgh Council, so they may complement and inform wider professional learning across Scotland and beyond.

Background

The team has delivered a secondment-based professional learning programme for Support for Learning teachers, designed to build specialist expertise in assessing and supporting learners with literacy difficulties and dyslexia. Teachers who successfully completed this programme were awarded GTCS Professional Recognition in Support for Learning: Literacy and Dyslexia.

Through generous funding from the **Sean Connery Foundation**, and in partnership with **Dyslexia Scotland**, the **City of Edinburgh Council**, and the **Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative**, this work has been expanded and further developed. The resulting materials have enhanced professional learning and strengthened support for learners across Edinburgh schools.

"I got my break – BIG break – when I was five years old. And it's taken me more than 70 years to realise it. You see, at five, I learned to read. It's that simple. And it's that profound."

Sir Sean Connery.

Sir Sean Connery's legacy for dyslexia

Dyslexia Scotland. 31st October 2022

While Sir Sean, who was born in Edinburgh, was not himself dyslexic, learning to read was life-changing for him, and he was passionate about sharing his enthusiasm for reading with others.

Learning Outcomes

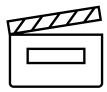
By completing this professional learning activity, you will learn how to:

- Use the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) to identify a learner's literacy strengths and areas for development.
- Record and report assessment findings clearly and effectively.
- Plan and deliver individualised, evidence-based literacy support that targets specific learning needs.

This resource was developed with support from **HSBC UK**, awarded to **Dyslexia Scotland** as part of HSBC UK's **'Supporting Our Communities'** programme.

Dyslexia Scotland is very grateful to both the Sean Connery Foundation and HSBC UK for their generous support in enabling the development and wider sharing of these professional learning materials.

Professional Learning Activity Overview



https://youtube.com/shorts/Y5xM_q0GcVE?feature=share
Watch the recording which outlines the involvement of the Sean Connery Foundation in funding this PLA and introduces its purpose and aims.

This professional learning activity is part of a range of free online learning opportunities and modules available through the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit.
Home | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

These professional learning opportunities aim to provide educators with a deeper understanding of inclusive practice, literacy difficulties, dyslexia and practical, evidence-based approaches to supporting learners.

Engagement with this resource also supports the requirement for teachers in Scotland to maintain the General Teaching Council Scotland's (GTCS) professional standards of which Professional Values and Personal Commitment are central.

Studying this resource
This self-directed reflective learning activity has been developed to support flexible learning at your own pace alone or with a colleague or group of colleagues.

The core content should take approximately 6 hours to work through. We recommend working through this resource in sequence. When doing so you will be guided to consider how you would approach assessment, reporting, planning, and the use of strategies with a learner.

Downloadable files and further reading within this resource.

Download Icon

The ‘Download’ icon lets you know when you must download the file to engage in the activities.

The ‘Print’ icon lets you know when and what resources are available to print on the highlighted pages.

The ‘Watch’ icon lets you know that some short recordings are available

This resource provides a wide range of files you can use in your practice. These have been collated together for ease and include editable activities, printable resources and planning templates to support learners as part of their individual planning and programmes. A Reflective Log is also available to download for you to evidence your professional learning to support your annual reviews and GTCS Professional update.

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

1. **Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA)**
2. **DLA Printable Resources and Templates**
3. **DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources**
4. **Reflective Log PLA Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia**

Activity 1: Reflective Task

On page 3 in your Reflective Log, you should start by:

1. Using a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being poor and 5 being very knowledgeable) rate your knowledge and understanding of assessing, reporting, planning and strategies to support a learner with literacy difficulties/ dyslexia.

2. Consider and record what you hope to achieve from this professional learning activity.

3. Complete the template for the self- evaluation wheel.

2. Dyslexia and the Scottish Context

Back to content page

In this section you will explore an overview of:

- Inclusive Education
- The Scottish Working Definition of Dyslexia
- Terminology

Inclusive Education

Scotland's education system is rights based, inclusive, and designed to make sure that every child and young person gains as much as possible from the opportunities that their education can provide. Our education system has been developed to ensure that the provision of support for a child or young person is based on what they need and is not dependent upon them receiving a formal label, medical diagnosis or identification of need such as autism, dyslexia, mental health or a physical disability.

The Scottish vision for inclusive education applies to:

- eligible children from age 2 who attend an early learning setting
- children and young people and throughout their education at school

This means that every child or young person has the right to access:
the same opportunities

- every aspect of the curriculum (the totality of the curriculum)
- support to be their authentic self in their learning environment

In practice this means that every child or young person has the right to the same access to any opportunities, every aspect of the curriculum that is offered to their peers and be supported to be their authentic self in their learning environment.
Further information on the Scottish Context can be found on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit. Scottish Context | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

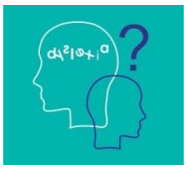
The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (as amended) provides the legal framework for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of children and young people who face a barrier, or barriers, to learning. The Act imposes various duties on education authorities and responsible bodies.
Further information on the legislative framework can be found in the Informed level of the Inclusion section of the Education Scotland Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework.
Inclusion, wellbeing and equalities framework | Leading professional learning | Professional Learning | Education Scotland

The Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Approach, (Policy).

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national policy approach to enhancing the wellbeing of children and young people and building a flexible scaffold of support. Where it is needed, for as long as it is needed through a team around the child and **non-statutory** educational planning. This is consistent with the aims of the ASfL Act 2009 as amended that provides an entitlement to early intervention and placing the child or young person at the centre of any assessment, planning and support. Further information on the GIRFEC approach is available on the Scottish Government website.
Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC): child's plan - practice statement - gov.scot

Key Points: ASL Act and the GIRFEC Approach.

- There is an interconnection with the statutory ASL Act and the GIRFEC policy.
- A 'GIRFEC Plan' or 'Child's Plan' is only a statutory plan for social work and not for education. Neither replace the only statutory education plan which is called a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP).



The Scottish Working Definition of Dyslexia

Scotland has had its own working definition of dyslexia since 2009. Most local authorities have adopted this definition. The definition has been developed by the Scottish Government, Dyslexia Scotland, the Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia in the Scottish Parliament and a wide range of stakeholders. This is one of many definitions available and is recommended as helpful guidance by Education Scotland.

The advice and guidance for the identification, assessment and support of dyslexia within the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit is linked directly to the Scottish Working Definition of Dyslexia.

What is Dyslexia | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

The 2025 Refreshed Scottish Working Definition

To ensure the Scottish working definition continues to be robust and reflects current research and approaches consideration has been given to the 2024 Delphi Dyslexia Definition.

Some minor changes to the Scottish Working definition have been made as a result. The two definitions have been developed around different contexts and systems and although there are some differences in terminology, they are very similar as they both focus on literacy difficulties, as well as the wider range of associated characteristics and holistic approaches to identification.

The aim of the Scottish working definition has always been to provide a description of the range of indicators and characteristics of dyslexia as helpful guidance for educational practitioners, children, parents/carers and others.

The Scottish Working Definition of Dyslexia 2025

Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties often do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning, teaching and working environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

- auditory and visual processing of language-based information
- phonological processing – awareness, processing speed and/or memory
- oral language skills
- reading fluency
- short-term and working memory
- sequencing and directionality
- number skills
- organisational ability

Motor skills and co-ordination may also be affected

Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

It is hereditary, life-long and neurodevelopmental and it can impact on wellbeing.

Unidentified and/or unsupported dyslexia can have an impact on achievement and may lead to lower self-esteem and higher stress.

Learners with dyslexia will benefit from early identification, inclusive ethos, approaches and environments, appropriate intervention and support.

What is Dyslexia | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

Research has confirmed that dyslexia impacts not only reading and writing but all aspects of an individual's life. It is now accepted and understood that persistent literacy difficulties/dyslexia affect all aspects of a child or young person's life, particularly their view of themself as a learner and their mental wellbeing. This may undermine their confidence in the strengths they also possess as a result of dyslexia.

Early intervention and support are entitlements within the Scottish Education system. It is very important to identify the needs of children and young people in a way that is timely, relevant with the least intrusion. For our children and young people who experience literacy difficulties and dyslexia this involves supporting their strengths and challenges.

Terminology

It is important to explain the choice of language and terminology used in this PLA because of the range of personal and professional perspectives. The PLA refers to '**dyslexic children and young people'** as the preferred term throughout.
Educators refer to teachers, pupil support staff (often called Pupil Support Assistants), and community learning and development colleagues e.g. youth workers.

Throughout this Professional Learning Activity, a range of terms are used.

3. Diagnostic Literacy Assessment: A step-by-step guide of how to use this assessment tool

Back to content page

3.1 Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA): Overview, Administration and Considerations
3.2 Understanding the Learner: The Learner's Perspective
3.3 Reading: Phonic words, common words and non-words
3.4 Reading Non-words
3.5 Reading in Context
3.6 Spelling: Phonic and Common Words
3.7 Oral: Syllabification and Sequencing
3.8 Writing: Story Writing and Writing Sequences
3.9 The Running Record and Miscue Analysis
3.10 Pre-literacy assessments: Phonological Awareness

This section provides guidance on how to use the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) to assess a learner's strengths and areas of need in literacy. The DLA has been developed by the City of Edinburgh Council Literacy / Dyslexia Support Team.

Please note, the DLA is not a diagnostic tool for identifying dyslexia. Instead, it provides a clear picture of a learner's literacy skills and informs the development of a focused DLA literacy programme. Section four provides further information on planning and reporting that supports the DLA literacy programme.

Section 3 Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will:

- Understand the purpose and scope of the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA).
- Know how to use the assessment to determine a learner's strengths and areas of need.
- Be able to use DLA results to guide next steps in planning and support.
- Recognise how to adapt the assessment based on the learner's specific needs.

If you have not already done so, download the files below.

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

- **Diagnostic Literacy Assessment DLA**
- **DLA Printable Resources and Templates**

The DLA is divided into sections, each of which will be explained in detail throughout this activity. As you work through this section or use the assessment with a learner, you will be guided to print and use specific pages from the DLA and the DLA Printable Resources and Templates file to complete each part.
The DLA provides valuable insight into the learner's literacy profile and supports informed decision-making when reporting and planning targeted interventions.

3.1 Diagnostic Literacy Assessment: Overview, Administration, Considerations

The Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) is a comprehensive tool used to assess a learner's current literacy skills and identify areas of strength and need. The assessment covers:

- Phonic knowledge
- Recognition of common and irregular words
- Decoding of non-words
- Reading in context
- Spelling of phonic and common words
- Recall of common sequences
- Syllabification
- Handwriting and story writing

These diagnostic assessments **are not standardised,** and it is likely that this assessment will be used:

- For learners about whom there is ongoing concern with literacy, despite supports being in place.
- For learners whom an individual literacy programme is required.

The assessment will enable the assessor to:

- gather information on learners' strengths
- identify areas that need additional support
- provide detailed information to support planning to meet needs

Note: All assessments need to be learner centred, section 3.2 provides further information and areas for consideration to ensure the assessment is planned and carried out appropriately.

What is in the assessment?

The DLA has:

- Assessment materials, which are designed to be re-used
- Teacher advice – information on how to carry out the assessments
- Record sheets – individual record sheets for each assessment and an assessment summary sheet.

The record sheets and the summary sheet will together provide information to identify the next steps in learning.

How to use the assessment tools to gather information

While this assessment is designed to give an overall profile of a learner and to identify gaps in learning, you can also select only the sections most relevant to the learner's needs. For example, if a learner primarily struggles with spelling, you may decide to administer only the spelling-related tasks, rather than the full assessment.
Assessors should record the results of each section of the assessment undertaken. It is also important to observe and note **how** the learner tackles each of the assessments. Guidance on how to record and use this information is provided in Section 4: Reporting and Planning for Individual Literacy Programmes.

Structuring the Assessment

It is recommended that:

- The assessment is spread over two to three sessions, depending on the learner's age, stage, and ability.

- A variety of task types are included in each session—e.g. a balance of oral, reading, spelling, and writing activities.

- Written tasks, such as spelling and story writing, are spaced across sessions to avoid fatigue (e.g. phonic spelling tasks may be split over two sessions).

Suggested Order for Administering Assessments

The suggested order for administering assessments below doubles as a useful checklist. Referring to the checklist is an essential part of the process—it helps you stay organised and confirms that all relevant aspects of the assessment have been completed.

The suggested DLA Order is on page 2 of the '**DLA Printable Resources and Templates'**. Using this as a working document helps to ensure you cover all assessment components, even when they are delivered in shorter, spaced-out sessions.

Session 1 - Discussion with the Learner

Reading:	Phonic words Common words
Oral Assessments:	Syllabification Sequencing
Spelling:	Phonic words Common words (if appropriate)

Session 2

Spelling (continued):	Phonic words Common words (if appropriate)
Reading:	In context Non-words
Writing:	Sequences Story writing Handwriting

3.2 Understanding the Learner: The Learner's Perspective

Approaching the DLA with a Neurodivergent Learner

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term which encourages neurodevelopmental differences to be viewed and understood in a positive way. It is not a medical diagnostic label and those included must not be perceived to be a homogenous group with the same needs and requiring the same support approaches. The term includes:

- Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) also referred to as Dyspraxia
- Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)
- Epilepsy
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Intellectual Disability
- Tourette's and Tic disorders
- Specific Learning Disorder/ Differences e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia.

The term neurodiversity is increasingly being used in the workplace, education and beyond. It is rare that a child or adult would have only one area of difficulty. Co-occurrence of learning differences appears to be the rule rather than the exception.

When assessing a neurodivergent learner, it is essential to consider their individual needs, processing style, and potential sensory adaptations. Flexibility in timing, environment, and task order can help reduce anxiety and increase engagement. Pay close attention to how the learner engages with each task, note any emotional responses, self-regulation strategies, and communication preferences. Building trust and safety into the assessment process ensures more accurate and meaningful insights into their literacy profile.

The first step in the assessment process for every learner is having a conversation with them. This helps to put them at ease and reduce any anxiety they may feel.

During this discussion, your goal is to understand:

- What they enjoy about school.
- What they find challenging.
- What support they feel they need in class and in school.

The key focus is to gain insight into how the young person perceives themselves as a learner and how they approach their own learning process.

DLA Printable Resources and Templates.

The '**Discussion with the Learner Record Sheet'** is available on page 3 of the '**DLA Printable Resources and Templates'**.

Observing the Learner's Approach During the Assessment Process

Assessment isn't just about results—it's also about understanding **how** the learner approaches the tasks. Throughout the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment, you are guided to make general observations to get a sense of their learning process.? The learner's understanding and thought processes.

Things to look out for:

- **Concentration** – Do they stay focused, or do they frequently go off-task? Are there specific areas where this happens?
- **Fatigue** – Do they tire easily?
- **Physical Behaviours** – Do they move around, fidget with paper, or adjust their distance from the text?

Eye Stress Considerations

Some learners may experience eye stress when reading. If you notice them adjusting their position frequently, it could be worth asking:

"Do you find it easier to read on this buff-coloured paper or on white paper?

"Buff-coloured paper can sometimes reduce eye stress, making reading more comfortable. This is why we recommend printing all parts of the DLA assessments onto buff-coloured paper.

Noting Anxiety Triggers

Lastly, observe whether the learner shows anxiety in specific areas of the assessment. For example, do they seem more stressed during spelling and writing tasks compared to reading? These insights can help you tailor your support to their needs.

By taking the time to have this discussion and make careful observations, you'll build a clearer picture of how to support the learner effectively.

Pupil Voice Tools – Primary and Secondary

The Pupil Voice Tools are included in the City of Edinburgh Council's 'Literacy and Dyslexia Guidelines' as practical resources to support learner participation in identifying literacy strengths and needs. They provide a structured and supportive way for children and young people their school experiences, especially in relation to literacy.

You will be able to watch a short film demonstrating how the Pupil Voice Toolkit can be used and also download a copy of the Primary and Secondary Pupil Voice Toolkits at the end of section 3.2.

Many learners give limited responses when asked broad questions like

"How do you find school?"

This tool reduces that pressure by using accessible language, visuals, and specific prompts that encourage more meaningful and authentic engagement.

This approach is particularly valuable for learners who may feel anxious, lack confidence, or struggle to express themselves verbally. By moving away from open-ended questioning, the tool often leads to richer insights and a deeper understanding of each learner's needs. It also ensures learner voice is central to individualised planning and support, in line with ASfL and UNCRC legislation, and the GIRFEC approach.

The **Pupil Voice Tool** is designed to explore:

- areas of the curriculum they enjoy/ have strengths in, and those they find difficult
- aspects of organisation, they are good at/ need support with
- aspects of literacy they are good at/ need support with
- strategies they find/ would find helpful.

Overview

The assessor supports the learner in sorting each set of cards onto the most relevant descriptor on one of two boards:

- **Board A**: 1 = Easiest, 4 = Hardest
- **Board B**: 1 = Most helpful, 4 = Least helpful

For curriculum, organisation, and literacy cards:

- Record responses (1 to 4) on the record sheet
- Record **'G'** for *good* when the learner identifies a particular strength
- An **'Outside school'** card is included to prompt discussion about interests, activities, strengths, and strategies used beyond the classroom

For strategy cards:

- Record responses (1 to 4) on the record sheet
- Record **'T'** for *try* if the learner has not used the strategy but thinks it might help
- Ask the learner if there are any other strategies they have found helpful or would like to try, and note these in the space provided for additional comments

The **Pupil Voice Tool** can also be particularly beneficial when used ahead of a Child Planning Meeting, with responses linked to the Wellbeing Indicators where appropriate. The tool can also be revisited as required to reflect changes in the learner's views or needs. The names of meetings vary across the 32 local authorities.

Pupil Voice Tool – Primary and Pupil Voice Tool – Secondary

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

Use these tools to gather learners' perspectives on their school experience, especially regarding literacy, organisation, and the strategies they find most helpful in Primary and Secondary settings.

3.3 Reading: Phonic word and Common words

Purpose

The purpose of these assessments is to identify specific difficulties in **decoding phonic words** and to evaluate the learner's **automatic recognition of common words**, in order to inform appropriate next steps for targeted literacy support.

These assessments are divided into two parts:

- **Phonic Words** – Organised by phonic patterns, progressing from individual sounds to prefixes and suffixes.
- **Common Words** – Grouped into Boxes A to J, featuring 100 high-frequency words.

Prior to Assessment

Prior to carrying out any assessment it is important to ensure all the required materials and supports are in place.

If you have not already done so, download the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA)

- **Reading – Phonic and Common Words – Assessment Sheets 1–3'.** Print pages marked as 98, 99 and 100 in the DLA**.** Print on buff or pastel-coloured paper to reduce glare for learners with visual stress.

- **Phonic and Common Words – Record Sheets 1-3'**Print pages marked as 101, 102 and 103 in the DLA. One copy will be needed for each learner to be assessed.

Assessment Considerations

Eye Stress

- Enlarge Reading – **Phonic and Common Word – Assessment Sheets** 1-3 to A3 paper size if there are suspected visual difficulties or if the learner benefits from larger print.

- If assessment sheets are to be laminated to increase longevity of this tool, laminate using matt laminate to minimise shine, which can be distracting for some learners.

Positioning

- Sit on the learner's writing side (right-hand side for right-handed learners; left-hand side for left-handed learners), or at a perpendicular angle. This helps with observation while also ensuring the learner cannot see the marking on the record sheet.

X

X

Instructions

The phonic words are grouped to assess knowledge of different phonic patterns and blending skills. For most learners the phonic words up to section 10 should be attempted. Some learners may not manage section 4, vowel digraphs, but may still manage the blends following this.

- Use the **Reading - Phonic and Common Words – Record Sheets 1-3** to record the learner's response and make notes.
- Progress through the phonic and common words in order.
- Intersperse phonic word reading with common word reading to vary the cognitive demand.
- Ask the learner to attempt all 100 common words. Count the number of common words read correctly and report this as a percentage read.

Assessors should use their judgement about when to stop testing phonic words. This will depend on the learner's age, stage and skill level. Be prepared to stop the assessment if the learner becomes anxious or upset. However, if a learner is able to proceed it is worthwhile doing so, as you may find some learners are able to read a number of words later on despite being stuck in the early stages.

Suggested Marking Key

A consistent, clear system for marking reading assessments supports accurate analysis and review. Your notes should capture not just whether the word was read correctly, but how the learner attempted it.

When marking:

- **Phonic words** should be analysed for **decoding strategies** (e.g. sounding out, blending, segmenting).
- **Common words** should be assessed for **automatic,** whole word reading.

Symbol	Meaning
N	Learner gave the **letter name** instead of the sound
/m/	Write actual sound given, if it's different from target sound
● _ e.g. sh op	Dot or dash under each sound when word is **sounded out**
✓	Tick or leave blank if the word if read **automatically** without sounding
→ or **/**	Use arrows or forward slash to show **blending or syllable splitting**

You will develop your own system for marking, but it must be consistent and clear enough for accurate review on completion of assessment. The next page shares an example.

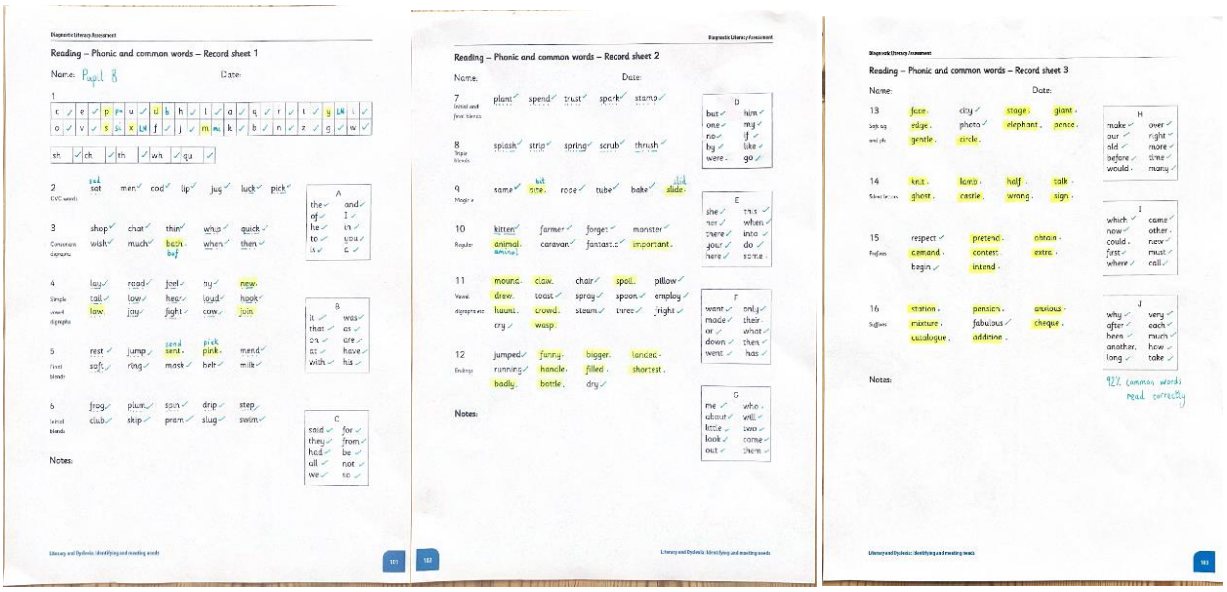


Figure 1: An example of a marked phonic reading and common word assessment completed for pupil X. The phonic errors have been highlighted and a % score for the common words read is given.

- **Sounds: p, s, m** → *Pupil X did not say pure sound.* E.g. 'p' - 'puh', 's' - 'sih', 'm' - 'mih'
  Marked with **an additional sound** in the adjacent box
- **Sounds: x, y** → *Pupil X* used letter name:
  Marked with **LN** in the adjacent box
- **Word: men** → *Pupil X* sounded it out:
  Marked with ● under each sound
- **Word: jump** → *Pupil X* read it automatically:
  Mark with ✓ (no dots needed)
- **Word: plant** → *Pupil X* sounded out each phoneme:
  Dots ● placed under **p-l-a-n-t**
- **Word: kitten** → Blended in chunks:
  underline syllables
- **Misreads**:
  - bath read as baf
  - animal read and aminal
  - bite read as bit

- **Note errors next to the word**
- **Observations**
- Focus on capturing **how** the learner is reading:
- Is their reading **automatic or effortful**?
- Are they **sounding out** or relying on **visual memory**?
- Can they **blend phonemes** effectively?
- Do they **segment and decode syllables** accurately?
- Are they **tracking words and lines** correctly?
- Do they read **left to right** consistently?
- Are they using a **finger or visual aid** to guide reading?

These detailed observations will enhance your understanding of the learner's reading processes and inform precise support planning.

Application to Common Words

Use the **same marking system** for assessing common words:

- Tick or leave blank words read **automatically** (sight vocabulary)
- Use dots or sound annotations for words that are sounded out

This helps determine how many common words can be recognised automatically and which remain dependent on decoding.

3.4 Reading Non-Words

Purpose

The purpose of the **Non-Word Reading Assessment** is used to evaluate a learner's:

- Application of phonic knowledge to unfamiliar combinations of letters
- Blending skills

This is particularly helpful in identifying learners who may rely on memory or sight recognition rather than blending.

Prior to assessment

If you have not already done so, download the 'Diagnostic Literacy Assessment' (DLA)

- **Reading Non-Words – Assessment Sheet -** Print page marked 105 in the DLA on buff or pastel-coloured paper to reduce glare for learners with visual stress. Laminate using matt laminate to eliminate shine.

- **Reading Non-Words – Record Sheet** - Print page marked as 106 in the DLA on buff or pastel-coloured paper. One copy will be needed for each learner to be assessed **Phonic**

Instructions

The non-words are grouped to assess knowledge of phonic patterns.

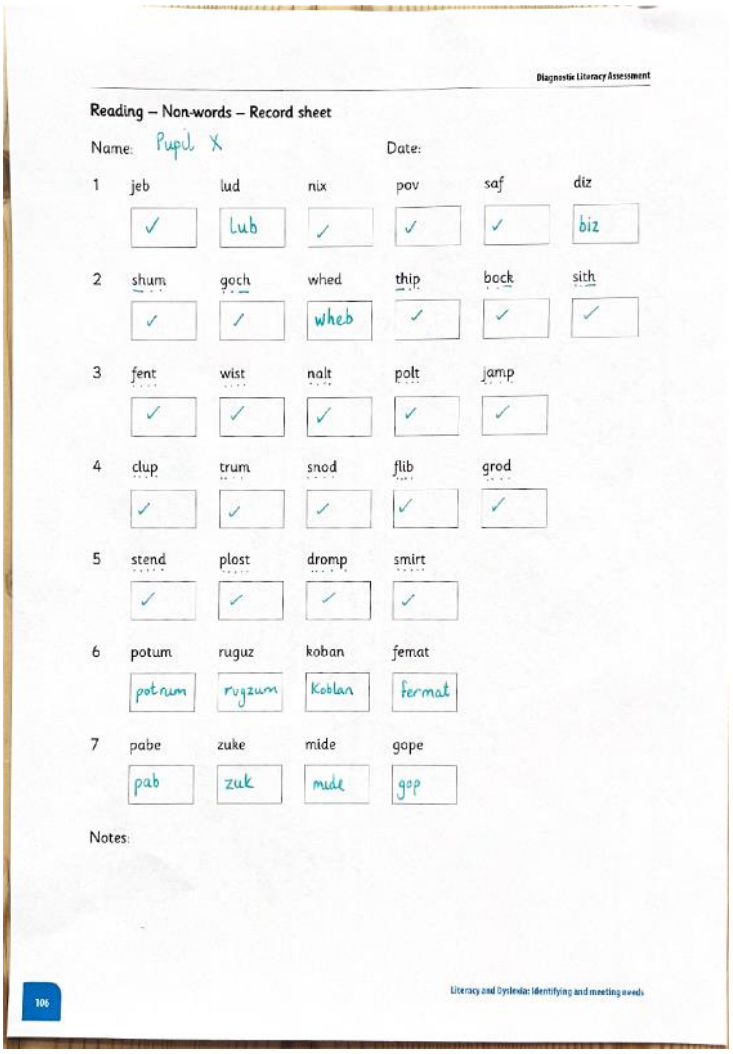
- Use the record sheet to record the learners reading and make notes.
- Write the learner's responses in the boxes below the words.
- Progress through the words in order.

Assessors should use their judgement about when to stop testing. This will depend on the learner's age, stage and skill level.
If the learner becomes anxious the assessment should be discontinued.

Observations

While the learner reads the non-words aloud, pay attention to:

- **Decoding** – Are they applying phonic strategies to sound out and blend?
- **Letter–Sound Correspondence** – Do they correctly identify individual graphemes?
- **Transpositions** – Are letters swapped? (e.g. saying "silp" instead of "slip"
- **Letter Confusions** – Do they mix up visually similar letters (e.g. *b/d*, *p/q*)
- **Tracking** – Do they lose their place or skip over words?
- **Directionality** – Are they reading from **left to right** consistently?



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Reading – Non-words – Record sheet

Name: Pupil X Date:

1	jeb	lud	nix	pov	saf	diz
	✓	Lub	✓	✓	✓	biz
2	shum	goch	whed	thip	bock	sith
	✓	✓	wheb	✓	✓	✓
3	fent	wist	nalt	polt	jamp	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	clup	trum	snod	flib	grod	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	stend	plost	dromp	smirt		
	✓	✓	✓	✓		
6	potum	ruguz	koban	femat		
	potrum	rygzum	Koblan	fermat		
7	pabe	zuke	mide	gope		
	pab	zuk	mide	gop		

Notes:

106

Literacy and Dyslexia: Identifying and meeting needs

Figure 2: An example of a marked non-word reading assessment completed for Pupil X. The errors have been noted in the box below each word.

3.5 Reading in Context

This section explores the learner's ability to read at sentence and passage level using meaningful, continuous text.

Purpose

Reading in context allows you to:

- Assess accuracy, fluency, and pace in connected text
- Evaluate the impact of prior reading and discussion of a familiar text
- Judge whether current classroom texts are appropriately levelled—and adjust support or reading level if required

Prior to the Assessment

- Photocopy a passage of approximately 100 words from a **seen text** (from a group reading book the learner has previously read)

- Photocopy a passage of approximately 100 words from an **unseen** section of the same book, or a passage from the same reading book level.

The '**Reading Behaviour and Miscue Analysis'** is available on pages 4 and 5 of the **DLA Printable Resources and Templates** for guidance on how to record the reading and use this information to gather further insight into a learner's reading behaviours and strategies.

Note: The passage does not need to be exactly 100 words. You can use the formula later in this section (see **"Using the Error Rate to Score a Reading Text"**) to calculate reading accuracy based on the number of running words read. So, any length of continuous text can be used as long as you record the total number of words for accurate analysis.

Instructions

Provide the learner with the book to read from.

Use the photocopied pages of the text to record reading accuracy of both seen and unseen text.

Check for comprehension by asking factual, inferential, lower order and higher order questions about the text.

Count the number of words read and the number of errors and score the text to see whether it is at an appropriate level (see Using the error rate to score a reading text).

Observations

- **Fluency** - is reading automatic or hesitant?
- **Reading Rate** – is the pace too fast or too slow?
- **Rereading & Omissions** – Do they reread often, omit words, or skip lines?
- **Using the Error Rate to Score a Reading Text**

The number of errors the learner makes during reading provides useful information about the **suitability of the text**.

Steps to Calculate Reading Accuracy:

1. **Count the number of errors**, including words the learner had to be told.
2. **Determine the total number of running words** (words in the passage).
3. **Calculate the percentage of words read correctly** using the formula:

Reading score (percentage) = 100 - ((E ÷ RW) X100)

Where: **E** = Number of errors

RW = Running words (total number of words read)

Example:

- Errors (E) = 18
- Total words (RW) = 150

So, the reading score = 100 - ((18 ÷ 150) x 100) = 88%

This result indicates a **Hard Text Level**.

Interpreting Reading Scores

Accuracy %	Text Level	Notes
95–100%	Easy Text	May be too easy, but useful for developing fluency and confidence if reading is hesitant/slow.
90–94%	Instructional Text	Suitable for teaching new skills and strategies.
80–89%	Hard Text	Too difficult. Understanding and enjoyment are likely to be impacted.

This can be used as a tool to assess the suitability of reading texts for learners with literacy difficulties or dyslexia. It provides guidance on scoring a text and helps identify whether it matches the learner's reading level. A copy of the Scoring for Reading Text is available to print in the downloadable Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Printable Resources on page 7.

Comprehension Check

After reading both the seen and unseen passages, ask the learner a mix of:

- **Factual questions** (literal understanding)
- **Inferential questions** (reading between the lines)
- **Higher-order questions**

This provides insight into the learner's level of comprehension beyond decoding.

3.6 Spelling Assessment: Phonic and Common Words

The spelling assessment is divided into two parts:

- **Phonic Word Spelling** – Assesses understanding and use of phonic patterns when spelling.
- **Common Word Spelling** – Focuses on spelling of high-frequency, non-decodable words (covered separately).

Phonic Spelling Assessment

Purpose

To assess the learner's grasp of phonics through their ability to spell a progressive list of phonic words.

Prior to assessment

Print pages marked as 110 and 111 of the **DLA 'Spelling – Phonic Words – Assessment Sheets 1–2'**: Used by the assessor to record learner responses in real time

Print pages marked as 112, 113 and 114 of the **DLA 'Spelling – Phonic Words – Record Sheets 1–3'**: Used by the learner to write their answers. One copy will be needed for each learner to be assessed. Alternatively, learners may use lined paper.

Instructions

- Read the sounds and words from the assessment sheets and ask the learner to record their answers on the record sheets/ paper.

- Record their incorrect responses directly onto your **Spelling – Phonic Words – Assessment Sheets 1–2**

The spelling phonic assessment follows the same order of phonics as the reading phonic assessment. It begins with basic initial sounds and ends with prefixes, and suffixes.

For most learners the words in each of the sections up to section L should be attempted (some learners may not manage section F, vowel digraphs, but may manage the blends following this).
Practitioners should use their judgement about when to stop testing. This will depend on the learner's age, stage and skill level. If the learner becomes anxious the assessment should be discontinued.

Observations

During the assessment, make notes on the strategies the learner uses when spelling. Consider the following:

- **Automatic Recall** – Are any words written fluently and confidently without hesitation?
- **Sounding Out** – Is the learner sounding out letter-by-letter?
- **Substitutions** – Are incorrect real words used (e.g. *bad* for *bat*)?
- **Transpositions** – Are letters swapped (e.g. *silp* instead of *slip*)?
- **Omissions** – Are vowels, syllables, or key sounds missing?

Also note the learner's general behaviour and emotional response:

- Do they frequently seek reassurance before writing?
- Do they display anxiety or confidence?
- Do they persevere or become easily discouraged?
- Can you identify any phonics rules the learner already knows (e.g. the *magic e* rule)?

Common Word Spelling Assessment

Purpose

The second part of the spelling assessment focuses on the automatic spelling of **common words –** high-frequency words that often cannot be decoded phonetically and require visual memory and repeated exposure.

A choice of two approaches may be used to assess common word spelling:

1. **Common word assessment** using words from, the reading assessment part of the DLA, or words from the Fry's list.

2. **Existing free writing** from class work or from the writing assessment part of the DLA.

Instructions: using the Common Word Assessment

If a more structured approach is preferred, use the **Common Words** listed in the **Phonic and Common Word Reading Assessment Sheets 1-3**. Pages marked as 98, 99 and 100 in the DLA.

- Give the learner lined paper to record the spelling.
- Say the word to the learner, put the word in a sentence then repeat the word.
- Progress through the words in order if using a word list.
- Please note, the words in the common word assessment **do not** progress in order of difficulty, therefore try to assess all 100 words if the learner is coping with the assessment.

Instructions: Using Free Writing

Instead of a spelling test, you may choose to assess the learner's spelling through a sample of free writing from their classwork. This approach allows for natural observation of spelling skills in context.

This informal method can reduce pressure and reveal how well spelling skills are transferring into real-life writing.

Observations (for both approaches)

Regardless of the method make notes on:

- **Automatic Recall** – Can the learner recall words automatically?
- **Errors** – Is the misspelling of the same word consistent (if using free writing)
- **Letter Transpositions** – Are letters reversed or misplaced within words? (e.g 'hwo' for 'who').
- **Confidence** – Does the learner appear self-assured or frequently seek reassurance?
- **Perseverance** – Does the learner keep trying or show signs of giving up quickly?
- **Focus & Engagement** – Are they able to stay on task throughout the activity?

By selecting the assessment method that best suits the learner, you can gain valuable insights into their spelling development while minimising stress and supporting their confidence.

3.7 Oral Assessments: Syllabification & Sequencing

Purpose

This section focuses on **Oral Assessment**, which is split into two parts:

- **Oral Syllabification** – to assess the learner's ability to break words into syllables
- **Oral Sequences** – to assess their recall of common sequences

The assessment can be used flexibly to suit the learner's needs and maintain engagement:

- **Between reading and spelling tasks** – Offers a change of activity to reduce cognitive load and support focus.
- **During spelling session** – Splits the assessment over two sessions to make it more manageable.
- **As a standalone assessment** – Complete in a single session if appropriate.

Prior to assessment

Print page marked 117 of the DLA. One copy will be needed for each learner to be assessed.

Instructions

Oral Syllabification:

- Model how to break words into syllables/ count syllables so the learner understands the task. Explain, if necessary, that syllables are like beats in music. Use the learner's name, friends' names and family names to demonstrate.

- To establish whether the learner can identify syllables, choose a selection of words from the lists (animals, school, food). Say each word, then ask the learner to repeat the word and count the syllables. They may do this by clapping or counting the syllables out on their fingers. If the learner finds this difficult, they can cup their hands under their chin while saying words and count the syllables this way.

Oral Sequences:

Ask the learner to recite or recall common sequences from the oral assessment record sheet.

Key Observations

Note:

- **Syllable Identification**: Can the learner identify the number of syllables automatically or do they require lots of practice/ multiple attempts?
- **Speech Clarity and Manipulation**: Can the learner repeat multisyllabic words accurately?
- **Sequence Recall**: How well can the learner remember and retrieve common sequences, such as numbers, alphabet, vowel names/ sounds, days of the week or months of the year? If they are unable to recall days of the week, they are unlikely to manage the months.

These observations provide insights into the learner's phonological awareness, working memory and retrieval skills, informing targeted support strategies.

3.8 Writing

The writing assessment is divided into two parts:

1. **Writing Sequences and Handwriting**
2. **Story Writing**

Writing Assessment:

1. **Writing Sequences and Handwriting**

Purpose

This task assesses the learner’s ability to:

- Recall and spell familiar sequences (e.g. **days of the week**, **months of the year**)
- Demonstrate handwriting fluency, size, spacing, and layout

Prior to Assessment

Provide the learner with blank or lined paper. Coloured paper can be used: ask the learner if this makes writing harder or easier.

Instructions: Writing Sequences

- Take the learner's age and stage into account when asking them to write sequences – younger learners may not know the months.
- If the learner cannot sequence the days of the week orally give them a reminder.
- If the learner is struggling to write the days of the week, do not ask them to write the months.
- Use your discretion on the amount of writing required and consider age, stage and skill level.

Ask the learner to write:

- Both their names
- Their address
- The days of the week
- The months
- The numbers 1 to 10 or 1 to 20 (in numerals)

Sequencing Observations:

Note:

- Accuracy of sequencing – spelling and order
- Whether the learner asks for help recalling sequences

Handwriting Observations:

Use all written responses produced by the learner during the assessment to make the following observations. Note:

- Any **reversals of letters or numerals**
- **Positioning** of the paper and the learner's **body posture**
- **Pencil grip** and hand positioning
- **Pencil pressure** applied to the page (too light, heavy, or inconsistent)
- **Style of writing** – is it printed, joined, or a combination of both?

- **Letter formation** – are letters correctly and consistently formed?
- **Legibility** – is the writing clear and easy to read?
- **Size** – are letters uniformly sized and appropriate for the learner's age/stage?
- Use of **upper- and lower-case letters** – is there inappropriate mixing?
- Whether the learner is **right- or left-handed**

These observations will contribute to a fuller understanding of the learner's fine motor skills, writing fluency, and potential barriers to written expression.

Writing Assessment:

2. Story Writing

Purpose

This task assesses the learner's ability to:

- Construct and sequence a **complete sentence#**
- **Sequence ideas** logically
- Use **punctuation** appropriately
- Apply **spelling knowledge** in context

Instructions:

- Let the learner know that they will be writing **briefly**—just a few minutes depending on their age and stage.
- Ask them to **verbalise** what they plan to write and **say their first sentence aloud**.
- Make it clear the writing will be **unaided**.
- Encourage them to **focus on getting their ideas down**, not spelling accuracy.

Suggested Topics:

Prompt the learner to write about something **personal** and familiar, such as:

- Hobbies
- Family
- Pets
- Friends
- Holidays/ Places they've visited

Observations

Use the story writing task to observe the learner's approach to generating, organising, and recording their ideas. Focus on the following:

Planning and Independence

- Can the learner **say a sentence** aloud before writing it?
- Do they **begin writing independently**, or require support?
- Do they need **prompting after their first sentence**?

Spelling and Word Choice

- Does the learner ask for **spelling help**?
- Are **commonly used words spelled correctly**?
- Are **spelling errors consistent**, or is there frequent variation?
- Do they use **inventive ('bizarre') spelling** that suggests phonetic strategies?
- Do they **limit their writing** to words they can confidently spell?

Organisation and Structure

- Are ideas **sequenced logically** to form a coherent narrative?
- Is there evidence of **complete sentences** and **appropriate punctuation**?

Fluency and Output

- What is the **quantity and quality** of the writing? Does it reflect the learner's oral ability?
- What is their **rate of writing**? Do they write quickly without rereading, or slowly while sounding out each word?

Editing and Self-Monitoring

- Can the learner **read back their writing**?
- Do they **notice and correct errors** when reviewing their work?

These observations help build a profile of the learner's writing behaviours, strengths, and areas requiring targeted support.

3.9 The Running Record and Miscue Analysis

Running record

A running record involves listening to a learner read and noting what they say and do as they read. This record is then analysed to identify features of the learner's reading behaviour that may be significant.

Learners should read from their book. The teacher uses a photocopy of the same text to record errors and self-corrections. Alternatively, the learner can read from a standardised text.

If the text has been copied from a textbook, the completed record can be returned to the class teacher with all errors blanked out and substitutions or insertions clearly marked. This allows the teacher to see at a glance, how much meaning the pupil is likely to have taken from the text.

Various coding systems exist to support the recording process.

Download the 'Running Record Coding System Example'

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

The example in this download is just one approach of using a coding system for a running record to analyse a learner's reading behaviour. Practitioners may also choose to develop a system that works best for their own practice.

What Can a Running Record Tell Us?

A running record enables close analysis of what a learner says and does while reading a text. It provides insight into their reading strategies, decoding skills, and resilience.

Word Attack and Phonics Skills:

A running record can help identify:

- **Sight vocabulary** –Does the learner have a good sight vocabulary? (i.e. words which are recognised automatically)
- **Phonics knowledge** – Can they accurately sound out unfamiliar words?
- **Reversals** – Are letters like *b/d* or *p/q* confused?
- **Blending** – How many sounds can they blend together (e.g. 3–4 or more)?
- **Sound prompts** – Are they more accurate when sounds are given orally?
- **Transposition errors** –Do they transpose sounds e.g. reading *stop* as *spot*?
- **Consonant blends and digraphs** – Can they manage blends (e.g. *bl*, *nd*) and digraphs (e.g. *ch*, *oo*)?
- **Morphemic strategies** – Do they build words letter-by-letter or use syllables, prefixes, and suffixes?
- **Approach to irregular words** – Is there an overreliance on phonics?

This analysis informs appropriate intervention strategies and helps assess the learner's **reading readiness** and **resilience**.

Reading Resilience: *Look for behaviours such as:*

- Persisting with challenging words, or giving up
- Re-reading words of phrases to gain clarity
- Making educated guesses, or asking for help
- Trying to maintain meaning, even when errors occur

Miscue Analysis

3.5 provided information on running records and Miscue Analysis.

Running records allow for **miscue analysis**—examining the types of errors (or miscues) learners make to better understand their reading strategies and how easy or difficult they find the text to read.

According to Goodman (1969: citied CEC Literacy / Dyslexia Guidelines 2019) Miscues aren't necessarily bad; they can show both strengths and weaknesses. A pattern of miscues gives valuable clues about how the learner processes text.

A simple analysis would involve asking:

- **Does the miscue look/sound right?** → Graphophonic miscue
- **Is it grammatically correct?** → Syntactic miscue
- **Does it make sense in context?** → Semantic miscue

A high number of semantic miscues often suggests the reader is actively trying to make sense of the text—which is at the heart of reading.

3.10 Pre literacy assessments: Phonological Awareness

If, while using the **Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA)**, you observed that the learner had significant difficulties with the Phonic Word - Reading Assessment, specifically struggling to identify individual sounds or blend simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, we recommend using the Phonological Awareness Assessment Tool (PhAAT).
This tool helps to pinpoint whether underlying challenges with phonological awareness are contributing to the learner's reading difficulties and identify specific difficulties with phonological awareness.

Phonological Awareness Assessment Tool (PhAAT). This is available on pages 7 - 11 in the DLA Printable Resources and Templates.

Phonological awareness is a crucial pre-reading skill that involves the ability to hear, recognise, and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. It develops gradually and includes several components:

- **Recognising individual words** in spoken language
- **Hearing and generating rhyme** (though some children may not fully grasp rhyme and still become successful readers)
- **Breaking words into syllables** and blending syllables together
- **Identifying and working with individual speech sounds (phonemes)**—this more advanced skill is referred to as phonemic awareness.

These listening and sound-based skills form the foundation for phonics, which is the next stage in learning to read. Phonics involves linking sounds (phonemes) to their corresponding letters (graphemes) and using this knowledge to decode written words. However, before learners can engage effectively with phonics, they need to be able to tune in to the sounds of language itself.

Phonological Awareness Assessment Tool

Some learners acquire phonological awareness naturally through conversation, songs, and stories. Others may need more structured and intentional support.

The Phonological Awareness Assessment (PhAAT) Tool will help you identify which aspects of phonological awareness the learner finds challenging, allowing you to tailor your support effectively.

To support learners who demonstrate difficulties in this area, we recommend using the **Phonological Awareness Resource Pack**. This resource complements the assessment tool by providing a range of targeted, easy-to-use activities tailored to specific areas of need. The activities are designed to be short, engaging, and accessible, ideal for embedding into everyday learning or intervention sessions. More details will be provided in **Section 5**.

In addition to formal activities, you can help build phonological awareness through regular reading of rhyming books, singing songs, playing sound-based games, and

encouraging playful use of language. Keeping the experience fun, positive, and pressure-free can make a significant difference in building the learner's confidence and skill.

Phonological Awareness Resource Pack

Available on Pages 12 –23 of the **DLA Printable Resources and Templates**.

The Phonological Awareness Resource Pack can be used to support staff in developing phonological awareness. Activities are mapped to specific areas of need identified on the PhAAT, helping ensure interventions are relevant and effective.

Phonological Awareness Assessment (Glasgow Dyslexia Service)

This Phonological Awareness Assessment resource, available on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit. It was developed by the Glasgow Dyslexia Support Service and offers structured activities to assess syllable awareness, rhyme, initial/final phoneme awareness, and blending/segmenting skills. This assessment focuses on early stages of phonological awareness before letters and words are introduced. However, it can be used with any learner to highlight gaps in their phonological development. This assessment is purely oral.

Free Resources to Support Collaborative Assessments | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

Further professional reading:

Reading Circle | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

Learning to Read in the Early Years Professional Support Overview

Reflection

Considering the entire assessment process described in Section 3, how would you explain the purpose of the DLA to a colleague?

Answer:
The DLA does not identify dyslexia. It provides a comprehensive profile of a learner's literacy strengths and needs. It is used on an individual basis, particularly where a learner has persistent literacy difficulties and has not made progress with other supports. The outcomes are used to plan targeted interventions.

Practical Activity: Applying the DLA in Practice
You may wish to choose a learner in your setting who has ongoing literacy difficulties and has made limited progress despite existing supports and carry out a Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) with them. In your Reflective log keep a note of yours and the learner's experience.

4 Reporting & Planning for Individual Literacy Programmes

Back to content page

4.1 Report Writing: Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) Report
4.2 Planning: Order of Teaching Phonics & Short-Term Plan
4.3 Individual Lesson Planning
4.4 Support Staff training
4.5 Reflection.

Learning Objectives
This section will support you to:

- Understand the structure of a diagnostic literacy assessment report.
- Learn how to document assessment findings in a clear, structured format.
- Develop skills in identifying and reporting strengths and areas of need.
- Gain confidence in using assessment information to inform short term and weekly intervention planning

This section provides guidance on using results from the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) to populate a report for learners with severe literacy difficulties/ dyslexia. The

report summarises all areas of the DLA assessment and records these as strengths and areas of need. This information will then enable you to develop a short-term plan and later create individual lesson plans to effectively meet learners needs.
Throughout this section an example assessment be referred to in order to demonstrate how a learner's areas of need in literacy are highlighted in the DLA report and used to plan for an individualised literacy programme.

DLA Pupil X Assessment Example (PDF)
https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

4.1 Report Writing: Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) Report

In line with the Additional Support for learning Act 2009 as amended a strength-based approach should be taken when collating assessment information and writing a learner profile or report.

The DLA enables a comprehensive report that summarises a learner's **strengths** and **areas of need** using specific headings that correspond to assessment components.

- **Reading:** phonic words, non-words, common words, reading in context
- **Spelling:** phonic words, common words, written sequences
- **Writing:** story writing & handwriting
- **Other:** general observations, pupil comments, oral sequences & syllables

A blank report template from the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment on page 25 can be printed from the of the **DLA Printable Resources and Templates**. The template can be

used to create a report for a learner that you have assessed using the DLA. The headings in the report correspond to each area of the DLA.

Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA) Report – Blank Template

Name		**DOB**	
School		**Class**	
Class Teacher		**Support Teacher**	

Observations from Assessment

	Reading: phonic words, non-words common words, reading in context	Spelling: phonic words, common words, written sequences	Writing: story writing & handwriting	Other: pupil comments, oral sequences & syllables
Strengths	** could decode Common words % Non-word reading Reading in context	** could recall and write: (Common words) Written sequences	** Writing Handwriting	General observations Pupil voice tool Oral syllabification Oral sequences
Areas of Need	** was unsure of: + phonics beyond this point	** was unsure of: + phonics beyond this point.	** Writing Handwriting	Pupil Voice tool Oral syllabification Oral sequences

Figure 3: Blank report template from the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Observations should be clear, concise, and specific. By reporting in each area, you can provide a detailed summary of a child or young person's literacy skills and areas of need. This information can be used to create a tailored a programme of support which is monitored and adjusted as required.

Look at the example of Pupil X report on page 27 in the DLA Printable Resources and Templates. It is helpful to have this to hand to refer to as we look at each aspect of the report in more detail.

DLA Report Example Pupil - Observations from Assessment

Name	Pupil X		DOB	
School			Class	P7
Date			Support Teacher	
	Reading: phonic words, non-words common words, reading in context	**Spelling:** phonic words, common words, written sequences	**Writing:** story writing & handwriting	**Other:** pupil comments, oral sequences & syllables
Strengths	**Pupil X could decode:** **Alphabet sounds** 24/26 **Consonant digraphs** - all **Cvc words** 5/7 **Consonant diagraph words** 9/10 **Simple vowel diagraphs words** 13/15 **Final blends** 8/10 **Initial blends** - all **Initial and Final blends** all **Triple blends** all **Magic e** 2/6 **Multisyllabic words** 6/8 **Common Words** 92% of 1st 100 common words, automatic recall **Non-word reading:** Blending skills evident from cvc to initial/ final blends	**Pupil X could recall and write:** **Alphabet sounds** - all **Consonant digraphs** 3/5 **Cvc words** 9/12 **Consonant digraph words** 6/8 **Simple vowel digraphs words** 4/12 **Final blends** 5/8 **Initial blends** 3/8 - sounding out as he writes words **Written Sequences:** First name numbers 1-10	**Pupil X** Has good ideas and was able to begin writing without support. He did not require prompting after his first sentence. He does not restrict his writing to words he can spell. Able to sequence ideas and notice errors when prompted. **Handwriting** Neat, legible, some use of cursive script Position of paper Pencil grip	**Pupil X** settled quickly to the assessment. He says in school he likes violin, Art and some types of writing. He finds maths, writing and reading difficult and would like help with these. **Oral Syllabification** Pupil X was able to identify the correct number of syllables in 6/9 words **Oral Sequences** Vowel names Vowel sounds a e u, Days of the week Full name Birthday
Areas of Need	**Pupil X was unsure of:** **Alphabet sounds** p, s, m (not pure) **Unknown alphabet sounds** d x y (b/d reversal x,y letter names) **Simple vowel digraphs** ew aw oi **Final blends** nt nk **Magic e** i-e **Multisyllabic words** 3+ syllables **Complex vowel digraphs** ou aw oi ew au ow wa **+ phonics beyond this point.** **Non-word reading** b/d reversal 2 syllable words/ magic e **Reading in Context** Unseen text 88% – Fluency, hesitant. Pace, slow. Use of punctuation.	**Pupil X was unsure of** **Alphabet sounds** – x, y **Cvc words** b/d, c/k confusion **Consonant digraphs** sh qu **Consonant digraph words** qu, ck **Twin letters** all **Simple vowel digraphs** ai oa oy ew ea igh, ou oi **Final blends** sk nk ft **Initial blends** dr fl cr cl sk, **+ phonics beyond this point** **Written Sequences** Address, Surname Days of week Months of the year	**Pupil X** Written work does not match oral ability. Spelling of common words and use of punctuation. Unable to self-correct spelling & punctuation. Rate of writing varies between slow, sounding out every letter to form words and writing quickly without pausing to read work over. **Handwriting** **Formation of letters:** h, o **Reversals:** b/d s **Use of capital letters:** F Q Props head up with his hand rather than holding the paper	**Oral Sequences** Alphabet Vowel sounds i o Months of the year Address **Pupil Voice Tool** **Pupil X** often finds these hard: remembering information; understanding spoken/written instructions; writing quickly/ layout; punctuation; handwriting; reading quickly enough

Figure 4: Diagnostic Literacy Assessment example report created for Pupil X

Reading

Responding to literature and texts play a central role in the development of children, young people and adult's knowledge and understanding. There are a range of key areas involved in the acquisition of reading skills, further information and resources on these can be found in the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit Reading Circle resource. [Reading Circle | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia]

This section of the DLA focuses on phonics.
Phonics involves the skills of hearing, identifying and using the patterns of sounds to read. The explicit and systematic teaching of phonics should develop understanding of the sounds (phonemes) and corresponding letter/s (graphemes) which represent them.

Phonics requires learners to know and match letters or letter patterns (graphemes) to sounds (phonemes) and use this information to decode words. We have 44 sounds/phonemes that we use in our spoken language: However, we have only 26 letters. (44 sounds/phonemes = 138 graphemes/spelling representations) Before readers of any age start learning phonics, they need to develop strong competencies in phonological awareness and build an awareness that sounds, letters and words work together to help with reading and writing.

If the sound cannot be matched to a letter, the successful introduction of phonics is compromised. Struggling readers of all ages may benefit from revisiting early skills and breaking them down. The Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit has a range of support approaches and strategies are available for teachers to help children develop their reading skills. Local authorities may also have their own programme of support for educators to use.

In this first section of the report, you will record strengths and areas of need in:

- **phonic words**
- **non-words**
- **common words**
- **reading in context**

Reading: Phonic words
List the sounds and words the learner reads correctly under strengths, and note any unknown or difficult sounds and words under areas of need

Use the results from the assessment '**Reading - Phonic and Common Words - Record Sheets'** you accessed in Section 3 to identify the phonic patterns the learner was able to decode and those they found challenging from sections 1-12.
If the learner successfully completed most or all phonic patterns in a section, record this clearly.

For example:
☑ Pupil X could decode:

- **Most alphabet sounds**
- **All consonant digraphs**
- Most phonic patterns from **CVC words to magic e**

Next, identify phonic gaps and record specific areas of need, highlighting errors within each phonic pattern from sections 1-12.

For example:

⚠ Pupil X was unsure of:

- **Alphabet sounds** (mispronounced/not pure): p, s, m, x, y
- **Unknown initial sounds:** *b/d confusion*
- **CVC words:** t/d confusion, b/d reversal
- **Consonant diagraphs:** th
- **Simple vowel digraphs:** oi, aw, ew
- **Final blends:** nt, nk
- **Magic e words:** i-e
- **Multisyllabic words (3+ syllables):**
- **Complex vowel digraphs:** oi, ou, aw, ow, au, wa
- **+ phonics beyond this point** *(*see below)*

This pattern of errors would be recorded in the DLA report under the Reading section, as shown in the image below:

Look at the Reading column of the DLA report below. The example provides an example of strengths and areas of need in reading for Pupil x

	Reading: phonic words, non-words common words, reading in context
Strengths	**Pupil X could decode:** **Alphabet sounds** 24/26 **Consonant digraphs** - all **Cvc words** 5/7 **Consonant diagraph words** 9/10 **Simple vowel diagraphs words** 13/15 **Final blends** 8/10 **Initial blends** - all **Initial and Final blends** all **Triple blends** all **Magic e** 2/6 **Multisyllabic words** 6/8 **Common Words** 92% of 1st 100 common words, automatic recall **Non-word reading:** Blending skills evident from cvc to initial/ final blends
Areas of Need	**Pupil X was unsure of:** **Alphabet sounds** p, s, m (not pure) **Unknown alphabet sounds** d x y (b/d reversal x y letter names) **Simple vowel digraphs** ew aw oi **Final blends** nt nk **Magic e** i-e **Multisyllabic words** 3+ syllables **Complex vowel digraphs** ou aw oi ew au ow wa **+ phonics beyond this point.** **Non-word reading** b/d reversal 2 syllable words/ magic e **Reading in Context** Unseen text 88% – Fluency, hesitant. Pace, slow. Use of punctuation.

Figure 5: A screenshot of a Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Report, outlining strengths and areas of need in reading for Pupil X

When there are clear and consistent gaps in a learner's ability to decode beyond a certain phonic level you should summarise their difficulties using '+ phonics beyond this point'. This should only be used when the pattern of errors indicates significant difficulty from that point onward. This keeps the report clear and concise, rather than a lengthy list of all the phonic patterns a learner was unable to read.

For some learners, this may occur later in the assessment (e.g. after Complex Vowel Digraphs), while for others, difficulties may emerge much earlier. For example, a learner who can only decode initial sounds, consonant digraphs, and CVC words but struggles beyond this point could be recorded as:

📌 Pupil Y was able to decode:

- all initial sounds
- most consonant digraphs
- most CVC words

📌 Pupil Y was unsure

- Consonant digraphs: wh, qu
- CVC words: u

+ phonics beyond this point.

Pupil X example - Reading assessment

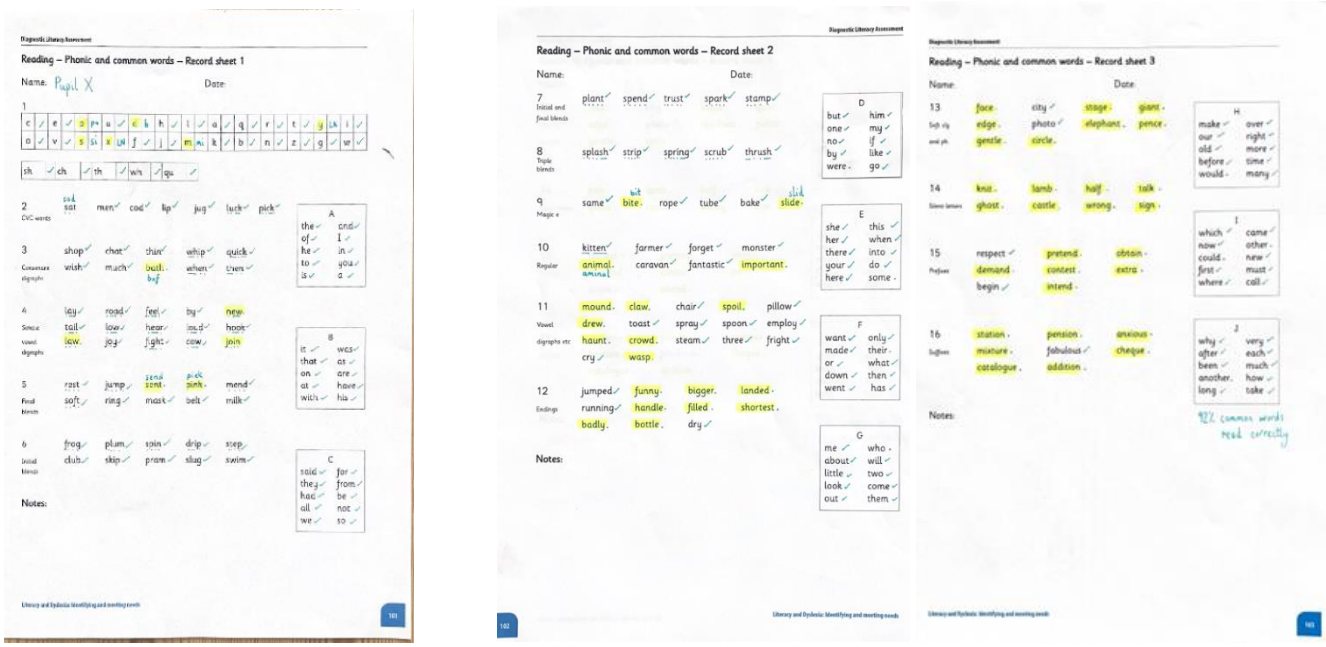


Figure 6: An example of a marked reading assessment, with errors highlighted yellow. For some errors, what the learner read has been written above.

Reading: Common words

Common words, also known as **high-frequency, sight words** or **'tricky' words**, are the words that appear most often in printed English. Learners frequently encounter these words in texts across all subjects, making them essential for developing reading fluency.

Many high-frequency words are not phonetically regular, meaning they can't be fully sounded out using phonics knowledge**.** In many cases, these words don't follow the phonic patterns that learners have encountered at the early stages of their phonics learning. This makes them particularly difficult for learners working at lower phonic levels, as the spelling-sound relationships in these words often don't align with the phonics they have been taught.

As a result, learners need to develop **automatic recognition** of these words through **r**epeated exposure, multisensory strategies, and meaningful context, rather than relying solely on phonics.
Examples include words such as **said**, **was**, and **come**.

Research shows that:

- The **first 25** most common words make up around **33%** of all printed material in English.
- The **first 100** words account for approximately **50%**.
- The **first 300** words make up about **65%** of all written material.

These words are typically listed in rank order, beginning with the most frequently used. Because they appear so often in reading material, being able to recognise them quickly and automatically helps learners become more fluent readers.

Next step

Record the percentage of common words read from the **Reading – Phonic and Common Words Record Sheet.**

- If the learner read a **high percentage** of common words, this should be noted as a **strength**.
- If they read a **low percentage**, this would be recorded as an **area of need**.
- The assessor is looking for **automatic** reading of common words. If a learner sounds out a number of common words, this should be recorded in area of need. e.g. X read 73% of common words. 32% - sounded out.

Please note that **focused support for common words** will be included in the DLA Learner Plan regardless of their current ability level.

For example:

- If common words are a **strength**, their target may be the **next 100 words** rather than the **first 100 words**.

- If common words are an **area of need**, the focus may be on consolidating within the **first 100 common words** before progressing further.

Reading: Non-words

Next, report the learner's **decoding skills** using the results from **Non-Words – Record Sheet.** This offers detailed insight into how the learner processes unfamiliar words.

When analysing the learner's performance, consider the following:

- Did the learner sound out each letter individually?
- Were they able to blend phonemes to form whole words?
- Was their reading of non-words automatic and fluent, or did they hesitate frequently?

Be specific when identifying phonic patterns:

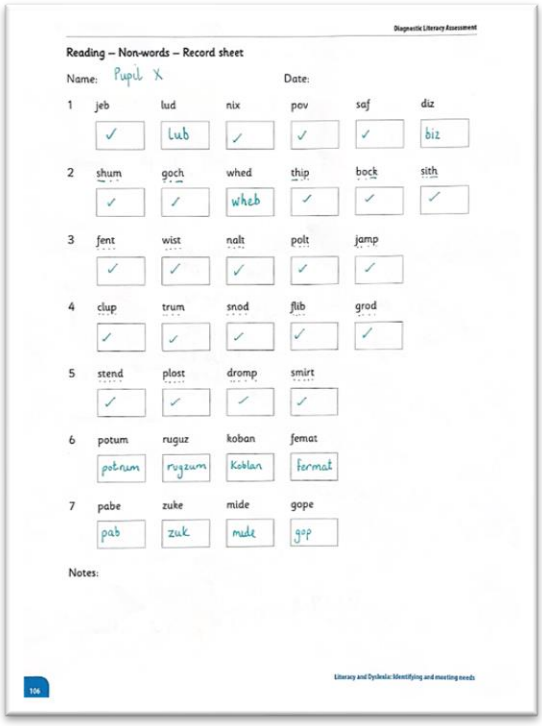
- Highlight the patterns the learner was able to decode (strengths).
- Note the patterns they were unable to decode (areas of need).

Look for error patterns that may indicate underlying difficulties:

- **Blending difficulties** – Do they struggle to blend sounds together to form a word?
- **Sound substitution, omission, or addition** – Do they:
    - Substitute one sound for another? (e.g. polt → post)
    - Omit a sound? (e.g. polt → pot)
    - Add a sound? (e.g. polt → polts)
- **Sound transposition** – Do they swap sounds around? (e.g. polt → plot)
- **Letter reversals** – Do they reverse letters such as **b, d, or p,** which may indicate confusion with letter orientation?

Pupil X example Non – Word Reading Record sheet

Figure 7 provides an example of a marked non-word reading assessment for Pupil X, with learner errors recorded in the box beneath the word. This is marked page 106 in the DLA Pupil X Assessment Example (PDF).


Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Reading – Non-words – Record sheet

Name: Pupil X Date:

1	jeb	lud	nix	pov	saf	diz
	✓	Lub	✓	✓	✓	biz
2	shum	goch	whed	thip	bock	sith
	✓	✓	wheb	✓	✓	✓
3	fent	wist	nalt	polt	jamp	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	clup	trum	snod	flib	grod	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	stend	plost	dromp	smirt		
	✓	✓	✓	✓		
6	potum	ruguz	koban	femat		
	potrum	ryzum	Koblan	fermat		
7	pabe	zuke	mide	gope		
	pab	zuk	mide	gop		

Notes:

106

Literacy and Dyslexia: Identifying and meeting needs

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Figure 7: Marked non-word reading assessment for Pupil X,

Reading in Context

Using the **(3.5) Reading in Context formula** you will have determined the level of text difficulty the learner read during this part of the assessment.

- If the reading material was at an **easy** or **instructional** level, record this as a **strength**.
- If the reading material was at a **hard** level, record this as an **area of need**.

Next step

Comment on the learner's reading behaviours, noting observations in the appropriate row - **strengths** or **areas of need:**

- **Fluency** – Is their reading smooth and automatic (strength), or hesitant and laboured (area of need)?
- **Rate of reading** – Is their pace too fast, too slow, or appropriate for comprehension?
- **Rereading** – Do they frequently reread sections of the text?
- **Self-correction** – Do they notice and correct their own reading errors?
- **Tracking text** – Do they omit words, lose their place, or skip lines while reading?
- **Comprehension** – Can they understand and recall what they have read?
- **Attitude and effort** – Were they reluctant to read, or did they put in noticeable effort?

Spelling

In this column of the report, you will record strengths and areas of need in **phonic spelling patterns, common words and written sequences.**

Spelling: Phonic words

In Section 3, the learner completed the **Spelling – Phonic Words Assessment**.

Step 1

Refer to the marking on **Spelling Phonic Record Sheets,** which identify both the phonic patterns they spelled correctly and those they found challenging from **sections A-Q**. Clearly record the patterns the learner demonstrated success with, as well as any specific difficulties or gaps in their spelling knowledge.

Step 2

List the **sounds and words** the learner spelt correctly under **strengths**, and note any unknown or difficult sounds and words under **areas of need**

If the learner successfully completed most or all phonic patterns in a section, note this explicitly.

For example:

☑ Pupil X could recall and write:

- **Alphabet sounds**
- **Consonant digraphs**
- **Cvc words**
- **Most consonant digraph words**
- **Simple vowel digraphs word**: oo ay
- **Most final blends/ initial blends**

Step 3

Identify and record **specific areas of need**, highlighting errors within each phonic pattern from **sections A-Q**.

For example:

⚠ Pupil X was unsure of:

- **Alphabet sounds:** b/d c/k confusion
- **Consonant digraph sounds:** sh qu
- **Consonant diagraph words:** wh ck
- **Twin letters:** all
- **Simple vowel diagraphs**: ai, oa, oy, ew, ea, igh, ou, oi
- **Final blends**: sk, ft, nk
- **Initial blends**: dr, fl, cr. cl, sk
- **+phonics beyond this point**

This pattern of errors would be recorded in the DLA report under the Spelling section, as shown in the image below:

Spelling section DLA report

Figure 8 highlights an example of a Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Report, outlining strengths and areas of need in spelling for Pupil x

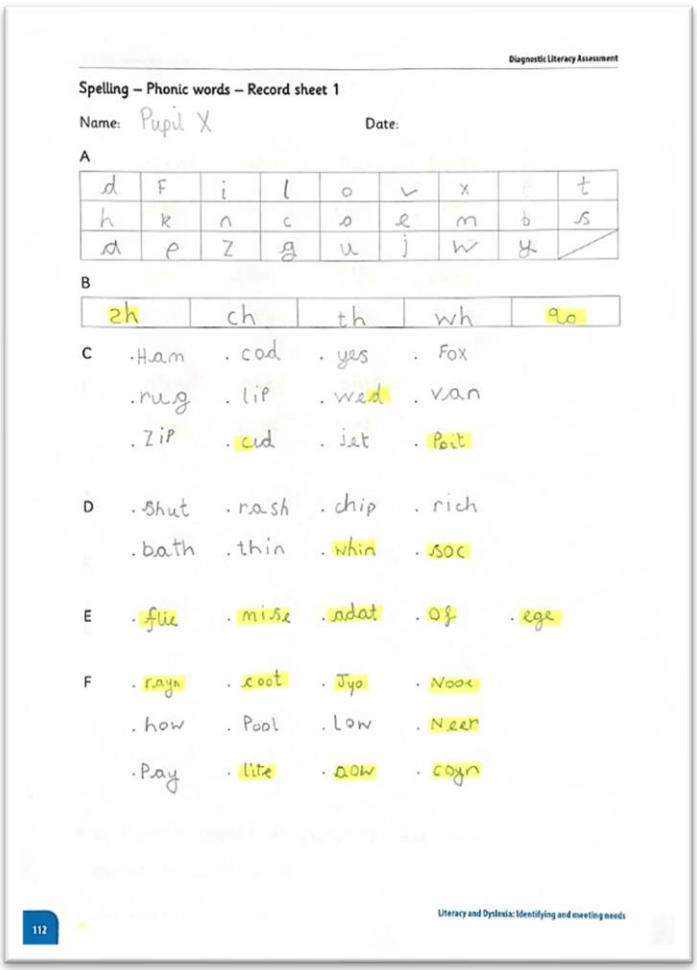
	Spelling: phonic words, common words, written sequences
Strengths	**Pupil X could recall and write:** **Alphabet sounds** - all **Consonant digraphs** 3/5 **Cvc words** 9/12 **Consonant digraph words** 6/8 **Simple vowel digraphs words** 4/12 **Final blends** 5/8 **Initial blends** 3/8 - sounding out as he writes words **Written Sequences:** First name numbers 1-10
Areas of Need	**Pupil X was unsure of** **Alphabet sounds** – x y **Cvc words** b/d, c/k confusion **Consonant digraphs** sh qu **Consonant digraph words** qu ck **Twin letters** all **Simple vowel digraphs** ai oa oy ew ea igh, ou oi **Final blends** sk nk ft **Initial blends** dr fl cr cl sk **+ phonics beyond this point** **Written Sequences** Address, Surname Days of week Months of the year

Figure 8: Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Report: Spelling

As the learner writes on the phonic spelling record sheet, the assessor can record errors on the phonic spelling assessment sheet. The first example below shows, what the learner wrote on the **spelling record sheet**, with the incorrect phonic errors highlighted on the **assessment** sheet.

For example:
qu = written as **qo**
web = written as **wed**
kid = written as **cid**

Look at Pupil X example Spelling Record sheets 1 and 2 in Figure 9.



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Spelling – Phonic words – Record sheet 1

Name: Pupil X Date:

A

d	F	i	l	o	v	x		t
h	k	n	c	o	e	m	b	s
a	e	z	g	u	j	w	y	

B

zh	ch	th	wh	qo

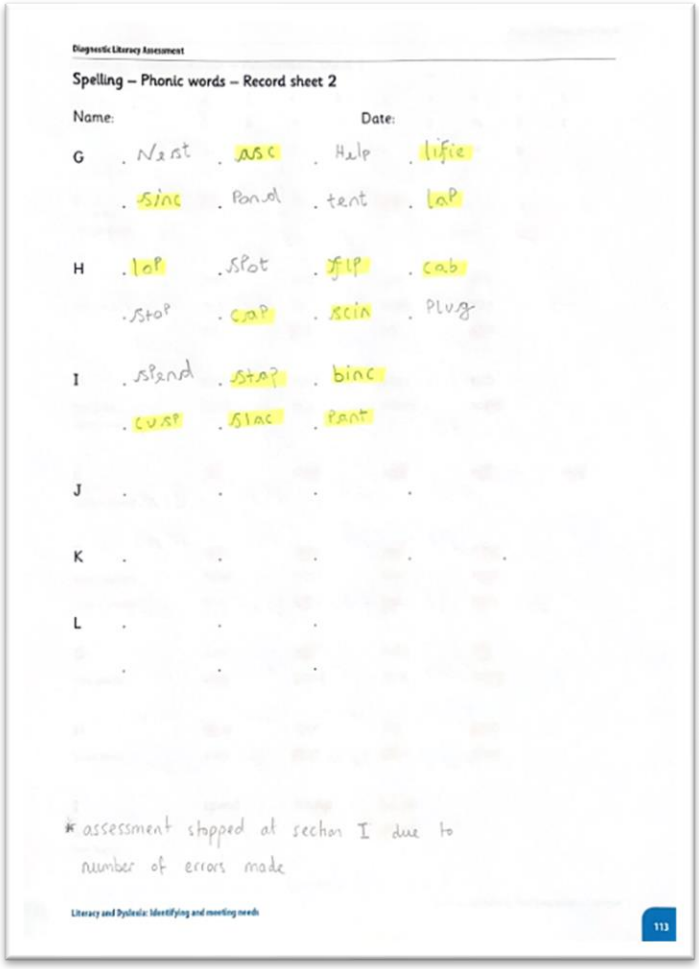
C .Ham .cod .yes .Fox
.rug .lip .wed .van
.zip .cud .jet .Port

D .shut .rash .chip .rich
.bath .thin .Whin .soc

E .flie .mise .adat .of .ege

F .rayn .coot .Jyo .Nook
.how .Pool .Low .Neer
.Pay .lite .aow .coyn

112 Literacy and Dyslexia: Identifying and meeting needs



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Spelling – Phonic words – Record sheet 2

Name: Date:

G .Nest .asc .Help .lifie
.sinc .Pond .tent .laP

H .laP .sPot .flP .cab
.stoP .caP .scin .Plug

I .stand .stop .binc
.cusP .slac .Pant

J . . . .

K . . . .

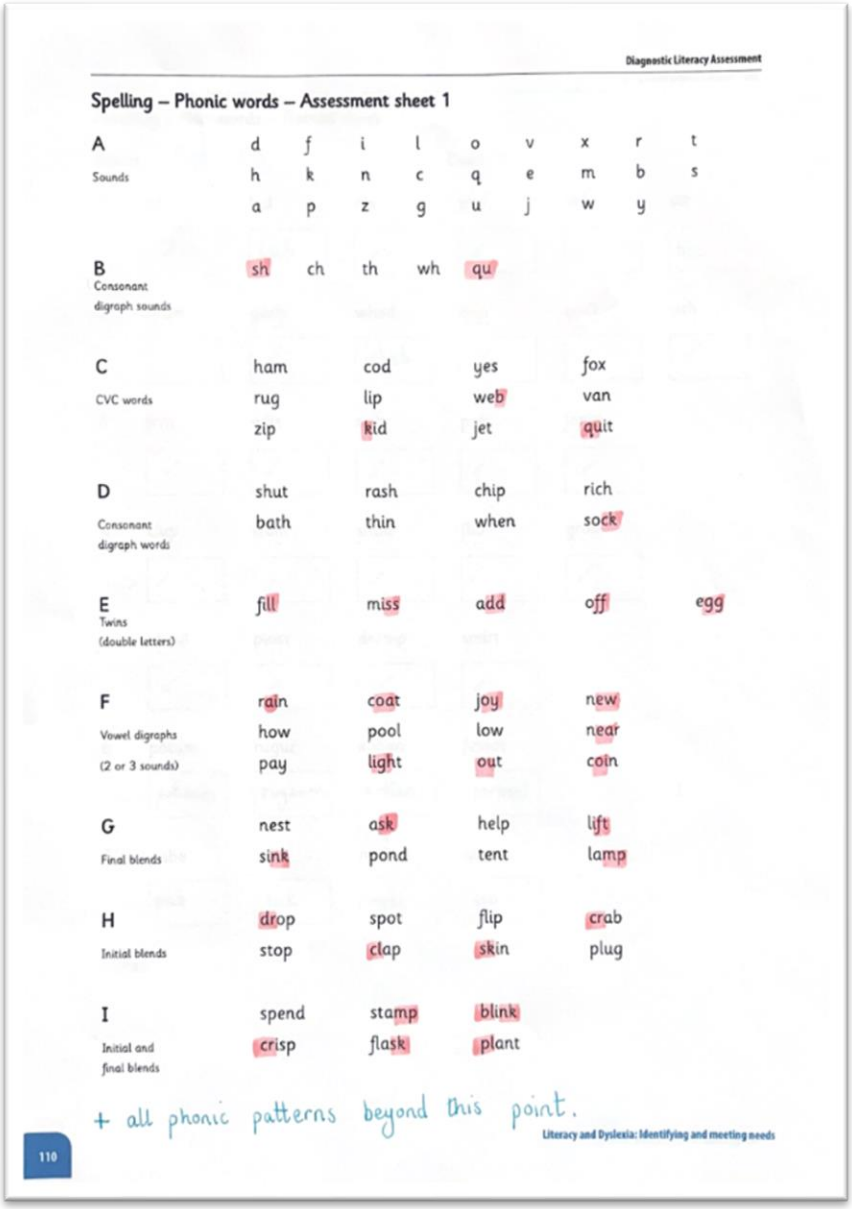
L . . .
. . .

* assessment stopped at section I due to number of errors made

Literacy and Dyslexia: Identifying and meeting needs 113

Figure 9: Marked phonic spelling assessment for Pupil X, with learner errors highlighted yellow

Figure 10 demonstrates how the spelling assessment sheet can be used by the assessor to record the phonic errors made by the learner in the spelling assessment.



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment

Spelling – Phonic words – Assessment sheet 1

A Sounds	d	f	i	l	o	v	x	r	t
	h	k	n	c	q	e	m	b	s
	a	p	z	g	u	j	w	y	
B Consonant digraph sounds	sh	ch	th	wh	qu				
C CVC words	ham	cod	yes	fox					
	rug	lip	web	van					
	zip	kid	jet	quit					
D Consonant digraph words	shut	rash	chip	rich					
	bath	thin	when	sock					
E Twins (double letters)	fill	miss	add	off	egg				
F Vowel digraphs (2 or 3 sounds)	rain	coat	joy	new					
	how	pool	low	near					
	pay	light	out	coin					
G Final blends	nest	ask	help	lift					
	sink	pond	tent	lamp					
H Initial blends	drop	spot	flip	crab					
	stop	clap	skin	plug					
I Initial and final blends	spend	stamp	blink						
	crisp	flask	plant						

+ all phonic patterns beyond this point.

110

Literacy and Dyslexia: Identifying and meeting needs

Figure 10: Learner phonic errors

Spelling: Common Words

If a direct spelling assessment of common words was conducted, record the percentage of words spelled correctly either under strengths or areas of need.

Please note, if no direct assessment of common words was conducted, **assessment and targeted support for spelling of common words** should still be included in appropriate planning for the learner. For example, it may be within a class plan, a short-

term plan and or weekly lesson plan. The **Common Word Spelling booklet** provided in section 5 can be used to assess and teach common words.

Observations

Observation is an important aspect of identifying need and an assessment process.

When undertaking the assessment of common words consider the following:

- **Automatic Recall** – Can the learner recall words automatically?
- **Errors** - Is the misspelling of the same word consistent (if using free writing)
- **Letter Transpositions** – Are letters reversed or misplaced within words? (e.g 'hwo' for 'who').
- **Confidence** – Does the learner appear self-assured or frequently seek reassurance?
- **Perseverance** – Does the learner keep trying or show signs of giving up quickly?
- **Focus & Engagement** – Are they able to stay on task throughout the activity?

Writing: story writing and handwriting

Populate the **Story writing and Handwriting** section with observations made during this part of the assessment. This helps build a clear profile of the learner's strengths and areas of need.

For **Story writing**, record observations on:

- **Attitude/Behaviour** – Were they confident and able to begin writing without support, or anxious/ frequently ask for reassurance?
- **Independence** – Were they able to begin writing without support? Did they require prompting after the first sentence? Did they ask for spelling help?
- **Structure & Content** – Were they able to talk about what they would write? Could they say their first sentence? Were they able to write in sentences? Were their ideas sequenced logically? Was their writing restricted to words they could spell?

- **Punctuation** – Did they use capital letters, full stops, and other punctuation marks correctly?
- **Rate & Quantity** – Was their writing speed appropriate? Did their written output match their oral ability?
- **Spelling in Context** – Do they use 'bizarre'/ phonetic spelling? Are phonic words spelled correctly? Were common words spelled correctly? Were any misspellings consistent?
- **Error Awareness** – Were they able to read their own work back? Did they notice and correct mistakes?

For **Handwriting**, record observations on:

- **Writing hand -** Left or right-handed?
- **Pencil Grip** – Was their grip appropriate, or did it need adjustment?
- **Writing Style** – Did they write in print, joined writing, or a mix of both?
- **Pencil pressure** – Pressure of pencil on page?
- **Letter Formation** – Was their letter formation clear and consistent, or irregular? Which specific letters did they have difficulty forming correctly? Did they use capital letters instead of lowercase?
- **Legibility & Size** – Were their letters/ words easy to read and appropriately sized?
- **Paper & Body Positioning** – How did they position their paper? What was their posture like while writing?
- **Letter Reversals or Confusion** – Did they reverse or confuse letters such as z/s or b/d/p/q?
- **Use of Upper & Lower Case Letters** – Was their use of upper- and lowercase letters consistent, or did they mix them inappropriately?

Observations made during the writing assessment would be recorded in the DLA report as shown below:

Look at the Writing column in the DLA Report Example Pupil X- Observations from Assessment below in Figure 11. It outlines the strengths and areas of need in writing for Pupil X.

	Writing: story writing & handwriting
Strengths	**Pupil X** Has good ideas and was able to begin writing without support. He did not require prompting after his first sentence. He does not restrict his writing to words he can spell. Able to sequence ideas and notice errors when prompted. **Handwriting** Neat, legible, some use of cursive script Position of paper Pencil grip
Areas of Need	**Pupil X** Written work does not match oral ability. Spelling of common words and use of punctuation. Unable to self-correct spelling & punctuation. Rate of writing varies between slow, sounding out every letter to form words and writing quickly without pausing to read work over. **Handwriting** **Formation of letters:** h, o **Reversals:** b/d s **Use of capital letters:** F Q Props head up with his hand rather than holding the paper

Figure 11: Pupil X Writing Strengths and areas of Need.

Other: General comments and observations.

Oral Sequences & Syllabification

In line with Scottish education's legislative rights-based framework the assessment process must be learner centred.

At the start of this section, it is important to note any relevant observations from the **Diagnostic Literacy Assessment – Discussion with the learner** or, **Pupil Voice Tool** and record this in the **strengths** box. This helps build a clearer picture of the learner's school experience, their strengths, needs and challenges. For example:

- What do they **enjoy and find difficult** in school? (e.g. Enjoys art and ICT, finds writing and spelling hard). Note what they would like help within class/ school
- Are there any **relevant external factors**? (e.g. Bilingualism, additional support needs, or other circumstances that may impact learning).
- Did they maintain **concentration** throughout the assessment, or were they easily distracted?
- Did they show signs of **fatigue**, such as tiring easily during tasks?
- Did they move closer to or further away from the text? (This may indicate potential visual difficulties)
- Did they display signs of **anxiety**, such as asking for reassurance when asked to read aloud or to write?

Next steps

Record your observations of **oral syllabification and oral sequences** in the strengths and areas of needs boxes. Note whether the learner can accurately repeat multi-syllabic words and identify the correct number of syllables in a word. Clearly indicate which sequences were recalled correctly, and which were not.

Look at the 'Other' column in the DLA Report Example Pupil X- Observations from Assessment below in Figure 12. It outlines the strengths and areas of need in oral sequences and syllables for Pupil X.

	Other: pupil comments, oral sequences & syllables
Strengths	**Pupil X** settled quickly to the assessment. He says in school he likes violin, Art and some types of writing. He finds maths, writing and reading difficult and would like help with these. **Oral Syllabification** Pupil X was able to identify the correct number of syllables in 6/9 words **Oral Sequences** Vowel names Vowel sounds a e u, Days of the week Full name Birthday
Areas of Need	**Oral Sequences** Alphabet Vowel sounds i o Months of the year Address **Pupil Voice Tool** **Pupil X** often finds these hard: remembering information; understanding spoken/written instructions; writing quickly/ layout; punctuation; handwriting; reading quickly enough

Figure 12: Pupil X Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Report, outlining strengths and areas of need in oral sequencing, syllabification and pupil comments

4.2 Planning

The Order of Teaching Phonics

The Order of Teaching Phonics is a structured progression guide that outlines the recommended order for teaching phonics, from initial sounds to more complex spelling patterns such as prefixes and suffixes.

It helps practitioners:

- Identify gaps in phonic knowledge
- Plan targeted next steps
- Align support with classroom teaching
- Track progress over time

Use the document alongside assessment data (e.g. the DLA report) to record errors, highlight needs, to guide planning.

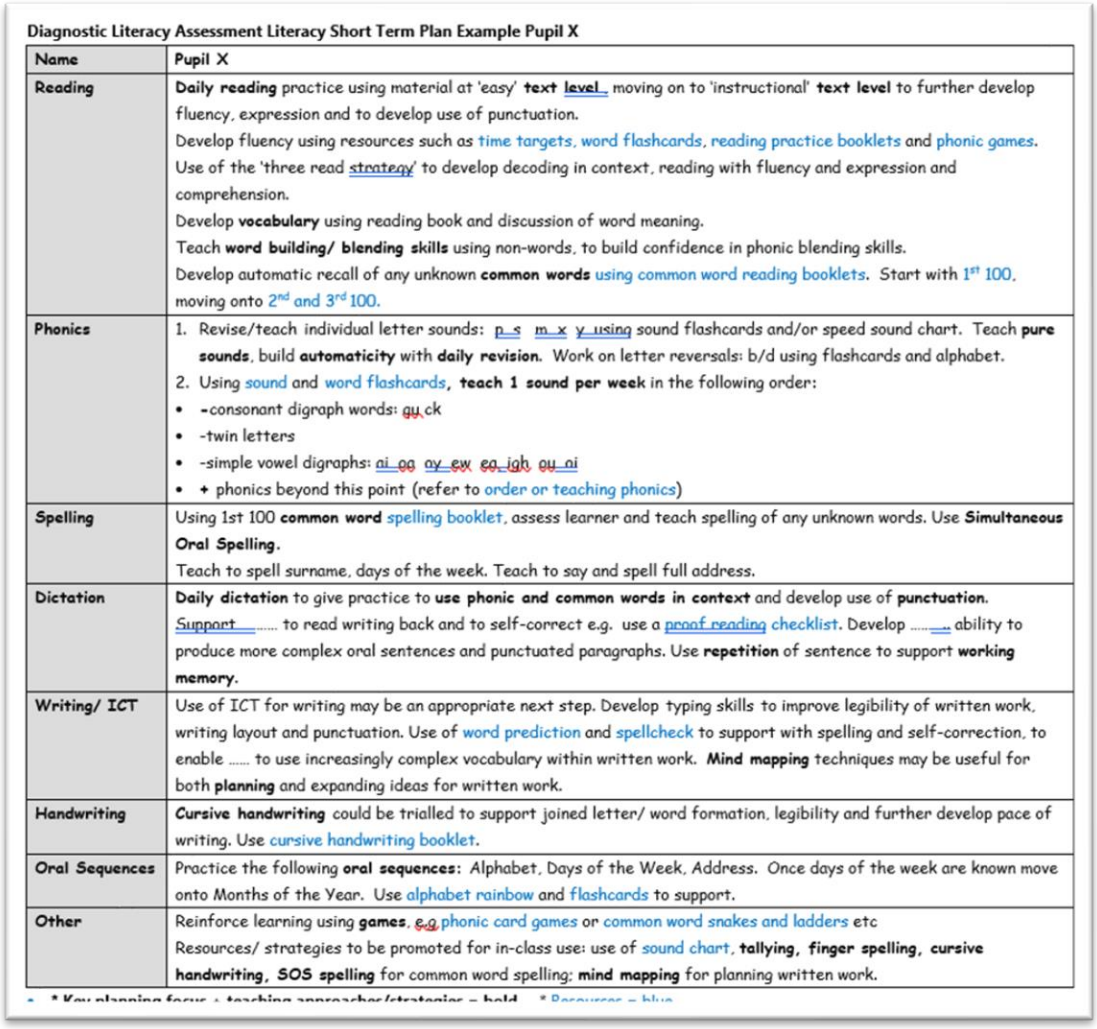
The document is available to download at the beginning of this module. You may wish to refer to it while completing this section of the DLA learner plan.

As you begin to analyse the assessment and gather information on the learner's phonic knowledge, you may want to begin recording errors on the '**Order of Teaching Phonics'** document. This will help you to see the specific gaps in the learner's phonic knowledge, which will also support you in your planning. The order of Teaching Phonics is available to print on pages 27, 28 and 29 of the DLA Printable Resources and Templates.

Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Literacy Short Term Plan

The DLA short-term plan translates the key areas for development identified in the report into actionable steps. It outlines the **resources** and **strategies** required to support progress, providing an overview that directly informs weekly lesson planning.

Figure 13 is a screenshot of the example plan for Pupil X. The key strategies are in **bold** and resources are highlighted blue. This is available on page 30 of the DLA Printable Resources and Templates.



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Literacy Short Term Plan Example Pupil X

Name	Pupil X
Reading	**Daily reading** practice using material at 'easy' **text level**, moving on to 'instructional' **text level** to further develop fluency, expression and to develop use of punctuation. Develop fluency using resources such as time targets, word flashcards, reading practice booklets and phonic games. Use of the 'three read strategy' to develop decoding in context, reading with fluency and expression and comprehension. Develop **vocabulary** using reading book and discussion of word meaning. Teach **word building/ blending skills** using non-words, to build confidence in phonic blending skills. Develop automatic recall of any unknown **common words** using common word reading booklets. Start with 1st 100, moving onto 2nd and 3rd 100.
Phonics	1. Revise/teach individual letter sounds: p s m x y using sound flashcards and/or speed sound chart. Teach **pure sounds**, build **automaticity** with **daily revision**. Work on letter reversals: b/d using flashcards and alphabet. 2. Using sound and word flashcards, **teach 1 sound per week** in the following order: • -consonant digraph words: qu ck • -twin letters • -simple vowel digraphs: ai oa ay ew ea igh ou oi • + phonics beyond this point (refer to order or teaching phonics)
Spelling	Using 1st 100 **common word** spelling booklet, assess learner and teach spelling of any unknown words. Use **Simultaneous Oral Spelling**. Teach to spell surname, days of the week. Teach to say and spell full address.
Dictation	**Daily dictation** to give practice to **use phonic and common words in context** and develop use of **punctuation**. Support ..... to read writing back and to self-correct e.g. use a proof reading checklist. Develop ..... ability to produce more complex oral sentences and punctuated paragraphs. Use **repetition** of sentence to support **working memory**.
Writing/ ICT	Use of ICT for writing may be an appropriate next step. Develop typing skills to improve legibility of written work, writing layout and punctuation. Use of word prediction and spellcheck to support with spelling and self-correction, to enable ..... to use increasingly complex vocabulary within written work. **Mind mapping** techniques may be useful for both **planning** and expanding ideas for written work.
Handwriting	**Cursive handwriting** could be trialled to support joined letter/ word formation, legibility and further develop pace of writing. Use cursive handwriting booklet.
Oral Sequences	Practice the following **oral sequences:** Alphabet, Days of the Week, Address. Once days of the week are known move onto Months of the Year. Use alphabet rainbow and flashcards to support.
Other	Reinforce learning using **games**, e.g phonic card games or common word snakes and ladders etc Resources/ strategies to be promoted for in-class use: use of sound chart, **tallying, finger spelling, cursive handwriting, SOS spelling** for common word spelling; **mind mapping** for planning written work.

Figure 13 Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Literacy Short Term Plan Example Pupil X.

The DLA Short Term Plan is structured under the following headings:

- Reading
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Dictation
- Writing/ ICT
- Handwriting
- Other

For each section of the DLA Short Term Plan, consider the following elements:

Reading

- Plan for use of an appropriate text level
- Include daily reading practice
- Support comprehension through use of the Three Read Strategy –decoding, vocabulary development, fluency and expression; questioning strategies, and awareness of punctuation's effect on meaning
- Phonic word reading: to build confidence and fluency use words the learner can easily decode to begin with, before progressing. Use strategies such as time targets, word flashcards, and phonic games. The phonic words worked on here come from the phonic reading section of the lesson. These are not incorporated into the phonic section of the lesson because they do not appear as phonic spelling errors
- Common words: teach automatic recognition of high-frequency words (e.g. first 50 common words)
- Use non-words to develop blending and word-building skills.

📌 **Resources:**

- Tricky Words Reading Booklet
- Common Word Reading Booklet
- Time Targets Booklet
- Reading Practice Booklets
- Phonic and common words games
- Flash cards
- Decodable text

Phonics

In this section of the plan, you will **take your content from areas of need in the phonic spelling section of the DLA report**.

Using the **Order of Teaching Phonics** document will ensure a systematic approach to planning and supporting gaps in the learner's phonic knowledge. You will also incorporate errors made in the oral and written sequences.

For example:
If a learner omits vowels when writing or cannot recall the complete vowel sound oral sequence, you will include this as:

- Teach vowel sounds within words

Referring to the patterns of errors made by Pupil X (in the **phonic spelling part of the DLA**) the Phonic section of the report has the following information:

1. Teach unknown sounds; sound confusions; sounds that were not pure i.e.:
    - Teach pure sounds **s, p, m**
    - Support **b/d** confusion (visuals)
    - Teach vowel sounds (within words)
2. Consolidate consonant digraphs: **th, qu, ck** (**c/k/ ck** words)
3. Teach twin letters
4. Teach simple vowel digraphs: **ai oa oy ew ow (how) igh ou oi**
5. Final blends: **sk, nk, nt/** Initial blends**: sk**

+ phonics beyond this point

📌 **Resources**:

- Reading: easy/instructional level text, decodable text
- Spelling: flash cards/ tallying materials (cubes/ counters)
- Visual aids: sound rulers/ speed sound charts
- Fluency: flash cards/ time targets/ reading practice booklets

Spelling

Here you will refer to the errors made in the **spelling** of **written sequences** and spelling **common words**.

- **Written sequences**: e.g. teach …. to spell their surname, days of the week
- **Common words:** e.g. begin checking through the spelling of first 50 common words. Use SOS method to teach (see Section 6 for information on this teaching strategy). Where appropriate refer to their incorrect spelling in written work. e.g. Pick out frequently recurring errors from …..'s writing and learn these by SOS.

📌 **Resources**:

- Tricky word spelling record
- Common word spelling booklet

Dictation

This part of the plan should aim to develop writing skills, supporting the writing of phonic and common words used in context. Daily dictation should incorporate the specific phonic patterns and common words the learner is working on. This provides opportunities for practice in context, reinforces word recognition, and supports the use of accurate punctuation. The learner can be supported to proof-read their work, to develop self-correction and editing skills. Where appropriate, this section may also refer to the learner's auditory memory.

For example:

Daily dictation can help strengthen auditory memory, as the learner is required to listen to a sentence, repeat it aloud, retain it in memory, and then write it in the correct sequence.

If the learner needs support with developing more complex sentence structure, this section can also focus on building their ability to generate and articulate more complex oral sentences before writing. For example adding powerful openers or connectives.

📌 **Resources**:

- Visual supports: sound charts, vowel rulers, checklists
- Recording device: ipad or talking tin to record sentence orally

Writing/ ICT

Touch typing/ Speech to text/ Accessibility features: the use of ICT to support writing may be an appropriate next step for a learner to enable them to gain more independence and experience greater success across the curriculum. Developing their skills in this area would be key.

Planning Writing – e.g. Mind Mapping may be useful both for planning and for note taking as this would cut down on the amount of writing required.

Proof reading: a checklist for proof reading may be advised - e.g. to remind a learner to look for spelling errors and to check punctuation.

📌 **Resources**:

- Technology: I-pad, laptop, access to keyboard
- Visual supports: writing checklists, vocabulary word banks

Handwriting

Where appropriate refer to:

- letter formation
- pencil grip
- layout of work
- use of cursive script. e.g. A cursive handwriting programme may be appropriate and would help with letter formation, spelling and with the layout of their work.

📌 **Resources**:

- Pencil grip
- Sloping board
- Handwriting booklet

Other

Information in this section will focus on other identified needs, such as **phonological awareness** or information gathered using one of the **Pupil Voice Tools**

For example:

- If you have carried out an assessment using the **Phonological Awareness Tool,** you may include some suggested activities from the **Phonological Awareness Resource** Pack - e.g. If the learner needs support with **sound discrimination** you might suggest…….. **"**where appropriate refer to: - sounds/ syllables; During phonic work encourage Pupil B to identify sounds within words –initial – medial – final"

- If **organisation** has been identified as a need in the Pupil Voice Tool, then you might suggest a weekly planner/ diary for home or a checklist for the classroom, to encourage the learner to tick of tasks as they are completed.

- If a learner has **difficulty remembering or processing information** you might suggest breaking down instructions and providing visuals; give extra time for writing/ reading tasks; provide visual structures to support writing layout

- When referring to **In class strategies** – include strategies from the PVT that the learner has noted as particularly helpful e.g. giving a choice of answer; scribing; seating position. Also include strategies they would like to try e.g. Mind Mapping.

- Highlight the importance of playing games, as this will motivate learners and provide opportunities for overlearning at the end of the lesson. E.g reinforce learning using phonic card games.

4.3 Creating a DLA individual lesson plan

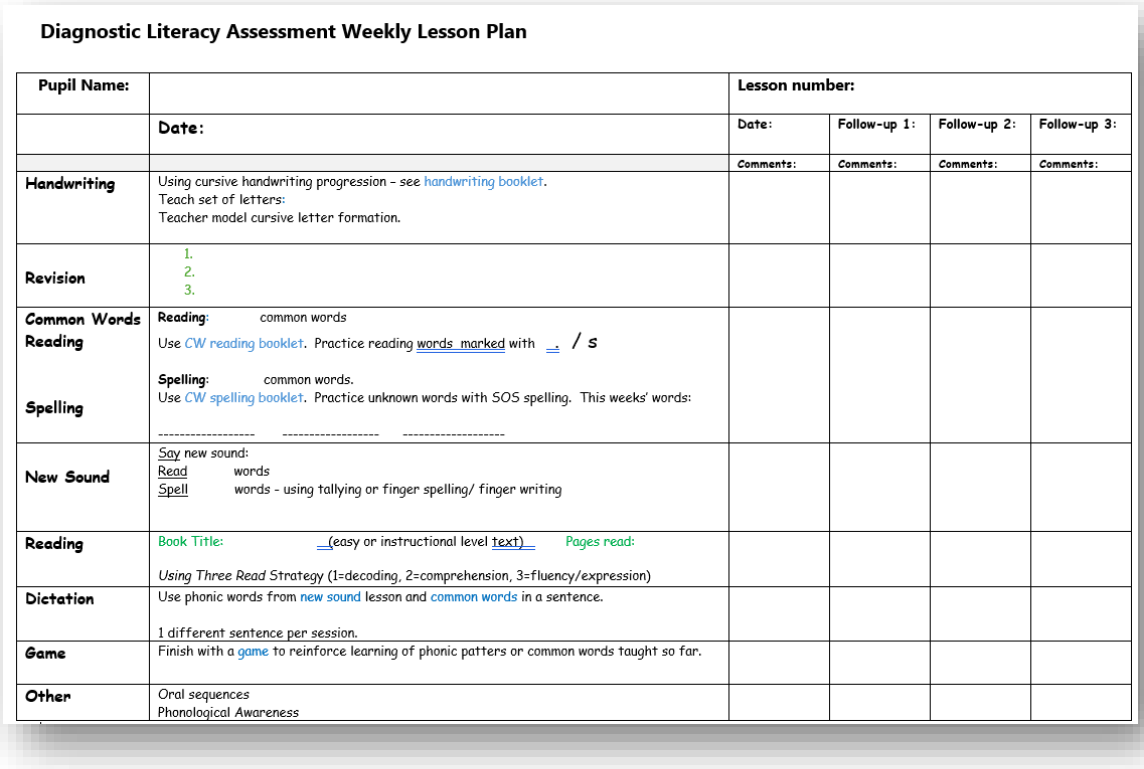
The next stage in the reporting and planning process is to use your short-term plan to create an individual lesson plan. The planner template highlighted in Figure 14 allows you to plan each element of the lesson and offers clear guidance for support staff who will deliver follow-up sessions. This planner provides, both a weekly lesson plan and an overview of the learner's progress and plays a crucial role in ensuring essential overlearning throughout the week.

Ideally this planning format is designed for a ASN Teacher/Support for Learning teacher to plan and deliver the first lesson of the week. The first lesson, taught by the teacher, should last approximately one hour (depending on the learner's age and stage).

Follow-up skills practice sessions are undertaken by support staff trained to deliver the programme. These sessions are typically shorter, lasting around 30-40 minutes and occurring three to four times a week.
During the initial session, support staff should observe the lesson. These observations provide valuable opportunities for on-the-job training whilst ensuring consistency and overlearning for the learner.

By using this format, the teacher can ensure that support staff are clear on learning objectives and consistently reinforce key learning areas. Asking support staff to record which elements of the lesson they have undertaken and how the learner has responded, enables the teacher to track the learner's progress and supports with planning for the next teaching session.

Weekly lesson plan template – A template is available page 32 of the DLA Printable Resources and Templates. This can be used to create an individual lesson plan, following completion of the DLA and reporting.



Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Weekly Lesson Plan

Pupil Name:		**Lesson number:**			
	Date:	**Date:**	**Follow-up 1:**	**Follow-up 2:**	**Follow-up 3:**
		Comments:	**Comments:**	**Comments:**	**Comments:**
Handwriting	Using cursive handwriting progression – see handwriting booklet. Teach set of letters: Teacher model cursive letter formation.				
Revision	1. 2. 3.				
Common Words Reading **Spelling**	**Reading**: common words Use CW reading booklet. Practice reading words marked with . / s **Spelling**: common words. Use CW spelling booklet. Practice unknown words with SOS spelling. This weeks' words: ---------- ---------- ----------				
New Sound	Say new sound: Read words Spell words - using tallying or finger spelling/ finger writing				
Reading	Book Title: (easy or instructional level text) Pages read: *Using Three Read* Strategy (1=decoding, 2=comprehension, 3=fluency/expression)				
Dictation	Use phonic words from new sound lesson and common words in a sentence. 1 different sentence per session.				
Game	Finish with a game to reinforce learning of phonic patters or common words taught so far.				
Other	Oral sequences Phonological Awareness				

Figure 14: Planner emplate highlighted

Structuring an DLA Individual Lesson Plan

The weekly DLA lesson plan template provides a **framework for structuring literacy support sessions.** A DLA individual lesson plan ensures that the learning session is **structured, targeted**, and **tailored** to meet the learner's needs.
The lesson plan follows a **set order** and includes **strategies** and **resources** used to develop learning in each section. The **follow-up comments** provide space for support staff to note the work undertaken and **record** any important **observations** that will help the teacher plan for the next session.
Below is a suggested lesson plan order, with a summary of the learning activities and resources required.

- **Handwriting –** Use the **cursive handwriting progression** from the cursive handwriting booklet, teach letter formation either individually or, where possible in groups or sets. e.g Teach **c** or **c,o,d or** where appropriate, **c,o,d,a,g,q,s** letter formation together. Then move onto **next set.**

Please note cursive handwriting may not be appropriate for all learners. If learner has fine motor difficulties you may want to work on letter formation using a printed style of handwriting.

- **Revision –** Include **oral sequence** practice such as: alphabet, vowels, days or the week or months of the year. Use flashcards and visuals such as the sound chart or alphabet rainbow to support. Once the 'new sound' has been introduced and practiced, move this into the revision section.

- **Common words:** Assess and teach **common word reading** and **spelling** using strategies such as **5-part reading strategy** and **Simultaneous oral Spelling**. Use separate Common Word Reading and Common Word Spelling booklets – (refer to marking guide at the front of the booklet). Once the learner has completed the 1st 100, move on to 2nd and then 3rd. Booklets progress up to 1000.

- **New Sound –** Teach 1 new sound each week. Practice **saying** sound; **reading words** using **assisted** and/or **independent blending**; **spelling** words using **tallying** and/or **finger spelling**, **finger writing, grapheme marking**. Refer to the **order of teaching phonics** document for the correct order. Once new sound is taught and practiced in follow-up sessions, move the sound into the revision section to support retention.

- **Dictation –** Include 'new sound' and common words taught so far. Build in opportunities for the learner to add to or extend the sentence. Develop proof reading and editing skills when checking the sentence for errors.

- **Reading in context –** select texts appropriate to the learner's reading ability. Use the 3 Read Strategy to develop decoding, reading fluency, reading with expression and comprehension using effective questioning strategies.

- **Games –** always finish with a game**.** Games are a great way of engaging and motivating learners, whilst providing opportunities for overlearning.

- **Other:** additional phonological awareness and oral sequencing activities can be included here**.**

Each learning activity feeds into the next. For example, handwriting at the beginning gives the learner practice of cursive writing before using it for Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS). Revision at the beginning helps the learner retrieve any prior learning from previous lessons, therefore helping with retention of skills taught and preparing the learner to use this knowledge during different elements of the lesson. The common words and new sounds (phonics) are practiced in isolation but then revisited within reading in context and dictation. Learners are continually being asked to revisit and revise previous learning.

Where possible the DLA programme recommends following this lesson order, however it is important to tailor each lesson to the needs of your individual. Some learners may not need every element, and others may be more engaged if they are able to choose the order of their lesson.

See the weekly lesson plan example below in Figure 15. This is available on page 33 in the PLA Printable Resource. This can be used as a reference and guide when creating your own individual lesson plan.

Any elements that will change as the learner progresses are highlighted green and any resources referred to are highlighted blue.

DLA Weekly Lesson Plan

Pupil Name: **Pupil X** **Lesson number:**

	* **Resources** ***Lesson elements that will change as learner progresses**	**Date:**	**Follow-up 1 Date:**	**Follow-up 2 Date:**	**Follow-up 3 Date:**
		Comments:	**Comments:**	**Comments:**	**Comments:**
Handwriting	Using cursive handwriting progression – see handwriting booklet Teach set of letters: c o d a g q s Teacher model cursive letter formation in air, using ipad / white board. Pupil practice on ipad or white board and work on corresponding page/pages in handwriting booklet. Practice pattern > letter > letter in a CVC word.				
Revision	1. Alphabet song – use alphabet rainbow visual 2. Practice vowel sequence (sounds) with vowel song and vowel ruler 3. Months of the year – song or sequence flashcards 4. Revision of sounds taught so far using flashcards or time targets:				
Common Words Reading **Spelling**	**Reading**: 2nd 100 common words 1st 25. Use CW reading booklet. Practice reading words marked with . / or **S** **Spelling**: Using 1st 100 CW spelling booklet. Practice unknown words with SOS spelling. This weeks' words: said they was				
New Sound	Say new sound: sh teacher says and learner repeat sound – back and forth. Find sound on the sound chart. *See introducing new sound help sheet Read 8- 10 words > assisted blending or independent blending > flashcards containing sound Spell 3-5 words from flashcards using tally cubes or finger spelling/ finger writing. If required display sound flashcard for visual support during spelling. Grapheme mark words. Read Time Target - sh				
Reading	**Book Title:** (easy text level) **Pages read:** *Use Three Read Strategy* (1=decoding, 2=comprehension, 3=fluency/expression) Discuss vocabulary meaning to support comprehension.				
Dictation	Use phonic words from new sound lesson and common words in a sentence. 1 different sentence per session. e.g. The fish shop is shut. They were at the fish shop. I wish I could swim.				
Game	Finish with a game to reinforce learning of phonic patters or common words taught so far.				
Other	Count syllables in words: 3+ syllable words Read non-words to build confidence in reading unknown words Teach to spell surname and address				

Figure 15: Example lesson plan for Pupil X

Personalising the Learning Experience

A well-structured individual lesson plan should balance **core learning objectives** with **personalised elements** that support engagement.

When planning an individual programme, it is essential to **consider the learner's interests**, strengths, and needs. Personalisation ensures that the lesson is **meaningful** and **engaging**, thus **increasing motivation** and **participation**.

Key strategies for personalising learning:

Personalised learning is most effective when it recognises and responds to the diverse needs of all learners, including those who are neurodivergent. The following strategies support a flexible, responsive learning environment that promotes autonomy, engagement, and inclusion:

Sensory/environmental adaptations

Consider any adaptations that can be made to the learning environment, such as lighting, quiet room, seating position, wobble cushion, fidgets, etc.

Promote Learner Autonomy and Engagement

Encourage learners to take ownership of their learning by offering choices and involving them in structuring their lesson. This builds motivation, independence, and a sense of control over the learning experience. Allowing learners to decide the order of tasks or choose from a menu of activities helps personalise learning while maintaining a clear, predictable and supportive structure.

Use prompts such as:

- "Which activity would you like to start with?"
- "Would you prefer to begin with a task you enjoy or one you'd like to get out of the way?"

Regular reflection questions after activities will promote metacognition, whilst acting on learner feedback to adapt future lessons helps to build a positive learning environment and improved learner engagement:

Gather feedback using prompts such as:

- How was that?
- Easy or hard?
- Fun or boring?
- Helpful or not?"

Keeping a visual record of strategies, the learner finds helpful, will further support independence and autonomy.

Use a Visual Timetable

Provide a clear overview of the lesson using symbols or written prompts. A visual timetable helps learners anticipate what's coming next, reduces anxiety, and supports smooth transitions between tasks. This can also be created with the learner at the start of the lesson if they are deciding the order of some of their tasks.

Incorporate Preferred Activities

Where possible, include topics, materials, or texts that reflect the learner's interests. This can increase motivation and make learning more enjoyable and relevant.

A game at the end of the lesson is often motivating for learners. Ensure that time is made for this, to keep motivation going and engagement levels high. Some learners may benefit from a game earlier on in the lesson too.

Build in Movement Breaks

For some learners—particularly those with literacy difficulties or attention needs—planned movement breaks can support focus, self-regulation, and overall engagement.

- Offer a menu of movement break options (e.g. stretching, jumping, short walks).
- Involve learners in creating their own movement break cards to promote independence and body awareness.
- Use movement during tasks e.g. hop while saying the alphabet
- Consider using movement breaks at natural transition points or before cognitively demanding tasks to reset attention.

Review of the lesson

The lesson review is an opportunity to gather learner views and encourage ongoing engagement. By involving the learner in discussion of next steps you can develop greater autonomy and motivation.

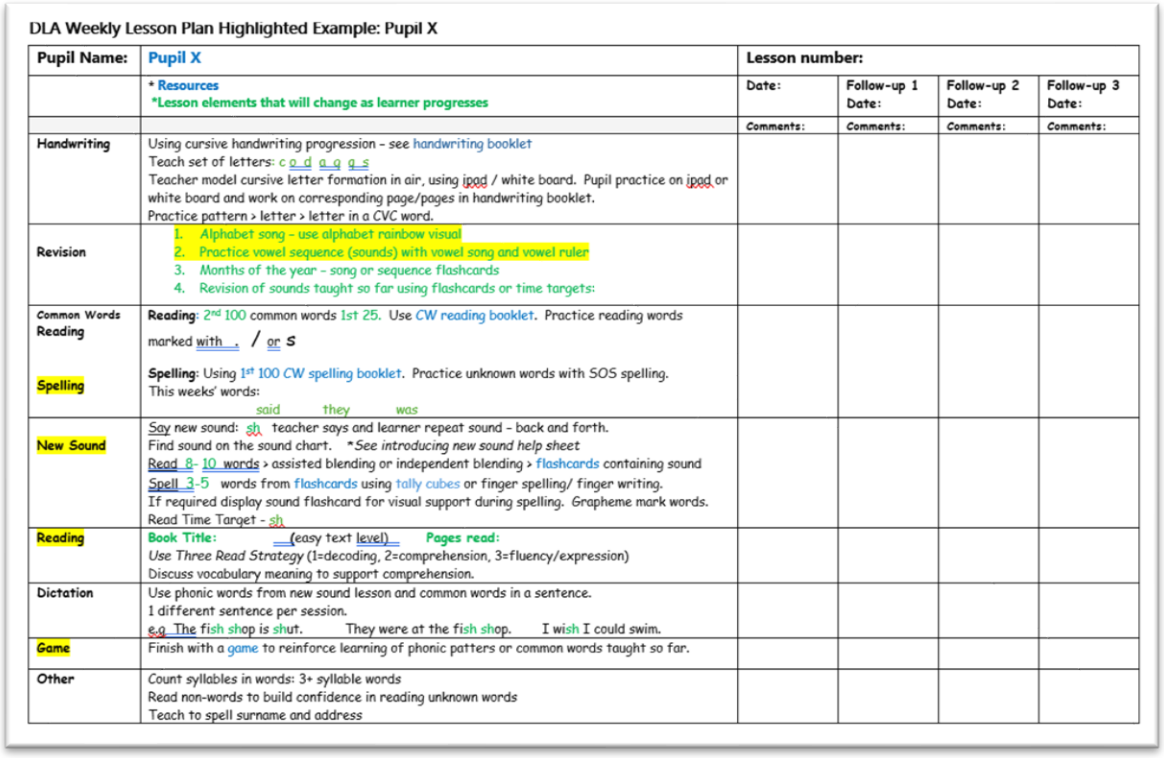
- Take time to establish and discuss next steps in learning.
- Encourage pupils to reflect on and talk about all aspects of their learning experience e.g. What was good about today's lesson? What did you enjoy? What could we do some more work on?

Include both self-evaluation and lesson evaluation questions.

Lesson Plan Adaptations

Some learners, including those who are neurodivergent, may benefit from shorter or more chunked lessons to support focus, processing, and self-regulation. In such cases, it's important to prioritise the most essential elements of the lesson. The weekly lesson plan example for pupil X below in figure 16 highlights key components we recommend including in every session. This can be used as a reference and guide when creating your own individual lesson plan. The highlighted yellow activities should be prioritised.

Other elements, while still valuable, can be practised less frequently—such as on alternating days or weekly—to avoid cognitive overload and maintain a manageable, supportive structure.



DLA Weekly Lesson Plan Highlighted Example: Pupil X

Pupil Name:	Pupil X	Lesson number:			
	* Resources *Lesson elements that will change as learner progresses	Date:	Follow-up 1 Date:	Follow-up 2 Date:	Follow-up 3 Date:
		Comments:	Comments:	Comments:	Comments:
Handwriting	Using cursive handwriting progression – see handwriting booklet Teach set of letters: c o d a g q s Teacher model cursive letter formation in air, using ipad / white board. Pupil practice on ipad or white board and work on corresponding page/pages in handwriting booklet. Practice pattern > letter > letter in a CVC word.				
Revision	1. Alphabet song – use alphabet rainbow visual 2. Practice vowel sequence (sounds) with vowel song and vowel ruler 3. Months of the year – song or sequence flashcards 4. Revision of sounds taught so far using flashcards or time targets:				
Common Words Reading Spelling	Reading: 2nd 100 common words 1st 25. Use CW reading booklet. Practice reading words marked with . / or S Spelling: Using 1st 100 CW spelling booklet. Practice unknown words with SOS spelling. This weeks' words: said they was				
New Sound	Say new sound: sh teacher says and learner repeat sound – back and forth. Find sound on the sound chart. *See introducing new sound help sheet Read 8- 10 words > assisted blending or independent blending > flashcards containing sound Spell 3-5 words from flashcards using tally cubes or finger spelling/ finger writing. If required display sound flashcard for visual support during spelling. Grapheme mark words. Read Time Target - sh				
Reading	Book Title: (easy text level) Pages read: Use Three Read Strategy (1=decoding, 2=comprehension, 3=fluency/expression) Discuss vocabulary meaning to support comprehension.				
Dictation	Use phonic words from new sound lesson and common words in a sentence. 1 different sentence per session. e.g. The fish shop is shut. They were at the fish shop. I wish I could swim.				
Game	Finish with a game to reinforce learning of phonic patters or common words taught so far.				
Other	Count syllables in words: 3+ syllable words Read non-words to build confidence in reading unknown words Teach to spell surname and address				

Figure 16 Example lesson plan for Pupil X.

4.4 Support Staff Training

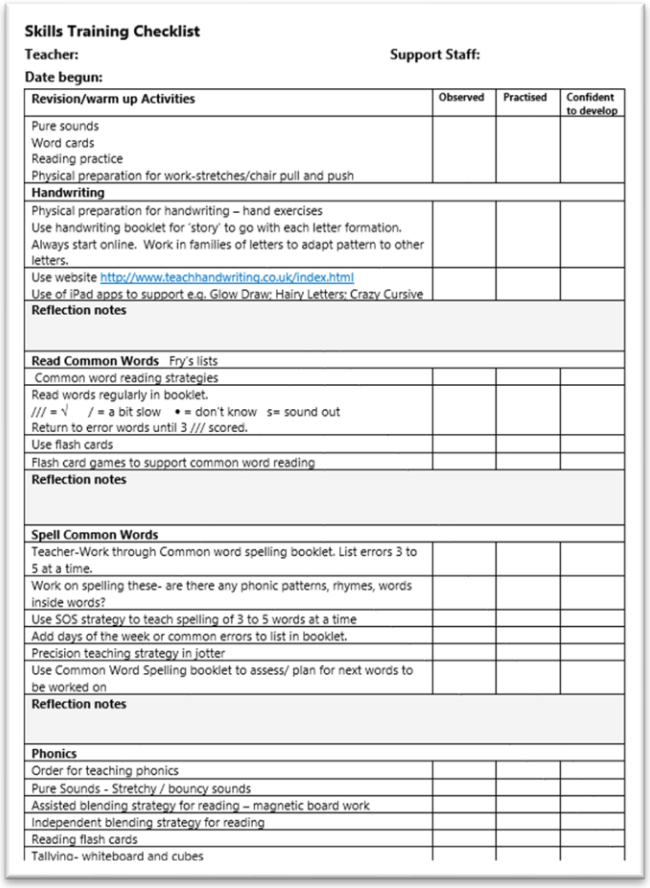
It is essential that support staff receive comprehensive training in delivering this programme. Support staff should observe the teacher's lesson each week, focusing on the resources and strategies being used, before undertaking follow-up skills practice using the weekly lesson plan.

During the lesson, support staff should be encouraged to ask questions based on what they observe and, on their work with the learner from the previous week. As the sessions progress, support staff should gradually take on more of the programme elements, with the teacher observing and offering guidance. This process helps support staff build their knowledge, skills, and confidence over time.

The **Skills Training Checklist** front page is shown below. It is a useful tool in this process. The teacher and support staff member can review each section, noting when areas have been observed; practised in the context of the teacher's lesson; and when the PSA feels confident to independently deliver these elements during skills practice follow-up sessions.

Skills Training Checklist

Figure 17 highlights the key skills required to teach key aspects of the lesson plan. It can be used by teachers and support staff to keep track of training and skill development. This is available on pages 35 and 37 of the DLA Printable Resources and Templates .



Skills Training Checklist

Teacher: **Support Staff:**

Date begun:

Revision/warm up Activities	**Observed**	**Practised**	**Confident to develop**
Pure sounds Word cards Reading practice Physical preparation for work-stretches/chair pull and push			
Handwriting			
Physical preparation for handwriting – hand exercises Use handwriting booklet for 'story' to go with each letter formation. Always start online. Work in families of letters to adapt pattern to other letters.			
Use website http://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/index.html Use of iPad apps to support e.g. Glow Draw: Hairy Letters: Crazy Cursive			
Reflection notes			
Read Common Words Fry's lists			
Common word reading strategies			
Read words regularly in booklet. /// = √ / = a bit slow • = don't know s= sound out Return to error words until 3 /// scored.			
Use flash cards			
Flash card games to support common word reading			
Reflection notes			
Spell Common Words			
Teacher-Work through Common word spelling booklet. List errors 3 to 5 at a time.			
Work on spelling these- are there any phonic patterns, rhymes, words inside words?			
Use SOS strategy to teach spelling of 3 to 5 words at a time			
Add days of the week or common errors to list in booklet.			
Precision teaching strategy in jotter			
Use Common Word Spelling booklet to assess/ plan for next words to be worked on			
Reflection notes			
Phonics			
Order for teaching phonics			
Pure Sounds - Stretchy / bouncy sounds			
Assisted blending strategy for reading – magnetic board work			
Independent blending strategy for reading			
Reading flash cards			
Tallying- whiteboard and cubes			

Figure 17: Skills Training Checklist

When support staff are confident and skilled in delivering skills practice follow-up sessions, it is important that they are still able to observe the teacher undertaking work with the learner on occasion. This will give them the opportunity to ask questions and enable them to continually develop and hone their practise.

In planning and delivering lessons, it's possible that not all elements of the lesson will be fully modelled. However, the support staff member may work with other learners who would benefit from their confident use of these strategies, so further training may be necessary.

Curriculum for Excellence – Curriculum Improvement Cycle. (CIC)

A wide-ranging review and refresh of Scotland's national curriculum which is taking place over a ten-year cycle. The CIC review does not intend to replace the Curriculum for Excellence but to make sure it remains fit for purpose by being "relevant, forward-looking and improves learner outcomes" through the new lens of the 'Know Do and Understand' (KDU) curriculum model. In time the CfE Benchmarks will be replaced in the coming years. However, they are still relevant.

The Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) | About Curriculum for Excellence | Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland

CIC Explainer 2 draft updated

Edinburgh City Council Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Planning Tool

A planning document has been created to align DLA individual literacy programmes within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Planning Tool. This ensures that interventions are purposeful, structured, and fully linked to national curriculum experiences and outcomes. The CfE Planning Tool is available on pages 38 – 51 in the printable DLA Printable Resources and Templates.

The CfE defines literacy as:

"The set of skills which allow an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful."

This definition underpins the planning document, ensuring that the assessment and support process sits firmly within the broader CfE literacy framework.
The document includes:

- A range of **'I can…' statements** to clarify learning outcomes and support learner understanding during lessons
- Opportunities to ensure **progression across each section** of the individual lesson plan
- A clear **match between planned literacy instruction and CfE Experiences and Outcomes**
- A **highlightable format** to record areas taught and track progress

This tool is designed for use by teachers, to guide the planning and delivery of individual literacy support.

By using this planning tool, practitioners can ensure that targeted literacy programmes are not only tailored to the learner's needs but also reflect the breadth and depth of Curriculum for Excellence.

Both this **CFE document** and the **Support Staff Training Checklist** serve as useful references for classroom teachers, support staff, and parents in developing and guiding individual programmes and lesson plans.

4.5 Reflection

Consider how the different elements of Section 4 fit together to create a coherent literacy support programme.

- DLA report
- Short-term plan
- Weekly lesson plan
- CfE tool

Explanation:

Each element builds on the last. The **DLA report** provides a clear summary of strengths and needs. The **short-term plan** translates these findings into targeted teaching steps. The **weekly lesson plan** structures delivery and ensures overlearning. The **CfE tool** ensures everything links back to wider curriculum outcomes. When used together, they provide a cycle of assess → plan → teach → review that keeps support systematic and purposeful.

Reflective Activity 3

In your Reflective Log consider if this could support the process in your own setting or local authority process.

5. Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources

Back to content page

Section Contents

5.1 Pedagogy and Planning for Effective Literacy Support
5.2 Handwriting
5.3 Revision
5.4 Common Word: Reading
5.5 Common Word: Spelling
5.6 New Sound Phonic Strategies
5.7 Dictation
5.8 Reading in context
5.9 Games for Overlearning
5.10 Phonological Awareness
5.11 Classroom Practice
5.12 Reflection

This section of the PLA provides practical, evidence-informed strategies for supporting learners with literacy difficulties or dyslexia. It builds on the earlier sections by offering a comprehensive set of tools and teaching approaches that align with the principles of explicit, systematic, and multisensory literacy instruction.

You will explore how to plan and deliver individual literacy lessons that target specific skills in reading, writing, and spelling while reinforcing learning through overlearning, structured revision, and connected tasks.

Each strategy is designed to be used flexibly in response to a learner's assessment profile and includes suggestions for adapting materials, increasing engagement, and building confidence through success. These approaches can be applied in both 1:1 and small group settings and are particularly suited to learners who require targeted support. Many of these strategies and resources can also be used in the classroom, ensuring a link between this support and the learner's classroom experience.

This section includes:

- Core teaching principles to guide literacy support
- Strategies to support each element of the weekly lesson plan
- Practical resources to develop decoding, spelling, writing, and comprehension skills

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand the pedagogical principles that underpin effective literacy intervention for learners with dyslexia or literacy difficulties
- Identify how to match teaching strategies to an individual learner's needs based on assessment information
- Implement a range of multisensory strategies to support the development of core literacy skills
- Use strategies and resources that promote overlearning, fluency, and independence in reading and spelling
- Plan and deliver targeted literacy support using the weekly lesson plan structure

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

Download the '**DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources'**.

5.1 Pedagogy and Planning for Effective Literacy Support

Supporting learners with literacy difficulties or dyslexia requires a highly structured, evidence-informed approach, tailored to the individual's literacy strengths and areas of need. While the strategies shared in this section can benefit all learners, they are especially effective for those with persistent literacy difficulties/dyslexia.

This section brings together pedagogical strategies for effective literacy intervention, along with an overview of how to apply these principles in lesson planning. The goal is

to help practitioners make informed, practical decisions that lead to meaningful progress.
You will explore how to plan and deliver targeted literacy lessons that develop reading, writing, and spelling skills through explicit, cumulative, and multisensory instruction. The Weekly Lesson Plan structure, introduced here, serves as the core format for literacy intervention in both 1:1 and small group settings.

Pedagogical Approaches

Current guidance, including from the national Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit website highlights that learners with dyslexia benefit from a structured and consistent approach to literacy instruction. Effective support typically includes explicit teaching, systematic progression, and the use of multisensory strategies that reinforce learning through repetition and active engagement.
These principles form the foundation of targeted literacy interventions and can help ensure learners build skills gradually and securely over time.

1:1 Focused Support

Focused intervention enables learners to work at their own pace and receive immediate feedback. It allows for close observation, scaffolding, and responsive teaching tailored to specific needs. Importantly, this support is informed by assessment data, such as the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA), to identify specific gaps in learning and pinpoint where a learner may require additional practice.

By analysing assessment information, practitioners can ensure that targeted sessions address both areas of need and build on existing strengths. This enables teaching to be both precise and impactful, helping learners make meaningful progress. The flexibility of 1:1 work also allows for timely adjustments to planning based on learner response, engagement, and observed needs.

Systematic Lesson Progression

A systematic literacy programme integrates phonics, spelling, reading, and writing in a structured and sequential way. This ensures that key literacy skills are taught not in isolation, but in a connected and mutually reinforcing manner. For learners (particularly

those with dyslexia) this approach supports the development of both decoding and encoding skills by making clear the relationships between sounds, word structures, and meaning.
For example, a newly introduced phonic pattern might be first taught through spelling, then reinforced in reading texts, dictation sentences, and supported through handwriting activities that embed spelling rules through motor memory. This kind of cumulative and consistent exposure helps learners transfer knowledge across different literacy tasks, deepening their understanding and skill over time.

Teaching in this structured way helps reduce cognitive overload, as learners are not shifting between unrelated tasks. Instead, each lesson builds on prior knowledge, creating a coherent and purposeful literacy experience.

To maximise the impact of this approach, frequent opportunities for consolidation and review are essential. This is where the principle of overlearning, repeated practice beyond initial mastery, plays a key role in securing long-term retention and confidence.

Overlearning
Overlearning refers to the deliberate and structured practice of literacy skills beyond the point of initial success to promote automaticity, fluency, and long-term retention. While a learner may appear to grasp a new spelling rule or phonic pattern after one or two lessons, true mastery requires repeated, meaningful exposure over time.
This is particularly crucial for learners with dyslexia or short-term memory difficulties, who often struggle to retain and retrieve information after limited exposure. Through overlearning, we help learners embed knowledge into long-term memory, allowing them to access and apply it more automatically in independent tasks.

Effective overlearning strategies include:

- Daily revision of previously taught phonic sounds and common words
- Timed fluency challenges using reading booklets or flashcards
- Repetition through multisensory methods (e.g. finger spelling, table writing, dictation)
- Games and activities that reinforce key learning in a fun and engaging way

Overlearning is not just repetition for its own sake. It gives learners the chance to **feel success**, build confidence, and experience the satisfaction of recalling and applying what they've learned, which is highly motivating and contributes to overall literacy progress.

Multisensory Teaching Approaches

Multisensory teaching is a cornerstone of effective literacy intervention, particularly for learners with dyslexia or literacy difficulties. This approach engages multiple senses simultaneously, typically visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile, to strengthen memory, reinforce learning, and support skill transfer to independent reading and writing tasks. Rather than relying on listening or reading alone, learners are supported to see, say, hear, write (do), and move as they engage with new literacy content. By involving multiple sensory channels at once, learners form stronger mental associations with letters, sounds, and words, leading to improved retention and recall.

Multisensory methods are embedded throughout all areas of this module, including phonics, common word reading and spelling, handwriting, dictation, and reading in context. This ensures instruction is accessible, engaging, and impactful for all learners.

Chunked Tasks

Breaking tasks into manageable chunks reduces cognitive load, increases concentration and focus, and improves understanding and retention; this is particularly true for learners who experience literacy difficulties or dyslexia. Chunking allows information to be presented in smaller, more digestible steps, making it easier for learners to process, rehearse, and remember.

This approach is woven throughout the lesson structure. For example, in the Weekly Lesson Plan, each component (e.g. handwriting, revision, new phonics, reading, dictation) is delivered in short, focused segments. Within these segments, further chunking is used, such as working on 3–5 common words at a time, introducing one phonic sound per week, or guiding learners through each stage of a dictation task step by step.

Chunking is particularly effective when combined with repetition and multisensory strategies. It supports learners who may become overwhelmed by longer tasks or who struggle with attention, working memory, or task initiation. By clearly structuring lessons in small, purposeful steps, we reduce anxiety, build confidence, and create regular opportunities for success.

Use of Visuals

Visual supports play a key role in literacy intervention, particularly for learners with dyslexia, short-term memory difficulties, or attention challenges. Tools such as colour-coded sound charts, alphabet strips, sound picture cards, and flashcards provide concrete reference points that help learners make sense of abstract concepts like phoneme-grapheme correspondence, spelling patterns, or tricky parts of common words.

Visuals reduce the memory demands placed on the learner and support recall during reading and writing tasks. For example, when introducing new phonemes or common words, associated images and colour patterns help anchor the information, while sound charts provide an accessible reference throughout the lesson.

Whether embedded in handwriting guides, revision games, or dictation modelling, these tools support organisation, retrieval, and engagement, allowing learners to access and apply skills more confidently.

When used consistently across lessons, visuals enhance clarity, promote independence, and help learners internalise key literacy concepts through repetition and visual association.

When combined, these approaches create a powerful, learner-centred model of literacy intervention. Focused 1:1 support informed by assessment allows teaching to be precise and responsive. A systematic, progressive and joined up lesson structure ensures that skills are taught in a meaningful sequence. While overlearning, chunking, multisensory teaching, and the use of visuals provide the scaffolding needed for learners to retain and apply their learning. Together, these strategies build confidence, independence, and long-term literacy success for learners who need it most.

Using Pedagogy to Inform Lesson Planning

Section 3 outlined how to use the **Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA)** to identify areas of need in literacy. **Section 4** introduced how to use that information to produce:

- DLA Report
- DLA Short-term Plan and

- DLA Weekly Lesson Plan

The DLA Weekly Lesson Plan is designed to deliver a connected and cumulative approach to developing literacy, where reading, writing, spelling, listening, and speaking are taught in a structured sequence that allows each skill to reinforce the others.
This approach ensures that learning is not only explicit and systematic, but also repeated, meaningful, and multisensory. Each lesson plan is built around chunked tasks, opportunities for overlearning, and a format that encourages regular revision and reinforcement, promoting confidence and long-term retention.

Each lesson is designed to include:

- Handwriting
- Revision
- Common Word Reading and Spelling
- Teaching New Phonic Sounds
- Dictation
- Reading in Context
- Games and Overlearning Activities

In the sections that follow, you will explore practical strategies for delivering each part of the DLA Weekly Lesson Plan in a way that is responsive to assessment, grounded in sound pedagogy, and tailored to the learner.

5.2 Handwriting

Handwriting activities using whiteboards and handwriting booklets develop fine motor control, letter formation, and writing fluency, but also serve a deeper literacy purpose. For example, cursive handwriting supports muscle memory, helping learners internalise spelling patterns as part of the physical act of writing words.

When working 1:1 with learners, we use a cursive handwriting approach. This style not only improves fluency and legibility, but also promotes smoother transitions between letters, reducing hesitation and cognitive load during writing tasks.

Download the PDF Cursive handwriting booklet.
This resource can be used by learners to practise cursive letter formation in a consistent and structured way. You may choose to integrate this booklet into daily routines, individual support sessions, or classroom handwriting practice.

Cursive handwriting:

- Supports the development of a flowing style that improves speed of writing.
- Helps layout and reduces spacing difficulties between words, as each word is produced as a whole and has an obvious beginning and end.
- Develops left- right progression, for both letters and words.
- Eliminates confusions about where to start writing the different letters. There are only 5 starting patterns, and the starting point is always on the line.
- Supports correct placing and sizing of letters.
- Avoids confusion between the 'ball and stick' letters: b d p q
- Avoids directional difficulties. The loops in g j and y lead the writer to the next letter.
- Eliminate the capital letters in the middle of a words. There is a clear distinction between capital letters and lower-case letters.
- Supports spelling development as:
- it encourages the natural flow of sounds into shape through the movement of the hand.
- children's hands can develop a physical memory for spelling patterns and words.
- it establishes joins early on so that children are quickly writing full letter strings e.g. ing in king; ch in which; ea in beach

Warm-Up Exercises

We recommend starting handwriting sessions with simple fine motor warm-ups to prepare the hands. For example:

- Choose a small ball and squeeze it between thumb and fingers.
- Keep fingers and thumb straight.
- Do 5 slow squeezes, then 5 fast ones.

Other warm-up options include threading, finger aerobics, and wrist circles, any activity that gets fingers active and ready to write.

Handwriting Teaching Sequence

To build confidence and fluency, introduce letters through a consistent, multisensory approach:

1. Use large arm movements in the air to practise the letter shape.
2. Write big on a whiteboard – Use a large surface to reinforce motor planning.
3. Write smaller on the whiteboard or iPad – Layer letters over different colours to highlight similar movement patterns.
4. Write on lined whiteboard – Begin to focus on size and placement.
5. If needed, use sandpaper or tactile surfaces – For added sensory input, trace the letter to build muscle memory.
6. Write in handwriting booklet – Practice within structured spaces.
7. Use the letter in context – Write it within a CVC word (e.g., *cat*, *dig*) and begin practising joins.
8. Reinforce with games and multisensory practice – For example, writing in sand, forming letters with dough, or tracing with fingers on textured cards.

We use a Cursive handwriting booklet that introduces letters in clusters based on similar movement patterns. For example, the *curly 'c' group* includes letters such as *a, d, o, g, q* and s that have the same starting point and movement direction. This pattern-based progression supports motor memory and consistency, helping learners build confidence through repetition of familiar movements. For each letter, a visual guide should be provided to support correct starting points, directional flow, and joins. These visuals are used both for modelling and as a reference during independent practice.

Initially, there may be some difficulty linking the letter symbol the learners sees in the environment around them and has to write. Practice and regular exposure to the print in class and supporting adults modelling cursive script will help the learner overcome this.

The main advantage is that the uncertainty as to where to start and 'Do I join this or not?' will be gone.

5.3 Revision

This section is a key part of the literacy intervention programme, providing structured and consistent opportunities to revisit prior learning in phonics, spelling, and reading. This serves not only to check retention but to strengthen memory, build automaticity, and promote confidence through success.

Revision is particularly important for learners with memory difficulties, who may struggle to retain or retrieve information after a single exposure. By deliberately planning for overlearning, that is, practising skills beyond the point of initial success, learners are more likely to retain information over time and transfer it to new tasks and contexts. During this section of the lesson, learners may revisit previously taught:

- Phonics patterns
- Spelling rules/ patterns
- Common words
- Reading texts or sentences

During revision, learners may also strengthen skills identified as areas of need through the DLA in Section 3, such as sequencing (e.g., alphabet, vowels, days of the week, months of the year) and syllabification. These skills can be effectively targeted through quick, focused revision activities, making this part of the lesson valuable for reinforcing both phonics and broader literacy skills.

- Practical Approaches to Revision

Flashcards/ sound chart review

Regular review using flashcards or a sound chart is an important part of the learning process. It helps develop instant recall of previously taught sounds, common words, and tricky words. This quick, repeated exposure supports overlearning, which is essential for

building fluency and confidence. Flashcard and sound chart-based revision is also a flexible strategy that can be used at the start of a session or as a short, focused warm-up.

The Edinburgh Sound Chart

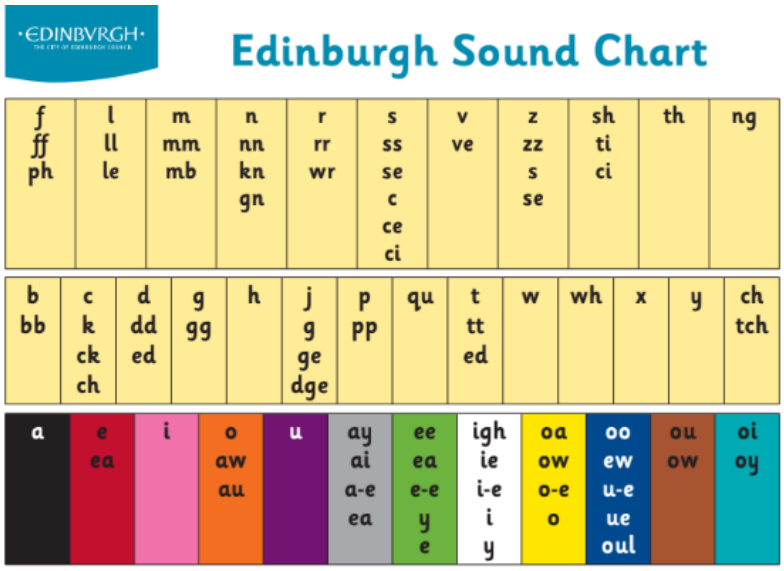


Figure 18: The Edinburgh Sound Chart

The Edinburgh Sound Chart PDF file

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

This resource can be used to

- Practise automatic sound recognition and to learn alternative spellings of the same sound, supporting phonics knowledge and spelling flexibility.
- Time targets
- To develop fluency and rapid recall of previously taught phonic patterns, learners practise reading a small set of target words in short, timed sessions.

Edinburgh Sound Chart

https://youtu.be/YnVmLBzBXu0

Select the link above to watch a short film modelling how the Edinburgh Sound Chart can be used to support automatic sound recognition.

Time Targets

Download the Time Targets Folder. This includes individual time tracker sheets for sounds, aligned with the phonic progression outlined in Section 4. These can be used to monitor and motivate improvements in speed and accuracy of sound recall.

1. Select the phonic pattern the learner is currently working on. Begin by allowing the learner time to read and become familiar with the words before introducing the timed element.

2. Then, time how long it takes the learner to read the set of words.

3. Repeat this over 3–4 consecutive sessions, tracking their progress. The goal is to improve speed and accuracy, reinforcing automatic recognition and providing clear, motivating feedback on mastery**.**

Reading Practice Booklets for Reading in Context

To develop the ability to read phonic patterns and words within context, practitioners can use the Reading Practice Booklets as a quick and structured way to provide learners with sentence-level reading practice.

Download - Reading Practice Booklets

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

This downloadable file includes individual Reading Practice Booklets for sounds, aligned with the phonic progression outlined in Section 4. These booklets provide targeted opportunities to build fluency with previously taught phonic patterns in context, supporting confident and accurate reading at sentence level.

Select the phonic pattern the learner is currently working on. Learners then practise reading sentences that contain the target phonic pattern, helping to reinforce decoding skills in meaningful, contextualised language. This not only supports word recognition but also develops key skills necessary for fluency, comprehension, and reading confidence.

The number of sentences read should be adapted to the learner's level. This might be one sentence per day, half, the full set, or as many as they can read within one minute.

Sequences

Section 3 of the DLA highlights a learner may be identified as experiencing difficulties with common sequences such as days of the week, months of the year, the alphabet, and vowels. Recognising that some children learn especially well through musical and rhythmic approaches, these videos provide engaging support to help improve retention of these sequences.

Watch the 'Day of the Week Song' short film

https://youtube.com/shorts/9PNgGX0ptMw?feature=share

This recording provides an example of how the sequence of the days of the week can been taught through song.

Watch the 'Months of the year song' short film

https://youtube.com/shorts/I3ztxANkZbw?feature=share

This recording provides an example of how the sequence of the months of the year can been taught through song.

Watch the 'Alphabet song' short film

https://youtube.com/shorts/s8UQh6iLqKI

This recording provides an example of how the sequence of the alphabet can been taught through song.

Watch the 'Vowel' song short film

https://youtube.com/shorts/rgEDpHKEV-0?feature=share

This recording provides an example of how the sequence of the days of the week can been taught through song.

Syllabification

Developing syllabification skills is essential for helping learners decode words for reading and segment them for spelling, especially with longer words. Using games is an effective and engaging way to build this important skill, making learning fun while improving literacy outcomes.

Syllable count game – Pages 2- 6 of the **DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources**

This downloadable game offers a practical example of how to develop syllabification skills through play.

Phonological Awareness Resource Pack

Shared in Section 3, this resource (referred to in later section 5.10) contains many suggestions that can also be used or adapted to support the development of syllabification skills.

Additional Revision Ideas

- **Spelling Challenges** – Give a timed task such as: "Write as many words as you can with the 'ai' sound in 30 seconds." This encourages rapid recall of phoneme–grapheme correspondences and supports spelling fluency.

- **Letter Reversals** – Target commonly confused letters with quick-fire activities like: "How many 'b' or 'd' letters can you correctly write or read in 10 seconds?" This helps reinforce correct letter formation and orientation through repeated, focused practice.

Revision isn't simply repetition for its own sake. It allows reinforcement of accuracy and fluency and provides valuable insight into what has or hasn't been retained. It also offers a confidence boost when learners realise they can remember and apply previously taught skills. However, not all revision activities should be done at once; activities must be selected and prioritised based on the short-term plan outlined in Section 4, with a focus on the learner's greatest area of need. This ensures revision remains purposeful, targeted, and effective.

5.4 Common Word: Reading

After completing the DLA in Section 3, you will have identified the percentage of common words the learner can read. You can now focus on the words they cannot yet read, using the strategies outlined in this section.

Instructions: Teaching Individual Common Words
It is recommended to work on **3 to 5** common words at a time, depending on the learner's stage and level of development. These may be new words the learner is encountering for the first time, or words they have previously found difficult and need further support with. Target words should be presented on **individual flashcards**, with **one word introduced at a time** to support focused teaching.

Each word is explicitly taught using the following steps:

1. **Say and point** to the word as it is introduced (e.g. "said")
2. **Identify the 'tricky' part** of the word that doesn't follow expected phonic patterns (e.g. in "said", the letters "ai" make an /e/ sound)
3. **Use letter names** to spell the word aloud (e.g. "S-A-I-D – said")
4. **Use the word in a spoken sentence** to provide context and reinforce meaning (e.g. "The teacher said, 'Well done.'")
5. **Draw attention to the word** in reading or oral tasks to reinforce recognition (e.g. "Can you find our new word 'said' in the story?")

After its introduction, the word is then revisited regularly through follow-up activities such as dictation, sentence building, and reading in context, helping ensure the word is encountered frequently and in meaningful contexts.

Common Word Reading Booklets

Common Word Reading Booklets are designed to support learners in developing **automatic recall** of these high-frequency common words through **daily, targeted practice**.

Instructions

- The supporting adult works with the pupil **daily**, using the booklet as part of a short, focused session.
- The pupil is asked to **read a selection of words** from the booklet each day (stop after the learner makes 3 errors).
- The adult **marks the responses** using the following system:
    - /// = **Correct and automatic**
    - / = **Correct but slow** (not yet automatic)
    - • = **Word not recognised**
    - S = **Word was sounded out** (not read automatically)
    - 5 = **5-Part Strategy used** (e.g. say, spell, cover, write, check) - see below for further details on how to use this strategy

Review and Progression

- The **next day**, review the previously marked words and **introduce more** words on the same or next page.
- If a word is marked ///, it **does not need to be revisited**.
- If a word is marked /, **retest the following day** and continue marking / until the pupil reads the word automatically for **3 consecutive days** (///).
- For words marked S or dot (•), **retest daily**. Mark the same again if incorrect. If correct, mark / and follow the same process until the word is read automatically over 3 days.

Download the Common Word Reading Booklets

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

This resource is a booklet containing the first 1000 common words that can be downloaded and used to support automatic recall of common words.

Additional Support for Stubborn Words

If a pupil **does not retain** a word over time despite repeated practice, consider using:

- **5-part strategy**
- **Precision Teaching: Reading Common Words** – highly structured, short bursts of repeated practice with feedback

5- Part Strategy

The 5-Part Strategy is a **multisensory approach** to support automatic recall of common words that learners have previously found difficult.

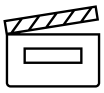
5- Part Strategy Instructions

The **teacher models steps 1–4** with the learner repeating, then the learner completes **step 5 independently**. Each step builds on the last to strengthen memory and understanding:

1. **See & Say** – The learner sees the word on a flashcard (or whiteboard), says the word aloud, and underlines it with their finger.

2. **Spell Reading** – The learner says the word, spells it using letter names, then reads the word again.
3. **Arm Tapping** – The learner taps each letter working down their arm while spelling it aloud, then reads the word again while sweeping along their arm from shoulder to wrist.
4. **Air Writing** – The learner air-writes the word while saying each letter and then reads the word aloud.
5. **Table Writing** – Without being first modelled by the teacher, the learner traces the word on a table with their fingers, first while looking at the word, then from memory, saying the letters and the whole word aloud.

The **'5- Part Strategy Help sheet'** is available on pages 7 -10 of the **DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources**. This help sheet as a reference when using this strategy to support a learner to read common words using the 5-Part Strategy



Watch the 5-Part Strategy short film
https://youtube.com/shorts/QzZ0CvO06BM
This recording illustrates how to support a learner using the 5-Part Strategy.

This strategy may be adapted to include partner work (Turn To Your Partner -TTYP) and embedded in fun, multisensory tasks like **chalk writing, play dough, hopscotch, or song-based games** to enhance motivation and retention.
Words are also taught **in context** and revisited regularly through flashcards, **common word booklets**, and reading activities. If a word is read incorrectly, a correction routine helps reintroduce and reinforce it.

Precision Teaching: Reading Common Words

This approach is designed for learners who are making minimal progress with less intensive strategies. It provides a structured, daily method of overlearning to improve automatic retrieval of high-frequency common words.

Set-Up

Create a Word List

- Begin with **3 words the learner can already read** with confidence.
- Add one word they are not able to consistently correctly read, and **one challenging word** the learner regularly struggles with and requires additional support to master.

Page Layout

- Use a jotter or grid paper.
- Across the **top of the page,** write the **days of the week** (e.g. Mon–Fri).
- Down the **left-hand side**, list the first **5 target words**.

Instructions

- Incorporate use of **5- Part strategy** (see above) to introduce the new challenging word each week.

Read Each Word Twice Daily

- Once at the start and once at the end of a lesson (or at school and home).
- Learner reads each word aloud.

Mark Progress

- Use a **tick (✓)** for a correct response.
- Use a **dot (•)** for an incorrect or hesitant response.

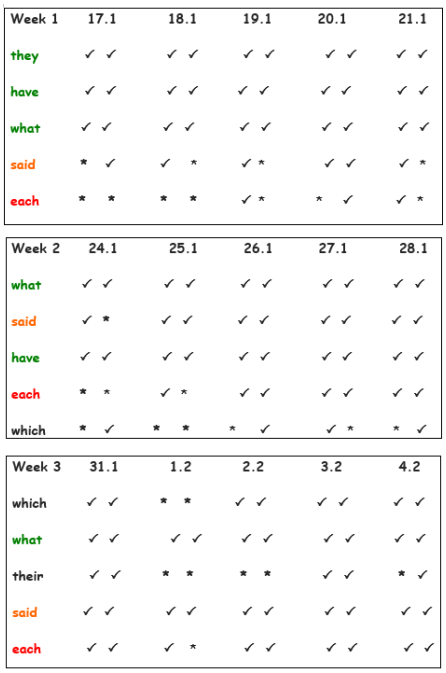
Update Word List Weekly

- If a word has been mastered (read correctly and confidently all week), remove it from the list.
- Replace it with the next challenging word.
- Mix up the order and write the updated list on a new page for the week ahead.

For example:

Word list order:

1. **they** - known
2. **have** - known
3. **what** - known
4. **said** - intermittent recognition
5. **each** – unknown
6. which – unknown
7. their – unknown
8. how – unknown
9. about – unknown
10. these – unknown



Week 1	17.1	18.1	19.1	20.1	21.1
they	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
have	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
what	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
said	* ✓	✓ *	✓ *	✓ ✓	✓ *
each	* *	* *	✓ *	* ✓	✓ *

Week 2	24.1	25.1	26.1	27.1	28.1
what	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
said	✓ *	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
have	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
each	* *	✓ *	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
which	* ✓	* *	* ✓	✓ *	* ✓

Week 3	31.1	1.2	2.2	3.2	4.2
which	✓ ✓	* *	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
what	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
their	✓ ✓	* *	* *	✓ ✓	* ✓
said	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
each	✓ ✓	✓ *	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓

Figure 19. Precision Teaching: Reading Common Words

Print the **Precision Teaching: Reading Common Words** from the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources on pages 11 and 12. These help sheets provides more information on how to use the Precision Teaching to support accurate and fluent reading of common words. Through structured, supportive practice, this

strategy encourages **repetition, consistency, and tracking**, helping learners build confidence and fluency with targeted common words.

5.5 Common Word: Spelling

Just as irregular common words must be recognised automatically for fluent reading, they also need to be consistently and accurately spelled to support confident writing. Common word spelling is reinforced through the use of structured, multisensory overlearning strategies.

To identify target words for spelling, you can use the full common word spelling assessment from the **DLA in Section 3**; review the learner's free writing for frequently misspelled words or systematically work through the **Common Word Spelling Booklet**. Working through this booklet during your lesson helps to track and monitor progress over time. Once identified, these essential high-frequency common words can be taught using the structured multisensory strategies outlined below to build accuracy, fluency, and independence in spelling

Key strategies and resources to support common word spelling include:

- **Common Word Spelling Booklet** – to track, revisit, and reinforce target words
- **Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS)** – combining saying, spelling, and writing aloud
- **'Nailed It' Method** (incorporating SOS) – structured repetition and recall
- **Mnemonics** – memory aids for tricky words
- **Precision Teaching: Spelling Common Words** – intensive overlearning for persistent difficulties

Common Word Spelling Booklet

Download –Common Word Spelling Booklet

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

This resource is a is a key planning and tracking tool for supporting adults to monitor learners' progress in spelling high-frequency common words. The booklet helps identify which words need reinforcement and provides an efficient way to track progress over time.

Instructions

1. Initial Assessment

- Use a whiteboard to assess spelling of words from the booklet. Say word. Say word in a sentence. Say word and ask learner to write.
- Mark each word in the booklet using the following code:
- /// = correct and automatic
- / = correct but slow or hesitant
- • = incorrect
- Stop the assessment once the learner has **spelled 3–5 words incorrectly**. (•).

2. Identify Target Words

- Select these first 3–5 incorrect words as the **focus words for the week**.
- Use Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) to work on these words (see strategy below)

3. Weekly Review

- The following week, **retest** the same words and mark them in the booklet:
- If spelled correctly mark as /
- If incorrect again, mark as • and include in the next week's target list

4. Ongoing Monitoring

- Continue retesting words weekly until they are marked / over t**hree consecutive weeks** (///), showing mastery and retention.
- Words marked only / should continue to be retested over 3 weeks to build automaticity and aid retention.

If words are not retained or continue to be marked • over time, despite use of SOS strategy introduce alternative strategies such as:

- **‘Nailed it’ Method Incorporating SOS**

- **Mnemonics**
- **Precision Teaching: Spelling Common Words**

Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS)

This is a multisensory strategy where the learner sees, says, hears, and writes each word while spelling aloud. This method strengthens visual, auditory, and motor memory, supporting automatic spelling of common words.

The **Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) Help sheet** is available to print on page 13 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources. This help sheet can be used as a quick reference during support sessions.

Watch the Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) short film

https://youtube.com/shorts/-YLV49ePnfk

This recording provides an example of what this strategy looks like in practice.

Set up

- **Target words** should already be identified through one of the following methods: the DLA common word assessment (section 3), examples from the learner's free writing (section 3), or by following the word order in the Common Word Spelling Booklet.
- White board and white board pen for the supporting adult and learner

Instructions: SOS

1. **Adult** prints word, saying the letter names
2. **Adult** says the word - if word has 2+ syllables clap them out
3. **Learner** repeats word
4. Discuss/ point out tricky part and underline or highlight it

5. **Learner** writes word underneath the adults/peers, using joined script*, saying the letter names* as they write
6. **Learner** says word again
7. **Learner** checks the word
8. **Learner** repeats steps 5 and 6 - writing, saying letter names, saying whole word and checking word - three times
9. **Learner** rubs out own writing and covers adult's/peer's word
10. **Learner** writes word from memory, saying letter names as they write
11. **Learner** checks word

If **correct**: move on to the next word.
If **incorrect**: return to **step 3** and repeat the process once more.

Adaptations

- If the learner cannot use joined script, they may print instead.
- If the learner cannot say letter names, they may use letter sounds—but ensure consistency (do not mix names and sounds).
- This strategy can also be adapted to a verbal-only format: the learner spells the word orally three times while looking at it, then attempts to write it once from memory.

'Nailed it' Method (incorporating SOS)

If a learner continues to struggle with the same target common words despite repeated practice using SOS, consider progressing to the **'Nailed It' Method**. This approach builds on SOS and offers additional structure and repetition through the use of flashcards and spaced retrieval.

The **'Nailed It' Method** is a spaced repetition strategy that supports learners in securing common word spellings through regular retrieval, overlearning, and self-monitoring. It uses flashcards in envelopes to organise words based on the learner's progress and incorporates the familiar SOS technique within a motivational system that encourages independence and mastery.

Learners practise spelling common words daily, with words sorted into two envelopes:

- **'Not Yet'** – words still being learned
- **'Nailed It'** – words spelled correctly and retained

This approach ensures frequent practice of difficult words and less frequent review of mastered ones, supporting long-term retention and giving learners a visible sense of progress.

The **Nailed it' Help sheet** is available to print on page 14 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources. This help sheet can be used as a reference when using this strategy to support a learner.

Instructions

- Present the learner with flashcards for 3–5 common words they need to practise.
- Use the **Common Word Spelling Booklet** to select words, or choose from the learner's written work or common word assessment from the DLA (section 3).
- Provide two envelopes:
- One labelled **'Not Yet'**
- One labelled **'Nailed It'**

Routine

Day 1:

- Use SOS on a whiteboard to teach the next 3–5 target words.

Day 2:

- Repeat SOS for the same words.

- Write each word on a flashcard and place them in the **'Not Yet'** envelope.

Day 3:

- Review: ask the learner to spell each word from the '**Not Yet'** envelope.
- If correct, move the correct word to the **'Nailed It'** envelope.
- If incorrect, keep it in **'Not Yet'.**
- Repeat SOS for all words still in the '**Not Yet'** envelope.

Ongoing:

- Continue daily as per Day 3.
- When the **'Not Yet'** envelope is empty (or almost empty), **return to Day 1** with new tricky common words.

Progress Check

- After four weeks, reassess the learner using the **Common Word Spelling Booklet.**
- If a word is no longer retained, return it to the 'Not Yet' envelope for continued practice.

Mnemonics

Mnemonics are a powerful multisensory strategy that help learners remember how to spell common words, especially those with tricky or irregular spelling patterns. These memory aids can take the form of phrases, rhymes, or associations that make the spelling more memorable.

Mnemonics can be used as a stand-alone strategy or alongside other structured approaches such as **Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS)** or the **'Nailed It' Method**.

For example, a mnemonic may be introduced during an SOS session to draw attention to a particularly tricky part of a word or added to a flashcard in the '**Nailed It'** envelope system to provide an additional hook for recall. This flexible strategy empowers learners to engage creatively with spelling and can be especially helpful for visual or verbal learners.

Mnemonics can take different forms:

Syllable-based Mnemonics

Breaking a word into syllables and attaching a memorable phrase:

- e.g. **necessary** → "one collar, two sleeves" (to remember one 'c', two 's')

Phrase and Picture Mnemonics

This common approach links each letter in a word to the first letter of a phrase, often supported by an image:

- e.g. **USE** → "Use Some Elastic"

Step-by-Step: Mnemonic Strategy

1. **Introduce and discuss** the word, phrase, and any visual (e.g. picture or drawing).
2. **Emphasise the first sound** of each word in the phrase aloud ("Use. Some. Elastic.").
3. **Learner repeats the phrase**, emphasising the first sound of each word, while **colouring in the picture**. This reinforces auditory and visual memory.
4. **Learner writes** the word by placing the first letter of each word beneath the correct letter in the target word.
5. **Cover the word.** Ask the learner to **write the full word from memory**, saying the phrase aloud, emphasising the key sounds.

💡 Top Tips

- This method works best when the **first word of the phrase is the target word** (e.g. "Use - Use Some Elastic").
- Encouraging learners to **create their own mnemonic and drawing**, can increase engagement and strengthen personal memory connections.

Precision Teaching: Spelling Common Words

A short, structured daily method for monitoring and overlearning spelling of high-frequency or tricky words.

This strategy is designed for learners who require more intensive support to secure the spelling of common words. It combines SOS with daily tracking, to build spelling fluency and automaticity through repetition, immediate feedback, and visible progress.

Getting started

1. **Create a word list** of 10–15 words the learner frequently misspells. These can come from the Common Word Spelling Booklet, the common word spelling assessment on the DLA (section 3), or the learner's own written work.
2. Start by selecting the first **3–5 target words** from the list.
3. **Teach and practise** these using the **SOS method** on a whiteboard or paper.

Instructions

- Use **two pages** of a jotter or notebook.
- At the **top of both pages**, write the dates for the week:
- On Page 1: write each date **twice** from right to left
- On Page 2: write each date **once** from left to right (for tracking)

Daily Routine

Page 1 – Learner Spelling Practice

- Down the right-hand side, write the 3–5 target words.
- Each day, the learner spells each word twice, e.g. at the start and end of a lesson.
- Ensure previous attempts are covered (e.g. fold the page or use a whiteboard).

Page 2 – Accuracy Tracker

- On the second page, place a:
- ☑ Tick for correct spellings
- ● Dot for incorrect spellings
- Use this page to monitor progress over the week and guide feedback.

Reinforcement & Adjustment

- **Re-teach** any words still receiving dots using SOS.
- At the start of the **next week**:
- Remove the top word from the list (if mastered).
- Add the next word in the sequence.
- Present words in a **new order** to encourage flexible recall.

Example Word List

Word	Status
they	intermittently correct
have	intermittently correct
what	intermittently correct
said	intermittently correct
each	incorrect
which	incorrect
their	incorrect
how	incorrect
about	incorrect
these	incorrect

☑ **Example Tracker**

Page 2 – Week 1 Accuracy

Word	17.1	18.1	19.1	20.1	21.1
they	☑ *	☑ ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑

have	* ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑
what	* *	* ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑	☑ ☑
said	* *	* *	☑ *	☑ ☑	☑ *
each	* *	* *	☑ *	* ☑	☑ *

Week 2 – Replace "they" with "which"

Continue tracking using the same method.

This approach helps learners internalise spellings through short, focused sessions while also providing a clear visual record of progress. It builds confidence and independence, especially when used alongside other multisensory spelling strategies.

The **Precision Teaching: Spelling Common Word Help sheet** is available to print on pages 15 -17 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources. This help sheet can be used as a reference when using this strategy to support a learner with Precision Teaching for Common Word Spelling.

5.6 New Sound Strategies: Teaching Phonics for Reading and Spelling

Introducing letter sounds in a clear and consistent way helps learners make strong connections between the sound (phoneme) and the letter or letters that represent it (grapheme). By modelling *pure sounds*, using engaging visuals, and providing repeated opportunities for learners to hear and use new sounds, we build a solid foundation for confident and successful readers.

Top Tip – Always use pure sounds – don't add 'uh' e.g. mmm not muh; d not duh

Introducing New Single-Letter Sounds

e.g. /m/, /s/, /a/, etc.

Find objects or pictures that starts with the target sound. For example:

- **/m/** = moon, mat, mouse, man

Say the Sound

- Use pure sounds only – no added "uh"
- Model: "mmm" → My Turn, Your Turn (MTYT)

Show Visuals

- Show objects or pictures that start with the sound
- For example: "this is a moon. It starts with mmm mmmmoon."

Flip It Game

- Use a card (or whiteboard) with picture on one side and letter on the other.
- Show image → "What do you see?" (moon)
- Flip to letter → "What do you see?" (m)
- Repeat rotation a few times.

Sound Review

- Use letter cards to flash through previously taught sounds.
- Learner says, "m – there you are!" when they spot the focus sound

Introducing Digraphs (Two Letters, One Sound)

Example digraph: **/ee/** (as in *tree*)

Use or draw a simple image that clearly represent a word containing the target sound, such as a **tree, bee,** or **feet.**

- Choose a clear phrase to anchor the sound, for example:
- "*ee* – tall tree"
- You'll use this phrase consistently to help learners link the sound to meaning and spelling.

Say the Phrase + Sound

- Show the image, discuss, and say the phrase: “ee – tall tree”
- Learners repeat: My Turn, Your Turn (MTYT)
- Emphasise the long vowel sound: “eeeee – like in tree”

Sound Out a Word

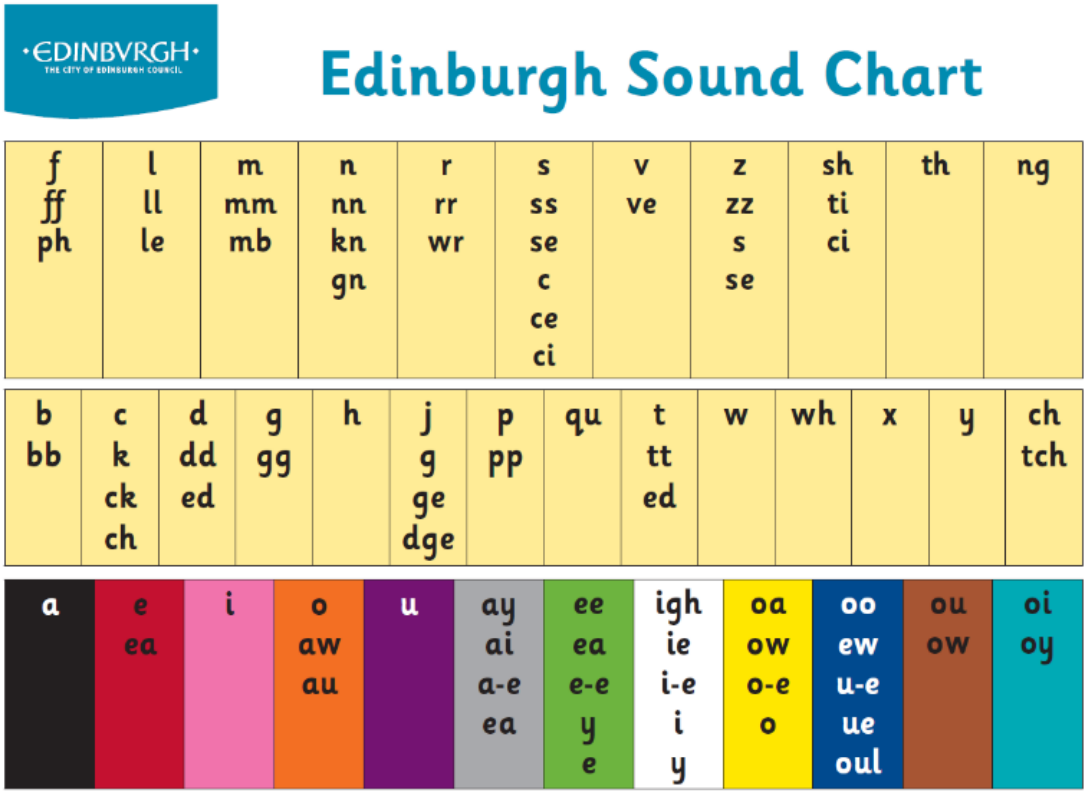
- Break down some words using the digraph:
- Teacher: “f – ee – t”
- Learners repeats “f – ee – t and then blends to say the word: “feet” Do for all words.

Show the Letters

- Write or show the digraph **ee** clearly: “These are two letters that make one sound – ee.”
- Learners repeat the sound: MTYT

Locate on Sound Chart

Point out **ee** on the sound chart.



Edinburgh Sound Chart

Flip It Game

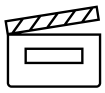
- Show image side → "What do you see?" → "tall tree"
- Flip to digraph side → "What do you see?" → "ee"
- Repeat the rotation a few times with MTYT

Review in a Pack

- Mix with previously taught sounds
- When learners see the focus digraph, they say: "ee – tall tree"

The following **short films** not only demonstrate how to introduce new single letter sounds and digraphs but also provide clear examples of how to teach alternative spellings of the same sounds and how to introduce **magic e** patterns.

These videos offer practical guidance on extending phonic teaching beyond initial sounds to support learners as they encounter more complex spelling patterns, helping to build both reading and spelling confidence over time.



Watch the 'Introducing Initial Sounds' film

https://youtube.com/shorts/qR0BBRoZWgs?feature=share

This short recording will show you how to introduce new initial sounds to a learner.

Watch the 'Introducing Digraphs' film

https://youtu.be/5XfZXUt1JwM

This recording will show you how to introduce new digraphs (e.g. ee) to a learner.

Watch the 'Introducing Alternative Spellings of the Same Sound'

https://youtu.be/9_GTgr7tWB8

This recording will show you how to teach alternative spellings of the same sound to a learner.

Watch the 'Introducing Magic e'

https://youtube.com/shorts/Z3Lfv8UJh6I?feature=share

This recording demonstrates how to teach and reinforce the magic e pattern, supporting learners to read and spell words with this structure confidently.

Assisted Blending (for Reading)

Assisted Blending (for Reading) is a highly supportive and structured strategy designed to help early readers blend individual known sounds (phonemes) into whole words. It reinforces key phonics concepts such as phoneme – grapheme correspondence and develops essential oral blending skills in a consistent, confidence-building way. This method ensures that learners use only the sounds they are secure with, gradually increasing fluency as their skills grow.

The process begins with a quick review of previously taught sounds, using flashcards or a sound chart to reinforce recall. Learners then engage in **Sound Talk**, a multisensory technique where the adult models how to segment and blend a word aloud, exaggerating sounds and mouth movements, followed by repeated oral practice using the **My Turn, Your Turn (MTYT)** approach.
Letter cards, magnetic boards, or digital tools are used to build words physically, helping learners match sounds to letters.

The adult models the blending process by pointing to each letter and saying the sound e.g. m – a – t. The adult then sweeps their finger under the word while saying it aloud e.g. mat. Learners then replicate this process independently, strengthening decoding skills and sound-symbol recognition.
This technique can be repeated as often as needed to build learner confidence and accuracy.

The help sheets and film demonstrations guide supporting adults' step by step through the strategy, making it easy to implement during targeted support or classroom phonics sessions.

Watch the '**Assisted Blending Demonstration'** short film
https://youtube.com/shorts/c9Kx3YpUmJY
This recording demonstrates how to teach assisted blending to an individual.

Watch the '**Independent Blending Demonstration'** short film
https://youtube.com/shorts/6r_foFPWx6g
This recording demonstrates how to teach assisted blending to an individual

The **Assisted & Independent Blending for Reading Help sheets** is available to print on pages 18 -20 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources:
These resources can be used as a reference when teaching assisted blending to an individual learner.

Independent Blending (for Reading)

Independent Blending for Reading builds upon assisted blending to promote learner autonomy in reading both real and non-words using familiar phonemes. This approach helps learners internalise the blending process and transition from supported blending to independent reading.

This strategy begins by selecting words made up of phoneme-grapheme correspondences the learner already knows well. Using magnetic letters, letter cards, or a digital app, the adult models the silent blending process by pointing to each letter and whispering the corresponding sound (e.g. *j – a – m*), then blending them together by running a finger underneath the word and whispering the whole word: *jam*. This subtle modelling demonstrates the internal decoding process without overt teacher instruction, encouraging the learner to take ownership of the strategy.

The learner then builds and reads the word independently. They point to each letter, say the sound quietly, and blend them to read the word aloud. **Real and non-words** are used to ensure learners are focusing on decoding rather than memorisation.

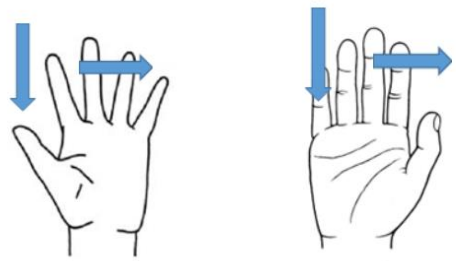
As confidence grows, written words can be presented on flashcards, and learners are encouraged to read aloud with minimal adult input.
To scaffold independence, the **My Turn, Your Turn (MTYT)** method can still be used sparingly if the learner needs occasional support, but the aim is to gradually fade this until the learner is confidently blending words on their own.
This technique supports the development of fluent and confident readers by strengthening decoding skills through repeated, independent practice.

Teaching Phonic Spelling

Teaching phonic spelling words requires a structured, multisensory approach designed to help learners break down words into individual sounds (phonemes) and represent them accurately in writing. This approach builds spelling confidence by reinforcing sound-symbol correspondence through tactile, kinaesthetic, visual, and auditory means.

Finger Spelling

The process begins by asking learners to hold up their non-writing hand and count the sounds in a word by raising one finger for each phoneme (unit of sound) (e.g. ch – ai – r = 3 sounds). They then use **finger spelling**, where learners pinch each finger with their writing hand in the direction the word is written, reinforcing left-to-right spelling orientation.



Finger Writing

For further engagement, learners may trace or **finger-write** each sound onto the corresponding finger as they say the sound and letters needed to write it aloud (e.g. ch = c–h). This tactile method supports the sound–letter mapping process.

Tallying

To support learners in working out the number of sounds needed to spell a word accurately, they can use **tallying** with coloured cubes, where each cube represents a letter and red cubes signify vowels. They lay out the correct number of cubes, say the sounds again while touching each one, and finally write the word underneath. This method combines visual and kinaesthetic strategies to deepen understanding of word structure.

ch ai r

Grapheme Marking

Learners can self-check their spelling by comparing the number of sounds (phonemes) to the number of letters (graphemes) in a word. This technique helps them identify whether they have included all the necessary sounds and represented them with the correct letter patterns.

Using **grapheme marking**, learners segment a word into its individual sounds and then underline the corresponding graphemes. For example:

chair → ch – ai – r = 3 sounds, but 5 letters.

Learners can underline each grapheme to visually mark them:

chair

_ _ .

For example:

Say & stretch out word (finger spell) ch…. ai ….r = 3 sounds

Tally = 3 sounds, 5 letters

Write under cubes as sound out

ch ai r

Write word / sound out

chair

Grapheme mark

chair

_ _ .

This visual method reinforces sound–letter correspondence and helps learners avoid common errors such as:

- Missing a grapheme (e.g. writing *chr* for *chair*)
- Using incorrect graphemes (e.g. writing *cheer* for *chair*)
- Overrepresenting sounds (e.g. adding extra letters for a single sound)

From Assisted to Independent Spelling

These strategies (finger spelling, finger writing, tallying and grapheme marking) are first introduced through **assisted spelling**, with the adult modelling each step of the process. This includes:

- Saying the word clearly
- Setting out and touching cubes and fingers to identify each phoneme
- Encouraging finger writing
- Prompting the learner to write the word under the cubes

As the learner gains confidence, the adult gradually reduces support, encouraging **independent spelling**. The child takes full responsibility for segmenting, using sound fingers, tallying, writing and grapheme marking.
Learners are also encouraged to **self-check** using a simple grapheme tick system:

"Do you have a 'ch'? Tick above it."
"Do you have 'ai'? Tick above it."
"Do you have a 'r'? Tick above it."

This self-marking strategy is particularly effective for early spellers or those who need additional scaffolding. It supports memory, reinforces correct phoneme–grapheme mapping, and builds independence in a fun, active way.

Watch the '**Teaching Spelling using Finger Spelling & Finger Writing'** short film.
https://youtube.com/shorts/9ihveUM_v6c
This recording demonstrates how to teach independent blending to an individual.

Watch the '**Teaching Spelling using Tallying'** short film.
https://youtu.be/0TK5Kv-lncs
This recording demonstrates how to teach independent blending to an individual.

Watch the '**Teaching Spelling using Finger Spelling, Finger Writing, Tallying and Grapheme Marking'** short film.
https://youtu.be/bsN_dKuEzUA
This recording demonstrates how to teach independent blending to an individual.

Watch the '**Grapheme Marking'** short film.
https://youtube.com/shorts/33oDrkxzHfY
This recording demonstrates how to grapheme mark top support phonic spelling.

Top Tip - If a learner is reluctant to use the finger-spelling strategy, he/ she can be encouraged to tap fingers out on lap or put dots on the paper/ whiteboard to show the numbers of sounds.

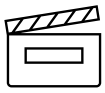
Make and Break Spelling

This multi-sensory approach teaches the spelling of tricky or complex words by focusing on **syllable splitting**. It is especially effective for common or cross-curricular vocabulary.

Learners **physically break words into syllables** using plastic letters, letter cards, or by cutting up paper. By saying the word aloud, clapping the rhythm, and **'syllable speaking'** (e.g. in-de-pen-dent), learners develop an awareness of how longer words are structured. They then rebuild the word, saying each letter name as they go, reinforcing both the **syllable structure** and correct spelling sequence.

This strategy strengthens memory and spelling accuracy by combining visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic input.

The **'Make and Break Spelling Help sheet'** is available to print on page 21 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This can be used as a reference when teaching make and break spelling to support the spelling of multisyllabic words by focussing on syllable splitting.



Watch the **'Make and Break Spelling'** short film.
https://youtu.be/sdoopdP4SdQ

This recording demonstrates how to teach make and break spelling to support the spelling of multisyllabic words by focussing on syllable splitting.

5.7 Dictation

Dictation helps learners apply spelling knowledge in context while also supporting **working memory**. It involves saying aloud a carefully selected sentence, that contains current focus phonics and common words, and having the learner repeat, recall, and write it.

This approach improves sentence recall and spelling accuracy through repetition, multisensory engagement (e.g. voice variation, finger counting, and visual prompts), and consistent modelling. Tools like a Sound Chart and spelling strategies (e.g. finger spelling or tallying) are used to scaffold learning.

Dictation can also support:

- Learners who are struggling to begin a piece of extended writing i.e. discuss and dictate the first sentence
- Up-levelling of written work. i.e. discuss dictated sentence and extend the sentence to make it even better (for example using powerful openers, connectives or interesting vocabulary).
- Writing confidence and self-esteem i.e. learners see that they can write accurate sentences (using controlled vocabulary)

Dictation steps

Ensure you use phonic and common words that the learner is working on in the sentence and start with a short sentence.

1. **Say** the sentence to the learner.
2. Learner then **repeats** the sentence - My Turn, Your Turn (MTYT)
   As you repeat the sentence:
   - put emphasis on different words each time
   - use mime as you say the word e.g. touch head as you say hat
   - say the sentence in different voices e.g. scary; whisper
   - show the number of words on your fingers as you say each word

- state the number of words in the sentence as you hold up your fingers
- Model punctuation

3. **Continue, MTYT** using above strategies until learners can remember the sentence easily.

4. If required, **model writing** of sentence on board:
   - ask learners to show number of sounds in phonic word(s) using spelling fingers
   - model use of Sound Chart to support spelling e.g. Which 'ay' grapheme am I using in this word?

5. Finally, the learner **writes the sentence** and reads it back to check for errors. This can be completed on a whiteboard and then up-levelled in a jotter.
6. **Self-correct sentenced** with learners e.g. 'If you have a capital T starting your sentence tick above it..' 'If you have a finger space, give yourself a smiley face.' 'If you have spelled chair -ch – ai – r put a tick above the ch, the ai, the r.'

7. As the young person's memory improves, the sentence length and complexity can be gradually increased.

Supporting Learners who have difficulties with dictation

Some learners may forget the sentence before they finish writing it. This is often because they are focusing so hard on spelling each word correctly. As spelling becomes more automatic, it will become easier for them to remember the whole sentence long enough to write it down.

To support this:

- Start by dictating individual words
- Move to short sentences or phrases (e.g. the red chair)
- Encourage learner to continue to repeat the phrase several times in their head (or out loud) while writing it.

- Gradually increase the length of phrases or sentences until the learner is able to remember and write the full sentence without any part being repeated by an adult. during the writing of it.

If the learner writes down the wrong word, this can be linked to short-term memory difficulties, or because the learner is creative and embellishes the sentence. Also, learners who are easily distracted often substitute words.
To support this:

- encourage learner to write sentence without changing any of the words
- highlight words that do not match the dictated sentence

A learner may also become overwhelmed by the amount of dictation.
To support this:

- start with words. Move on to phrases/ short sentences
- use a whiteboard – easier to make changes

Some learners may look for approval/ support after each word
To support this:

- Be clear to the learner knows you won't be looking at the sentence until it is completed and proofread.
- Be mindful of subconsciously changing your facial expression or leaning forward a bit in response to a misspelled word.
- Be aware children/ young people are very good at reading body language and can notice your subtle body movements/ learn to rely on your cues instead of on their own ability to proofread. Just look down at your notes/ away from the page as learner writes - resist the urge to look at paper until learner proofreads and says, "Done!"

Some learners may struggle with use of punctuation
To support this:

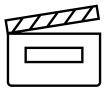
- Let learner know that you won't be looking at the sentence until it is completed and proofread.

- Play the punctuation practice game*

Punctuation practice game

1. Write a question mark, full-stop, exclamation mark on a piece of paper
2. Read sentence using the correct intonation, and ask learner to point to punctuation that links to that intonation
3. Show/ discuss how you make it clear through your intonation
4. Switch roles.

The '**Dictation Help sheet'** is available to print on page 22 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This help sheet can be used as a reference when supporting a learner with dictation.



Watch the '**Dictation Demonstration'** short film
https://youtu.be/jyQ_GD1dViE
This recording will show you how to use dictation to support a learner with their writing.

5.9 Reading in Context

This part of the lesson allows learners to apply their decoding and comprehension skills to real text. It reinforces learning from earlier in the session and supports vocabulary development, comprehension, and reading with fluency and expression.

To be effective, reading instruction must go beyond isolated word reading. Learners need opportunities to practise applying strategies in meaningful contexts. Carefully selected texts, matched to their reading level, help build fluency, confidence, and understanding without overwhelming the learner.

In this section, you will explore how to:

- Select appropriate reading material using tools such as the **Reading Score Formula and Five Finger Test**
- Apply the **Three Read Strategy** to build decoding, comprehension, and fluency
- Use **Repeated Reading** to support accuracy, pace, and expressive reading.

These approaches encourage learners to engage with text more confidently and purposefully, helping them make measurable progress in real reading situations.

Providing and choosing the right text

Selecting the right reading material is essential to support learners' progress. Texts must be at an appropriate level, challenging enough to develop skills but not so difficult that they hinder understanding or enjoyment. A simple way to judge text difficulty is by having a learner read a 100-word unseen passage. Track errors and assess comprehension by asking questions following reading of text.

- **95–100% accuracy** = **Easy text** – ideal for building fluency and confidence.
- **90–94% accuracy** = **Instructional text** – suitable for skill development with support.
- **80–89% accuracy** = **Hard text** – likely too difficult and may negatively impact comprehension and motivation.

For learners unable to read 100 words, use the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Formula **Scoring for reading text formula to** calculate the reading score:

Reading score (%) = 100 – ((Errors ÷ Running Words) x 100)

This helps ensure texts are matched to learners' decoding ability and comprehension level, supporting both access and engagement.

Remember the **Scoring for Reading Text file** is available in the Section 3 of the DLA Printable Resources and Templates .
This can be used as a tool to assess the suitability of reading texts for learners with literacy difficulties or dyslexia. It provides guidance on scoring a text and helps identify whether it matches the learner's reading level.

Five finger Test

The Five Finger Test is a quick and simple way to help learners choose books at an appropriate reading level.

The learner opens a book near the middle and reads one page aloud, holding up one finger for each word they can't read or don't understand.

- **0–1 fingers:** Book is likely a good fit
- **2–3 fingers:** Worth a try, but may need support
- **4 fingers:** May be too challenging
- **5 fingers:** Choose a different book

If unsure, check their comprehension by asking literal and inferential questions.

If their decoding is slow or effortful, even with fewer than five fingers, comprehension and enjoyment may still be limited.

The Five Finger Test Help sheet is available on page 23 of the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This resource can be used as a reference when supporting children to select a book at the appropriate level using the five-finger test.

Three Read Strategy

The Three Read Strategy is a structured approach to teaching reading that involves three focused reads of the same text, each with a specific purpose:

Read 1 **– Decoding**

Read 2 **– Comprehension**

Read 3 **– Fluency and Expression**

Introducing a New Story

Before starting a new story, it's important to activate the learner's **prior knowledge** and personal experience. Begin by **discussing the theme** and content to make the text more relatable and meaningful.

Take time to discuss and **explain any tricky or unfamiliar vocabulary,** particularly words the learner:

- Cannot decode
- Does not yet understand the meaning of

Pre-teach these target words by helping the learner:

- Break them into syllables
- Sound them out
- Recognise spelling patterns

This preparation **builds confidence** and improves **fluency and comprehension** during reading.

Read 1 – Decoding

- The learner reads the text independently.
- Provide support with decoding as needed
- Encourage use of phonics strategies and breaking down unfamiliar words

Read 2 – Comprehension

The adult models reading a short section aloud while the learner tracks the words with their finger as they are being read.

- This physical tracking helps the learner **stay focused**, **match spoken and written words**, and **reinforce word recognition**.
- Encourage the learner to follow along **at the same pace as the adult's voice**, pointing to each word as it's read aloud.

The adult also:

- Use **Think Out Aloud strategies** to demonstrate how to check understanding.

- For example: "Hmm… the sentence says, ‘The boy hesitated before opening the old wooden door.’ I know the word ‘hesitated’ means to pause or stop for a moment. So, the boy is probably feeling unsure or maybe even scared. That makes sense, because if the door is old and wooden, it might be a bit spooky. I wonder what’s behind it?".

- Refers to key words or phrases in the text and briefly explains them.

- Asks comprehension questions during and after reading – sometimes modelling how to answer and sometimes prompting the learner to infer or find the answer themselves.

After this shared reading:

- The learner **re-reads the same section aloud**
- Then continues reading slightly further on their own

Finish by **discussing the text together**, reinforcing understanding and clarifying any remaining vocabulary or content confusion.

Read 3 – Fluency & Expression

In this final read, the focus is on reading with fluency, rhythm, and appropriate expression.

- The **adult models fluent reading**, paying close attention to:
- **What is happening in the text**
- **What characters say and do**
- **Their thoughts, feelings, and motivations**
- The adult also **highlights how punctuation** (e.g. commas, exclamation marks, question marks) affects the tone, pace, and meaning of what’s being read.
- The **learner then re-reads** the same section or part of it, using expression to reflect the content, and continues reading a little further if ready.
- Afterwards, discuss the section with the learner to reflect on:
- How expression can bring the story to life
- How understanding the text helps guide how we read it aloud

This step supports learners in **connecting meaning to reading**, while also building confidence and fluency.

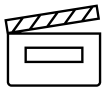
Vocabulary Development

Strong vocabulary knowledge is essential for both decoding and comprehension.

- During reading, take time to **clarify unfamiliar words** in context. Ask:
- "What do you think this word means?"
- "Can we use the sentence or the pictures to help us figure it out?"
- Revisit words that were **pre-taught before reading**, and check for understanding now that they appear in context.
- Use follow-up questions or simple definitions to ensure the learner can:
- **Explain the word in their own words**
- **Use the word in a sentence**
- **Recognise the word again in other texts**

Ongoing vocabulary teaching and revision helps learners grow their language knowledge, which directly supports comprehension and confidence with more complex texts.

The **Three Read Strategy Help sheet** is available on page 24 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This help sheet can be used as a reference when supporting a learner with reading in context using the Three Read Strategy.



Watch the '**Three Read Strategy Demonstration'** film
https://youtu.be/Bl6X-HB1ckM
This recording will show you how to use the 'Three Read Strategy' to support a learner with reading in context. All three strategies have been filmed together. However, we would suggest the following order in practice:

1. Day 1 – decoding and comprehension
2. Day 2 decoding and expression
3. Day 3 - focus on the greatest area of need.

Repeated Reading

Repeated reading is a strategy used to improve **fluency, accuracy, and confidence** in reading. This approach is especially helpful for learners who decode accurately but read slowly, or for those needing to build confidence and expression in reading aloud.

The learner reads the same passage several times, with support as needed. Each re-read helps build familiarity with the words, allowing the learner to read more **quickly, smoothly, and accurately**.

It can be used with **any passage of interest to the learner**, helping to increase motivation and engagement. Ideally, the passage should be at an **instructional to hard text level** to provide an appropriate level of challenge without causing frustration.

The **Repeated Reading Help sheet** is available on page 25 of the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file.
This help sheet can be used as a reference when supporting a learner with reading in context using the repeated reading strategy.

5.9 Games for Overlearning

Games and overlearning tasks are short, focused, and engaging activities designed to help learners consolidate key skills in a fun and low-pressure way. By incorporating repetition and variation, these activities support retrieval, fluency, and long-term retention. They are particularly effective for revisiting content introduced earlier in the session and reinforcing learning without the cognitive load of more formal tasks. These activities also help sustain motivation and provide learners with a sense of success and achievement.

The **Flash Card Games with minimal preparation resource** is available on page 26 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file.
This download is a list of quick and easy games that can be played using flashcards, requiring minimal preparation.

The **Noughts and Crosses CVC game** is available on pages 27-29 of the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file.
This is a phonics version of noughts and crosses. Players say the word in the chosen square before marking it with a nought or cross. The first to get three in a row wins.

The **Noughts and Crosses Game Template** is available on pages 30 – 33 of the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This is a blank template you can use to create your own version of the noughts and crosses game, tailored to the learner's current phonic or common word focus.

The **4 in a row game (th words)** is available on pages 34 and 35 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This is a fun, dice-based game where learners roll a die and say the CVC word in the matching square. If they read the word correctly, they place a counter on that square. The first player to get four in a row wins. The game is editable and can be adapted to include any phonic or common words the learner is currently focusing on.

5.10 Phonological Awareness

If, while using the **DLA outlined in Section 3** of this module, you observed that the learner had difficulty with the **Phonic Word – Reading assessment,** specifically struggling to identify individual sounds or blend simple consonant-vowel-consonant

(CVC) words, you will likely have gone on to use the **Phonological Awareness Assessment Tool (PhAAT)** and identified needs in phonological awareness. This tool helps to pinpoint whether underlying challenges with phonological awareness are contributing to the learner's reading difficulties.

To support development in this area, we recommend using the **Phonological Awareness Resource Pack.** This resource offers a wide range of structured, practical activities that are clearly matched to specific areas of need identified on the PhAAT, making it easier for staff to plan and deliver targeted interventions.

The activities in this resource are organised around key areas of phonological development, including:

- Listening and attention
- Auditory discrimination
- Auditory memory
- Counting words in spoken sentences
- Rhyme recognition and rhyme generation
- Onset-rime awareness
- Syllable blending and segmenting
- Phoneme (sound) discrimination and alliteration
- Phoneme (sound) isolation, blending, and segmentation
- Syllable or phoneme deletion
- Phoneme substitution
- Letter-sound recognition
- Letter writing and formation

Each activity is designed to be accessible, engaging, and adaptable to different learner needs and settings. The resource enables staff to provide targeted, responsive support that builds the essential listening and sound awareness skills needed for reading and writing success.

Remember the **Phonological Awareness Resource Pack** can be used to support staff in developing phonological awareness. Activities are mapped to specific areas of need identified on the PhAAT, helping ensure interventions are relevant and effective.

5.11 Classroom Practice

To ensure the targeted support strategies introduced in this PLA can be meaningfully transferred into everyday classroom practice, this section outlines tools and approaches for linking individualised support with the learner's classroom experience.
The focus is on aligning literacy support with national curriculum expectations, enabling collaborative planning, and promoting clear communication between staff and families.

These tools support practitioners in making practical, curriculum-linked decisions about what to teach, how to support individual needs, and how to evaluate progress over time.

Before targeted support can be effectively planned, it is essential to understand the learner's specific literacy profile. The following checklists offer a practical starting point for identifying areas of strength and need in reading, writing, and related skills.

Literacy/Dyslexia Checklists

These observational checklists are designed to help class and subject teachers reflect on a learner's literacy profile within a staged model of assessment. They support identification of needs, guide planning, and suggest practical classroom strategies.

Please note: These are not dyslexia diagnostic tools, but they help identify areas that may require further observation or intervention. Further information on identifying and supporting dyslexia and literacy difficulties is available on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit. https://addressingdyslexia.org/

Cfe level check lists to support the collaborative identification process of dyslexia are available on the Toolkit link below
Forms and Templates | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia

https://addressingdyslexia.org/professional-development/sean-connery-legacy/

Edinburgh City Council DLA Early Years Checklist (Nursery/ P1)
Edinburgh City Council DLA Primary Checklist
Edinburgh City Council DLA Secondary Checklist

Each checklist provides:

- Possible areas of difficulty
- Linked support strategies
- Prompts to consider:
    - What can/can't the learner do?
    - How do their difficulties affect access to learning?
    - What supports have already been tried?
    - What further supports could be introduced?

These checklists can be used flexibly to support a targeted, staged approach. Teachers might begin by identifying a key area of need, such as reading, and highlighting specific observations linked to that domain.

From there, **1–2 focused strategies** can be selected to trial in the classroom, with the impact observed over time. Once strategies have been implemented and monitored, the checklist can be revisited to either continue with further strategies in the same area or to focus on a new domain, such as writing or working memory.

The checklists are designed to be revisited regularly, not only to track learner progress but also to adapt support based on what is or isn't working. This iterative process promotes early intervention, supports responsive teaching, and ensures literacy support remains personalised and dynamic.

The information gathered from these checklists, along with assessment data from the Diagnostic Literacy Assessment (DLA), can then be used to inform the planning of

individual programmes through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) planning tool – ensuring that support strategies are purposeful, structured, and aligned with national outcomes.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Planning Tool

As referenced in Section 4, the **CfE planning tool** uses relevant existing Experiences and Outcomes (Es and Os) from the Curriculum for Excellence and aligns them with activities and resources specifically tailored to support individual learners. In Section 5, this approach continues to serve as a valuable tool, ensuring that targeted literacy support is both curriculum-linked and seamlessly integrated into classroom practice and broader planning.

While the document helps clarify learning objectives through "I can…" statements, it also acts as a bridge between the adults supporting the learner. It ensures that the strategies and resources explored throughout this PLA are meaningfully transferred into the classroom and understood by all involved.

The CfE planning tool can be used to:

- Facilitate communication between support for learning staff, class teachers, and PSAs
- Clarify shared learning goals and ensure alignment across support and class settings
- Record progress in a way that is visible and accessible to all adults working with the learner
- Promote consistency, ensuring that skills taught during targeted sessions are embedded and reinforced across school contexts

This collaborative approach helps ensure that literacy support is joined-up, consistent, and responsive to the learner's ongoing development.

The CfE Planning Tool is available in the DLA Printable Resources and Templates on pages 38 - 51. These planning tools help practitioners align focused literacy interventions with Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes, ensuring individual programmes are purposeful, structured, and curriculum linked.

Sharing Learning Intentions – Linking Class, Support, and Home

Building on the use of the CfE planning tool, sharing clear weekly learning intentions ensures that targeted strategies are reinforced not only in support sessions, but also in the classroom and at home.

For support to be effective, open communication between class teachers, support staff, and families is essential. Sharing learning intentions helps all adults work towards the same goals, increasing the learner's confidence and creating a consistent experience across contexts.

Learning intentions can be shared informally (via conversation or note) or more formally (via planning documents or learning logs), and may include:

- Specific sounds or spelling patterns being taught
- Vocabulary and decoding targets
- Comprehension goals
- Fluency and expression strategies
- Writing or punctuation focus

When learning targets are visible and reinforced across contexts, learners are more likely to retain skills, apply them independently, and feel supported in their progress.

The template for '**Sharing Learning: Home School Link'** is available on page 36 of the DLA Printable Teaching Strategies and Practical Resources file. This resource can be used to share learning intentions between support, class and home.

5.12 Reflection

In your Reflective Log

- Reflect on if and how you will begin to use the strategies from this PLA in your own practice.

- Which strategies do you feel ready to implement with learners straight away?

- Which areas do you think you will need to revisit and practice before feeling confident?

Thank you for engaging in this Professional Learning Activity.

Feedback

It would be extremely helpful to receive your feedback about this module. We are keen to know about the parts you found useful and where you feel we can improve. This would help with the development of any content we provide on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and future professional learning. Please contact us at the email address below.
toolkit@dyslexiascotland.org.uk