



Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to become a tutor with Literacy Unlimited. You are now part of an organization dedicated to empowering adults through improved literacy.

We hope this introductory guide will increase your awareness of the responsibilities of being a literacy tutor and provide you with the information you need to be confident and comfortable in your role.

Good luck and may each tutoring session be a rewarding experience for both you and your learner.

Quick Facts

Who is Literacy Unlimited?

Literacy Unlimited is a community organization dedicated to empowering adults through improved literacy. We are committed to raising public awareness of the literacy challenges in our community. The region that we serve extends from Verdun, to the West Island of Montreal, and on to the Quebec-Ontario border. We work in partnership with school boards, libraries, local community groups, and other literacy advocacy groups.

What are the goals of Literacy Unlimited?

- Recruit learners who require functional literacy skills.
- Recruit and train volunteers to work effectively in literacy activities.
- Provide instruction in reading, writing, numeracy, computers and any other areas deemed necessary for learners to acquire functional literacy skills.
- Offer continuing support to volunteers and learners.
- Promote community awareness of the need, the importance and the issues of literacy, as well as enlist community support.
- Raise funds by various means to support the ongoing operation of the organization.

What training do I need?

All new tutors are required to attend our minimum 8-hour basic tutor-training workshop. Additional training is provided for those tutoring computer skills and those involved in our adult and vocational education programs and our community programs. As well, ongoing workshops are held periodically for all tutors.

How do I contact Literacy Unlimited?

111, Broadview Ave, Pointe-Claire, Quebec, H9R 3Z3

Telephone: (514) 694-0007

E-mail: info@literacyunlimited.ca

Where do I get help/support?

The office staff is always ready to help you if you need assistance. In addition, experienced tutors can act as mentors.

Where will I do the tutoring? (please note: in 2020 exceptional circumstances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic mean that all tutoring is taking place remotely for the time. Please refer to the Tutoring Remotely Guide for more information)

You can meet with your learner in the tutoring areas at our office both daytime and evenings during office hours.

If it is more convenient, or when meeting outside of office hours, you can meet in community spaces such as libraries, community centres, and church halls. **Meetings must take place in public locations and never in private homes.**

Digital literacy tutors meet at our office in the tutoring spaces provided.

Tutors in our adult and vocational education programs and our community programs meet in schools and in spaces provided by the community groups with which we partner.

What is expected of me by Literacy Unlimited?

We expect you to have a genuine concern for the learning needs of your learner and to maintain learner confidentiality at all times. We also ask that you follow through with your commitment of a minimum of one year. Ideally, the tutor and learner should meet weekly for 2 hours.

What can I expect from Literacy Unlimited?

The staff of Literacy Unlimited are available to answer any questions you may have, supply you with reading, writing, math, and digital literacy materials to help you with your tutoring, and offer encouragement and support when needed.

What are my responsibilities as a tutor?

As a tutor, your responsibilities are to:

1. meet regularly and punctually with your learner,
2. help your learner gain missing literacy skills,
3. help your learner develop self-confidence,
4. keep a record of your learner's progress, and
5. report any changes or problems to the Program Director.

Working with Adult Learners

Red Deer Adult Literacy Program tutor handbook. (n.d.). Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer Public Library. Adapted with permission

Confidence

Adults often come into a learning situation with fear and apprehension, following a long history of failure. It takes a great deal of courage to admit their needs and ask for assistance. Once in a program, some may exhibit negative attitudes because of their past failures.

Competence

Each adult learner has unique talents and has succeeded in some area of life: church, neighbourhood, family, job, hobbies, sports or as part of a network of friends. They are mature people who deserve to be treated as such.

Energy

Adults sometimes are tired when they attend classes, as a result of their other responsibilities. They may be working fulltime, looking after a family and attending classes.

Goal-orientation

Adult learners usually have definite goals when starting an educational program. These goals may include self-improvement, getting a driver's licence, reading to their children, improving job skills, getting a job or a promotion and getting a high school diploma or equivalent.

Learning styles

Different people have different styles of learning. Some will learn best if they can see or feel what is to be learned, while others may have to hear it to know it. Most adult learners know how they learn best if you help them to think about it.

Life experience

Adults have a wealth of personal, family, work and life experiences that provide unlimited possibilities for the creation and understanding of lessons.

Motivation

Adult learners are usually highly motivated when they begin. Their motivation can quickly diminish if they become discouraged, if progress is slow, or as time passes and other responsibilities affect the amount of time and energy they can give to their learning.

Motives

Adults often attend classes with a mixed set of motives: educational, social and recreational. Sometimes they attend from a sense of duty, or because they are required to by their employer or to receive certain benefits.

Changing needs

The needs of the adult learner will change over time. The goals identified by the learner at the beginning may become more realistic, evolve as learning takes place or change with their life circumstances. For example, wanting to read with their children may become secondary to learning to read messages from the school and write messages to the teacher if a child is sick or having problems at school.

Reaction time

Increased age or poor health or even fatigue can affect the reaction time, vision and hearing of adult learners. Even time of day can be a factor in how effective learning is. However, learners do not lose their capacity to learn simply because they are no longer children.

Responsibilities

Adult learners have many responsibilities. They are busy earning a living, taking care of a home and family, often just trying to survive. As a result, many learners have little time to review and absorb large amounts of material at one time. They don't have time to spend on things they don't perceive as contributing directly to their learning or their lives.

Results

Adult learners need to see immediate change and growth. They may be intolerant of anything that does not help them achieve their goals. Often, as adults, learners' goals are overly ambitious. It may be necessary to break goals into smaller steps that are more readily achieved.

Self-consciousness

Many adults develop strategies to conceal their lack of education and skills. These strategies may show up as excuses for non-performance. Being aware of this helps to identify it as a cause for lack of performance and helps to find strategies to overcome it.

Self-motivation

Many adult learners are strongly motivated to study because they see education as a way to improve their self-image and reach other personal goals.

Uneven learning

Adult learners will not necessarily learn at an even pace. It may simply be because some things are more challenging for the learner than others. Or, there may be external factors affecting their ability to concentrate.

A Literacy Unlimited adult learner is an...

- adult with life experience.
- adult with needs that are concrete and immediate.
- adult who attends voluntarily.
- adult who is used to being treated as a mature person.
- adult who enjoys having his/her talents and information made use of in a teaching situation.
- adult who comes from one of a wide variety of backgrounds.
- adult who, through his/her fifties and sometimes well beyond, can learn as well as youth, but may need more time to perform tasks.
- adult who attends classes often with a mixed set of motives.
- adult who is sometimes fatigued when he/she attends classes.
- adult who may have a fear of an academic environment and may not trust that they can learn.

Assignment of learner

Upon completion of the tutor training workshop, you will be assigned a learner as soon as a match becomes available. You will then review your learner's Training Plan with the Program Director.

The Training Plan provides a personal, social and educational history of your learner, as well as reading and writing assessments conducted at Literacy Unlimited. It will help you obtain an understanding of your learner's literacy level and needs. **Please respect and maintain learner confidentiality at all times.**

Key Duties:

1. Establish a foundation of mutual trust and respect.

- Get to know your learner. Keep in mind the characteristics of the adult learner.
- Approach the tutoring situation in a professional, non-judgemental, respectful manner. Be empathetic and patient with your learner.
- Maintain confidentiality.

2. Meet regularly and punctually with your learner.

- Meet with your learner once or twice a week (two hours per lesson) for at least one year.
- Select a place that is convenient and comfortable for the learner.
- Continuity is important for both the tutor and learner. It is easier to achieve and assess progress with consistent, regular lessons.

3. Focus the lessons on the learner's interests and goals.

- Support your learner in setting achievable goals in reading, writing and numeracy.
- Develop and implement lesson plans each week based on the goals. Select subject matter and tutoring materials that are relevant, practical and enjoyable.
- Build confidence: Praise your learner on tasks well done and encourage new and more difficult challenges.

Procedures: Literacy Tutoring

As a new tutor, we value your time and your commitment to Literacy Unlimited. You are the main link to your adult literacy learner. These guidelines are in place to help you create a positive learning environment for your learner.

Meeting your learner

- It is your responsibility to contact your learner (contact information provided in the Training Plan).
- Introduce yourself and set a date and time for your first meeting as soon as possible.
- This is an opportunity to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, establish a rapport, get to know each other, and find out about your learner's needs and aspirations.
- Set a definite time and place for lessons. Encourage your learner to meet on time and regularly.
- Contact Literacy Unlimited office to report arrangements made with your learner.

If for any reason you do not make contact within a week of the assignment, please call the office at 514-694-0007 and let us know about your difficulties.

Suggestions for your first meeting

- Place: library, coffee shop, Literacy Unlimited office (should you wish to meet at our office, please call us to reserve a study room), or online if remote tutoring is the mode of learning you are selecting.
- Time: 30-60 minutes.
- Topics to discuss: Encourage the learner to talk about him/herself. Talk about yourself. You may want to use the interest inventory (available from the office) to get you started.
- Questions to ask: What do you want to learn? What interests you? How can I help?
- Offer encouragement: Tell your learner "You can do it!"

Reporting Progress

Literacy tutors are asked to complete progress reports twice a year, in December and June. You will receive a link to an online form. The form will ask you to report on the goals your learner has reached over the past six months, key achievements and challenges.

Keep a record of learner progress as you go and please contact the Program Director at anytime to discuss the status of tutoring in general – positive experiences as well as any concerns (relationship with learner, repeated cancellations, unable to contact learner).

Computer Usage

Laptops, tablets and an iPad are available upon request; these must be signed out and signed in by a staff member. On the laptop, log in using the Student account with the password Student. Access to the LU wireless network is already installed on these computers and no password needs to be entered from an LU laptop to access this network. If you are using your own or a learner's laptop, please ask a staff member for the wireless name and password.

No files should be stored on LU computers by learners. Learners should have a USB flash drive for the lesson if creating and saving their files and folders. LU has USBs available for purchase if required.

Printing

Learners may print a limited amount of pages, preferably in black & white. They should ask the tutor before printing. The laptops print to the wireless printer located next to the photocopier.

Schedule, Absences, and Cancellations

As a tutor, you are responsible for coordinating your schedule directly with your learner. Please contact your learner for any cancellations or changes in scheduling and request that your learner do the same.

If you and your learner wish to reschedule a session for a different time or day, please contact Literacy Unlimited staff first to check on available space.

Notify Literacy Unlimited staff of any cancellations or changes to tutor or learner status: new address/ telephone number, taking a break, or if tutoring is stopping for any reason.