

Section 6: Activity Suggestions for Remote Tutoring

If you have been working together for a while, you and your learner will have your favourite engaging, go-to activities that are staples in your lesson plan. Your learner loves those!

Some of these may adapt well in a remote environment, so go ahead and use them. Familiar activities will help your learner ease into this new learning environment.

Some of your go-to activities, however, will not be a fit with the remote learning mode you have chosen. This is a great opportunity to expand your repertoire and find some new favourites!

You may be surprised at how remote learning will reveal new and exciting activities that will fire up your learner, keeping them engaged and motivated.

It may feel a bit daunting to come up with activity ideas using a new learning mode like phoning or texting or video chatting. To help, LU has put together some great ideas to get you started.

Activities for every session

The activity ideas that follow are organized under the different learning modes. Some special activities that you can use with different learning modes are described in more detail at the end of the section.

These suggestions will give you options as well as inspiration for some customized activities.

As you explore this list of suggested activities, ask yourself:

- What are my learner's goals and interests and is this activity relevant?
- What literacy skills (and learning difficulties) does my learner have and is this activity at the right level?
- What kind of literacy skills does my learner want to improve and is this activity going to be effective in building those skills?
- Will my learner enjoy this activity and find it accessible?
- Is there a way to adapt this activity to better meet my learner's needs, interests and skill level?

Tutoring by phone

Tutoring over the phone may be one of the most challenging tutoring modes in remote learning. With no visual contact, oral and listening skills are extra important.

While you can still do plenty of reading and writing activities over the phone, do not be afraid to make discussion an integral part of your lesson plan.

Discussion helps learners to learn, to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning. Discussion helps learners to communicate their needs, knowledge and understanding.

Tutoring over the phone gives you an opportunity to capitalize on this.

Here are some activities that you can do over the phone.

Discussion:

- Discuss the practical literacy challenges of your learner and do some verbal problem-solving together
- Ask your learner about how they learn best and what things help them to learn
- Help your learner clarify their goals and what they need right now
- Encourage your learner to “think aloud” during reading and writing activities
- Do verbal role-plays around goal-based scenarios (e.g. a telephone call to register for a course, call to a doctor to get health information, etc.)
- Brainstorm some writing topics

Writing:

- Read something to your learner (with vocabulary and content relevant to their goals). Ask them to write down the key vocabulary. Ask them how they spelled the words and work on a challenging word over the phone.
- Read something to your learner (with content related to their goals and interests). Ask them to write down the main ideas and read them back to you.
- Suggest that your learner write a few sentences in a daily journal.
- Brainstorm some writing ideas over the phone. Ask your learner to sketch a mind map on paper, a mini whiteboard (check out our Home Literacy Kit) or using a window as a whiteboard with dry erase markers.

- Ask your learner to send samples of their writing (snail mail or drop-off at LU office) or photos of their writing (email or text) for your feedback.

Reading:

- Using common reading materials that you have sent your learner or found at home, do an assisted reading activity over the phone
- Use CLOZE passages that you have prepared and sent to your learner
- Consider borrowing two copies of a favourite workbook or reader from the LU resource library and work through those together over the phone
- Practice duet reading or choral reading using a reading resource you have sent your learner
- Ask your learner to read one of their journal entries to you

Mini-lessons:

- Dictate the spelling of targeted words over the phone for your learner to copy down on index cards. Use those cards for various activities – trace the shape of the words with a finger, organize the cards into categories, write a list of related word families on the back, create compound words, etc.
- Have your learner make up a story using as many words from the same word family as they can

In addition, try out some of the special activities at the end of this section that are compatible with phone use (Warm-ups, Language Experience Story, Word Scavenger Hunts).

Tutoring by text (SMS and Video Chat Apps)

Tutoring using text alone is also very challenging. Visual face-to-face cues are missing and oral communication is probably limited.

However, there is still a lot you can do with short texting activities via SMS or a platform like WhatsApp, especially if you have the capacity to use emojis, photos or video clips to add a visual element to your sessions or use an audio clip.

Standard texting

- Do a “written conversation” via text – remember to pick up on errors and model correct spelling and grammar in your responses

- Do a mini CLOZE exercise – send a short text with a word missing (replaced by an underscore) and ask your learner to fill in the blank
- Send a short text with a grammar or spelling error and ask your learner to correct it
- Text a series of words and ask your learner to text them back in alphabetical order
- Ask your learner to text as many words as they can that start with a specified consonant sound or blend (e.g. ch- or pr-)
- Text a scrambled sentence to your learner and ask them to text it back in the correct order – start with only a few words and build up slowly
- Go back and forth sending each other 3-letter words (or words that start with a specific letter, or words that belong to a category, etc.)
- Send a series of words that are all related except for one – ask your learner to text back the word that does not belong, with a short explanation why
- Practice expanding sentences – type a short complete sentence to your learner, ask them to retype the sentence adding in **one** word, then go back and forth each adding one word until you can't come up with anything else to add
- Practice writing a story – you start with a sentence, they add one, you add one and so on (create poetry or lyrics this way too)
- Ask your learner to describe a process using steps (e.g. making a sandwich, doing laundry, a task at work, etc.)
- Role play a conversation around one of your learner's goals (e.g. text out a possible conversation in a job interview or looking for an apartment to rent)

Using visuals in your texts:

- Text an emoji to your learner and then ask them to type back words that describe it – take turns going back and forth (you can increase the difficulty by using several emojis and making up a short story about them)
- Take turns describing an emoji that you want to be sent to you – the other person sends the emoji and you clarify if it is the one you were expecting
- Attach a photo and ask your learner to write a short description of it
- Ask your learner to send you a photo or a series of photos with captions
- Ask your learner to attach some photos of objects that they cannot spell – work through the spelling via text
- Ask your learner to take photos of various words in their community (scavenger hunt) and send them to you via text – discuss!

- Ask your learner to take photos of a process that they do well and provide captions for each photo
- Play charades on WhatsApp – you act out a word on a video clip and send it to your learner who guesses by text and then they send you a video clip doing a different word
- Send instructions via video clip on WhatsApp
- Celebrate small successes with a celebratory emoji!

Using audio in your texts (on WhatsApp):

- Dictate a sentence via audio clip and ask your learner to transcribe the sentence
- Ask your learner to send you a verbal question via audio clip and then you respond to the question via text
- Send an audio clip to your learner asking them to text you back a specific spelling word
- Send a short reading passage via text to your learner and ask them to record themselves reading it and then to send you the audio clip
- Send verbal instructions via audio clip

Remember to text the instructions for each activity before you start and get confirmation from your learner that they have understood. You could also give verbal instructions via phone, audio clip or video clip.

Top tip: Use full words when you text. If your learner wants to learn texting short forms and slang, do them only in the context of that lesson to minimize confusion.

Tutoring using video conferencing platforms

Online video conferencing platforms, like Zoom, are relatively straightforward to access (check out our [Quick Sheets on the website](#)).

Typical features in video conferencing Apps are:

- Whiteboard
- Share screen
- Annotation tools
- Chat
- Options to run polls or quizzes

Just take it slow, learn and practice one feature at a time and enjoy the experience!

Here are some activity ideas you can try using video conferencing platforms:

- Spend time doing tutorials on how to navigate each of the features in the video conferencing platform you are using – go at your learner’s pace
- Use the chat window to have written conversations or to practice reading and writing and then save the chats to use for future activities (e.g. correcting errors, expanding the chats, word study, CLOZE exercise, etc.)
- Use the chat window to send documents or links for your learner to use in the session
- Pull up a PDF or word document on a shared screen for a reading activity
- Share a reading passage on your screen (PDF or webpage) and ask your learner to use the annotate tool to circle phrases that answer comprehension questions you pose
- View web-based materials on your shared screen and ask your learner to use the annotate tool to circle key words or specific word patterns that you are working on (e.g. words ending in -ing, same word family, etc.)
- For web-based activities that are interactive, ask your learner to open those up on their device and share their screen with you so you can instruct and support them while they navigate the activity
- Create fun polls where your learner reads a list of items or sentences and interacts with the screen to respond to the poll
- Take advantage of the whiteboard feature (play word games, practice spelling, do mind mapping, etc.)

There will be a learning curve for you and your learner. Stick with it. It will be worth the effort as it offers a lot of options for a variety of activities that tick all the multisensory boxes.

More Activities

The activities described in more detail below have been referenced in other sections of this Guide. These include:

- Warm-up activities – to use at the beginning of any session
- Language Experience Story – how to adapt this idea to different learning modes
- Scavenger Hunt – a way to engage with vocabulary found in the home
- Choice Boards – a way of involving your learner in lesson planning
- Google Docs Activity – creating an opportunity for collaborative learning
- Video – as a starting point for learning

Warm-up Activities

These are general warm-up activities that are not too demanding and will ease your learner into the more challenging area of learning new skills. You could also do them at the end of the session to cool down.

Choose ones you know your learner will like and will fit with concepts you are working on!

Over the phone or on a video chat (some of these can be done by text as well):

- Read to your learner
- Do a duet reading of a shared reading passage (that you have sent in the mail)
- Transcribe a language experience story that your learner dictates over the phone and then send it to your learner by mail or email for next session
- Take turns brainstorming rhyming words
- Take turns picking words that start with the last letter of the previous word (e.g. clock, kangaroo, orange, elephant, tap, party, yellow, writing)
- Take turns coming up with 3-syllable words
- Do some free writing along with your learner and then share what you have written out loud
- Play Scattergories - pick a letter and a category – name as many words as you can in the category beginning with that letter

On a shared screen, shared document or whiteboard:

- Have a written conversation in a chat box
- Give your learner a fun and engaging Zoom poll
- Play Pictionary on a whiteboard – one person draws a picture and the other writes or types their guesses
- Play Hangman on a whiteboard
- Play Scattergories on a shared screen using this [Scattergories categories generator](#) – choose how many categories you want, push play and ignore the timer
- Do a fun online quiz on a shared screen – try out [Freerice vocabulary quiz](#) where a correct answer triggers a sponsor to pay for an equivalent of 5 grains of rice for the World Food Programme

Language Experience Story

Especially good for beginner readers, this technique provides activities that you can use for several weeks (or more!) and will bring in a kinesthetic-tactile approach.

Ask your learner to dictate their story while you copy it down. If texting is an option, text them back the story right away and have them read it back to you. Then, send them a package in the mail (or email if your learner has a printer) with the following items that you can use in subsequent sessions:

1. The story written or typed in large font for your learner to read to you
2. Index cards with key words (sight words) from the story – use them for extension activities (e.g. match words to words in the story, trace word with a finger or print the word in the air, brainstorm word families)
3. A second copy of the story with some predictable words replaced by just an underscore (CLOZE exercise)
4. A third copy of the story with some random words replaced by just an underscore (CLOZE exercise)
5. A fourth copy of the story with one sentence per line so that the learner can cut up each sentence with scissors and re-sequence
6. A fifth copy of the story so the learner can cut out individual words for various activities (e.g. re-creating the story, word sorts, alphabetizing, creating compound words, etc.)

Phone approach variations:

- If your learner has a printer and email you can send the sheets that way and create index cards that can be printed and cut out
- Your learner can also make their own flashcards with phone assistance (using our LU Home Literacy Kit)

Online approach variations:

- Send the package snail mail and use video chat to work through the activities
- Use Zoom whiteboard or shared Google Docs for the CLOZE activities
- Ask your learner to make their own flashcards with phone assistance (using our LU Home Literacy Kit)

Scavenger Hunts

This is a fun kinesthetic way to have your learner engage with vocabulary in their homes and neighbourhoods. Your scavenger hunt can be short or long and customized to different levels. It could be done in real time on your phone call, video call or texting session, or it could be assigned as homework.

Once your learner has completed the hunt, you can use the words and phrases in some extended activities (e.g. spelling, using the words in a sentence, adding words to categories, generating word families, etc.)

Here are a few suggestions to get you started.

Level 1 Activities (directions given verbally):

Write down:

- A word that starts with “A” on a label found in your bathroom
- A word that starts with “B” on a label found in your refrigerator
- Two words that you recognize in your neighbourhood
- Two words that you do not recognize inside your home
- Three 3-letter words found on your food packages

Level 2 Activities (directions given verbally):

Write down:

- Three 2-syllable words on items found in your bathroom
- Two words that rhyme on items found in your home
- Two words that start with pl- on labels found in your refrigerator
- Three words that appear on items that came in the mail today
- One compound word found on a food label

Level 3 Activities (directions given verbally or in writing):

Write down:

- Directions on a container of disinfecting wipes
- The first sentence of the first book you find at home
- Three descriptive words found on your shampoo bottle
- Five words on a nutrition label
- A phrase taken from the container of your tea or coffee that describes it

Choice Boards

A choice board is a great visual tool to get your learner involved in choosing what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. Make a grid with 9 squares and fill them with activity options that relate to your learner's goals.

This example includes activities for someone who wants to learn more about Covid-19 and is also practicing some digital skills around email and learning how to use Google Docs.

Delete 5 emails and learn how to unsubscribe to emails	Read the Westcoast Reader article on Covid-19 HERE	Create a draft email to a friend
Send your tutor an email attachment of this document on how to hand wash.	Write a numbered list of all the things you are doing to keep healthy and safe in this Google Doc	Insert a link in an email and then try the same in a Google Doc
Complete a quiz on Covid-19 HERE	Read this infographic on Covid-19 Riskiest Activities and write a list of the activities that you plan to do in the next month	Watch this video (with written captions) on proper handwashing

*** all links for this Choice Board can be viewed as a list at the end of this section

Choice Boards continued...

Ask your learner to choose which activities they will do to get a bingo either horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Or maybe they will choose to do them all!

When planning your choice board:

- Consider using your choice board for lesson planning – present the choice board for the main part of the lesson
- Send the choice board to your learner ahead of the lesson so they have a chance to consider what activities they would like to work on
- Consider using one board for a month and working through the activities
- You could include links to various online resources or just include activities that require pen and paper
- Your activities could be short mini-lessons or broader activities related to a specific goal
- Your board could include activities related to just one goal or could include several goals
- If you use this for homework assignments, make sure your learner will be able to do each activity independently
- If you complete a choice board activity within your session, consider some follow-up activities to accompany it

Google Docs

Google documents are similar to Word documents. The difference is that they can be used collaboratively so two or more people can work on the same document simultaneously. This creates opportunities for a variety of tutoring activities.

You will have to have a Google account. If your learner does not have a Google account, you can share the document via a link and give them editing permission.

You can work together in the document while on a video conferencing platform (e.g. Zoom), while over the phone or even when not connected (using the chat window to communicate).

Here are some ideas to use Google Docs in a tutoring session:

- Do a written conversation in real time – in the document or in the chat window
- Give your learner a writing activity and make written comments in the comment box
- Write something and ask your learner to leave written comments in the comment box – this encourages engagement and critical thinking
- Ask your learner to use the highlighter tool to focus on different concepts (e.g. highlight the two-syllable words in red and the three-syllable words in green, highlight all the prefixes in blue and the suffixes in yellow, etc.)
- Write a text with errors and have your learner make suggested changes using the editing tool (provides a visual element) – once you have accepted their suggestions, allow them to click the “accept suggestion” checkmark
- Use the document as your own personal whiteboard while tutoring on the phone or during a video tutoring session
- Create a word sort using Google Slides where your learner can drag and drop words into categories – copy [this one](#) and use it as a template for your own customized word sort
- If you are really ambitious and have the skills, consider creating a customized [HyperDoc](#) for your learner and sharing it with other tutors – a Hyper Doc is a digital lesson plan created by a teacher or tutor

Using Video as a Starting Point for Writing

To add variety and a dynamic visual element to your lessons, try using video clips (e.g. TEDTalk, TV411, YouTube or a news webpage). They are great as a springboard into reading and writing activities. They are also great ways to break up a session. They add interest and can help motivate a learner.

Here are some ideas for how to use video clips in your tutoring session:

- Share a video clip with the sound off and ask your learner to write the dialogue
- Share a short video clip, stop it before the end and ask your learner to write their own ending – then watch the end and discuss which ending was better!
- Watch a TEDTalk and write some thoughts about it
- Watch a YouTube video on learning a skill (anything your learner would like to learn) and ask your learner to write a summary of the steps
- Watch short entertaining video clips about various language skills and then do related web lessons – [TV411](#) (is a great place to do this!

Links in this section

Warm-up Activities

<https://swellgarfo.com/scattergories/>

<https://literacyunlimited-resourcehub.ca/resources/language-skills/reading-resources/#Vocabulary>

Choice Board

<https://thewestcoastreader.com/covid-19/>

<https://literacyunlimited-resourcehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/How-to-Hand-Wash.pdf>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xpK7k5bSPMYeYvbGDUGmdzU4vz-vbbf0Mgv5cy139dI/edit?usp=sharing>

<https://app.quizzify.com/demos/coronavirus-quiz>

<https://literacyunlimited-resourcehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Coronavirus-COVID19-riskiest-activities-03.png>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IisgnbMfKvI>

Google Docs

<https://literacyunlimited-resourcehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WORD-SORT-Suffixes.pptx>

<https://hyperdocs.co/blog/posts/hyperdocs-templates-for-getting-started>

Video

<http://www.tv411.org/writing/creative-personal-writing/editing-checklist>