

# Let's talk about literacy

Literacy touches every part of our lives – at home, at work, our health and in the community. It is more than reading and writing. It is being able to understand, use and act on information.



Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information.

In Ireland, many adults have unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. This means they might find it difficult to:

- read and understand instructions,
- work out a household budget,
- help kids with homework, or
- search the web for information.

## Why literacy matters

Literacy matters for everyone – the individual, services, our community and society. Literacy allows us to fully engage in society and be active citizens. It provides us with opportunities and is essential to developing an equal society.



The **Adult Literacy for Life** programme office developed a short eLearning course on adult literacy for people who deal with the public. The course will help people to become literacy aware and respond sensitively to unmet literacy needs.

[www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/aware](http://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/aware)



# Using a literacy friendly approach

Using a literacy friendly approach means:

1. Being **aware** of and **taking account** of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.
2. **Removing** literacy related **barriers** where possible.
3. **Communicating** clearly using plain language and universal design.
4. **Promoting** literacy and lifelong learning opportunities if appropriate.



## Tips for being literacy friendly in your work

Tip 1	Tip 2	Tip 3
<b>Respond sensitively to literacy needs</b>	<b>Use plain language</b>	<b>Chunk and check</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You cannot know if someone might need literacy, numeracy or digital literacy support by looking at them.</li><li>• But you can look out for signs where people might need extra time to go through information or help with filling in a form.</li></ul>	<p>Plain language is a clear and straightforward style of writing and communication that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is understood the first time you read or hear it; and</li><li>• Uses everyday language and avoids unnecessary jargon or technical terms.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is a tool to help with understanding information. You break down the information into smaller chunks. This is better than providing all the information at once.</li><li>• In between each 'chunk', you can ask the person what they understood from it before moving on.</li></ul>

### More information

<https://www.nala.ie/publications/writing-and-design-tips/>

### More information

[www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/toolkit/techniques/chunk-and-check/](http://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/toolkit/techniques/chunk-and-check/)

Find out more on the website: [www.adultliteracyforlife.ie](http://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie)