

Course  
**Building Foundations**  
**ENG-B122-4**

Literacy





“Literacy unlocks the door to learning throughout life, is essential to development and health, and opens the way for democratic participation and active citizenship.”

Kofi Annan (1938- )

## Presentation of the Course *Building Foundations*

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The goal of the course *Building Foundations* is to introduce adult learners to the understanding and use of oral and written discourse in real-life situations related to their immediate environment.

This course develops adult literacy learners’ capacity to use language in their immediate environment by engaging them in a variety of simple speaking and listening, reading and writing, activities to decode and encode meaning.

By the end of the course, adult literacy learners will be able to understand and produce some very basic informative, expressive and aesthetic texts related to their immediate environment in order to obtain and give short basic information and instructions, request assistance, and express preferences, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. They will, for example, write rudimentary messages, journal entries and one-step instructions, recognize high-frequency sight words in short notes, labels, and high-interest/low-vocabulary adult content books, as well as understand short announcements and messages.

## Dealing with Real-Life Situations

Dealing effectively with real-life situations is based on actions. These actions are grouped into categories and make use of a set of resources that include operational competencies and essential knowledge. During the learning process, adults are expected to construct knowledge related to these resources in order to be able to deal appropriately with their real-life situations.

The class of situations, categories of actions, operational competencies and essential knowledge constitute the compulsory elements of the course. These elements are detailed in their respective rubrics.



## Class of Situations Addressed by the Course

This course addresses a single class of situations: *Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning.*

This class of situations includes a wide range of immediate personal and social situations in which adults are required to decode and encode meaning both orally and in writing. Dealing competently with these situations requires phonemic awareness, familiarity with basic sound-symbol correspondences and the capacity to recognize and use common high-frequency words and routine expressions that they encounter in their immediate surroundings. It also requires the

ability to ask for, obtain and give some basic information and instructions, request assistance and express preferences, satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Some examples of real-life situations include getting around the community, looking for an apartment, using banking services, preparing meals and taking medication.

Class of Situations	Examples of Real-Life Situations
Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting around the community</li> <li>▪ Shopping for food</li> <li>▪ Shopping for clothes</li> <li>▪ Locating people and professionals</li> <li>▪ Looking for an apartment</li> <li>▪ Preparing meals</li> <li>▪ Reporting a crime</li> <li>▪ Recycling</li> <li>▪ Taking medication</li> <li>▪ Going out</li> </ul>
Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning ( <i>Continuation</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Socializing with friends and neighbours</li> <li>▪ Using banking services</li> <li>▪ Driving</li> <li>▪ Being in an emergency</li> <li>▪ Looking for work</li> <li>▪ Celebrating special occasions</li> </ul>

## Categories of Actions

The *categories of actions* are groups of actions that are appropriate for dealing with the real-life situations addressed in the course. *Examples of actions* are provided to illustrate the scope of the category across a variety of contexts.

Categories of Actions	Examples of Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interacting orally in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduces oneself or another person</li> <li>▪ Exchanges basic personal information (e.g. name, address, phone number, status, family members)</li> <li>▪ Asks for, obtains and gives very basic general information (e.g. apartment size, highway code, appointment time and address)</li> <li>▪ Asks for, obtains and gives short straightforward instructions (e.g. how to take medication, directions to local shopping centre)</li> <li>▪ Requests assistance using very basic vocabulary and routine expressions and terms (e.g. from health professionals, law enforcement agents)</li> <li>▪ Expresses needs using very basic vocabulary and routine expressions and terms (e.g. regarding clothing, shelter, food)</li> <li>▪ Expresses satisfaction, dissatisfaction or preferences using very basic vocabulary and routine expressions and terms (e.g. regarding restaurants, food, movies)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listening to informative texts in the immediate environment to decode meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listens to short television and radio commercials and ads, recognizing familiar strings of words (e.g. prices, names of stores)</li> <li>▪ Listens to short recorded messages, recognizing familiar strings of words (e.g. business hours, location)</li> <li>▪ Listens to short announcements, recognizing familiar strings of words (e.g. in-store specials)</li> <li>▪ Listens to simple oral narratives (e.g. beginner read-aloud books)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reading informative, expressive and aesthetic texts in the immediate environment to decode meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reads common signs and symbols (e.g. road signs, warnings, movie and restaurant ratings)</li> <li>▪ Recognizes common high-frequency sight words (e.g. registered trademarks, “for rent” notices)</li> </ul>

Categories of Actions	Examples of Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognizes common familiar words (e.g. neighbourhood streets and metro stations)</li> <li>▪ Reads one-step instructions (e.g. “Boil for 5 minutes”, “Take with water.”)</li> <li>▪ Finds names and locations in building directories (e.g. of health professionals, services, tenants)</li> <li>▪ Recognizes basic information in simple schedules, labels (e.g. frequency and dosage of prescription medication, food expiry date, clothing fabric, business hours)</li> <li>▪ Reads some high-frequency goodwill expressions in cards, notes (e.g. Happy Birthday, Thank you, Get well soon)</li> <li>▪ Reads short, simple menus with pictures (e.g. on fast-food boards)</li> <li>▪ Reads common frequency sight words in high -interest/low-vocabulary adult content books (e.g. Fry, Dolch)</li> <li>▪ Reads requests for personal information on simple common forms (e.g. name, address, phone number, marital status)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writing informative and expressive texts in the immediate environment to encode meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writes names, addresses, phone numbers in personal phone book (e.g. neighbours, health professionals, local delivery restaurants)</li> <li>▪ Writes brief reminder notes (e.g. appointments, medication)</li> <li>▪ Writes short lists of familiar items (e.g. food items)</li> <li>▪ Writes rudimentary one-step instructions (e.g. “Take out garbage,” “Call doctor”)</li> <li>▪ Fills out simple common forms (e.g. date/name/location of past job experience on job applications)</li> <li>▪ Fills out very basic schedules (e.g. hospital appointments, record of child’s medication)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writing informative and expressive texts in the immediate environment to encode meaning (<i>Continuation</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writes rudimentary messages (e.g. name, phone number and time of call)</li> <li>▪ Writes common high-frequency goodwill expressions in cards, notes (e.g. Happy Birthday, Thank you)</li> <li>▪ Keeps a rudimentary journal (e.g. pictures and short captions)</li> </ul>

## Compulsory Elements and End-of-Course Outcomes

Dealing effectively with real-life situations is based on actions. These actions are grouped into categories and make use of a set of resources that include operational competencies and essential knowledge. During the learning process, adults are expected to construct knowledge related to these resources in order to be able to deal appropriately with their real-life situations.

The class of situations, categories of actions, operational competencies and essential knowledge constitute the compulsory elements of the course.

### Class of Situations

Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning

### Categories of Actions

- Interacting orally in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning
- Listening to informative texts in the immediate environment to decode meaning
- Reading informative, expressive and aesthetic texts in the immediate environment to decode meaning
- Writing informative and expressive texts in the immediate environment to encode meaning

### Operational Competencies

#### Communicates

- Determines a purpose for communicating
- Listens attentively to the interlocutor
- Maintains conversation by responding appropriately to the interlocutor's interventions
- Adapts language to the degree of formality of the situation

#### Acts methodically

- Uses meaning-making strategies, techniques and procedures including print decoding strategies to make sense of written texts
- Uses strategies to encode meaning in the production of written texts
- Uses compensatory techniques to repair communication difficulties
- Observes conventions for initiating, maintaining and closing the exchange



### **Essential Knowledge**

- Types of discourse (informative, expressive and aesthetic)
- Discourse cues and features
- Reading, writing, speaking, listening strategies, techniques and procedures
- The sound system
- The writing system
- Language functions
- Sociolinguistic features
- Grammar and syntax
- Vocabulary pertaining to the immediate environment

The end of course outcomes describe how adults make use of the compulsory elements to deal with the real-life situations addressed in the course.

### End-of-Course Outcomes

In order to deal competently with the class of situations *Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning*, adult literacy learners use some very basic language resources such as phonemic awareness and awareness of sound-symbol correspondence to decode and encode meaning. Whether they are producing or understanding very basic oral or written discourse, adults determine a purpose for communicating.

When interacting orally, adult literacy learners use language functions to achieve their communicative purposes, such as to ask for, obtain and give very basic information and instructions, request assistance and express needs and preferences as well as satisfaction or dissatisfaction in matters closely related to their immediate environment. When doing so, they use a range of very basic vocabulary, routine expressions and terms, and elements of the sound system such as appropriate pronunciation and word stress. They listen attentively to their interlocutor and maintain the conversation by responding appropriately to their interlocutor's interventions. They observe appropriate conventions for initiating, sustaining and closing the exchange. They also use extra-linguistic features of oral discourse, for example body language, in addition to compensatory techniques, such as circumlocution and approximation to repair any communication difficulties.

When listening to informative texts, they use listening techniques and recognize discourse cues such as attending to common key words and phrases in short announcements and recorded messages.

They read some informative, expressive and aesthetic texts related to their immediate surroundings by using print decoding strategies such as recognizing sight words and other meaning-making strategies such as visualizing and recognizing formulas and models. They obtain some basic information in simple schedules and labels, follow short instructions, and recognize some high-frequency sight words in cards, personal notes and high-interest/low-vocabulary adult content books.

They also write some informative and expressive texts, such as short lists of familiar items, common high-frequency goodwill expressions, rudimentary messages and journal entries. When producing such texts, they rely on writing models and use elements of the writing system, such as initial capitalization and end punctuation.

Whenever adult literacy learners produce oral or written discourse related to their immediate environment, they respect the sociolinguistic features of discourse by adapting their language to the degree of formality of the situation.

## Evaluation Criteria

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- Interacts using basic, common oral texts in routine situations at a functional level
- Understands basic, common oral texts in routine situations at a functional level
- Reads predictable, basic, common texts at a functional level
- Writes short, basic, common texts at a functional level

## Operational Competencies

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The contribution of each operational competency is described in terms of the actions that are appropriate for dealing with the real-life situations of this course. These operational competencies are addressed in other courses and therefore all of the courses taken together contribute to their development.

In this course, only the following operational competencies are addressed: *Communicates* and *Acts methodically*.

### Contribution of the Operational Competency *Communicates*

The operational competency *Communicates* is the capacity to express meaning simply and clearly and to understand the basic meaning expressed by others. It is solicited in all real-life situations in which people exchange meaning and is linked to the class of situations *Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning*.

Adult literacy learners exercise their communicative competency by determining a purpose for communicating. When interacting orally, they listen attentively to their interlocutors and maintain conversation by responding appropriately to their interlocutor's interventions. They adapt their language to the degree of formality of the situation in order to achieve their communicative purposes in real-life situations associated with their immediate environment.

### Contribution of the Operational Competency *Acts Methodically*

The operational competency *Acts methodically* involves the identification and use of appropriate strategies, techniques and procedures in order to achieve a specific purpose. It is solicited in all real-life situations linked to the class of situations *Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning*.

Adults act methodically when they use print-decoding strategies, techniques and procedures, such as recognizing sight words and syntactical cues, and other meaning-making strategies, such as rereading and referring to existing knowledge. Adults also act methodically when they observe conventions for initiating, sustaining and closing the exchange and use compensatory techniques, such as circumlocution and approximation, to repair any communication difficulties.

## Essential Knowledge

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The essential knowledge for the literacy level courses is found at the end of the literacy courses.

## Attitudes

The following attitudes are provided as suggestions only. The development of these attitudes can help adults to become more competent in dealing with the real-life situations in this course.

Willingness to take risks	Self-confidence
<p>Willingness to take risks involves being ready to experiment and not being inhibited by fear of making errors. This attitude is a crucial factor in language development and depends on recognizing and accepting the fact that learning is a trial-and-error process. It is by showing initiative, accepting new challenges and experimenting with various forms of communication in different situations that adults increase their language proficiency and improve their level of competency.</p>	<p>Self-confidence can be defined as having faith in one’s abilities. It is an attitude that allows adults to have positive and realistic views of themselves and their situations and to progress. When adults are self-confident, they show a readiness to learn, a willingness to interact orally with their interlocutors and to undertake new reading and writing challenges. This attitude allows adult literacy learners to reflect upon their achievements, establish new goals, and actively participate in the construction of new knowledge and the development of language proficiency.</p>
Perseverance	
<p>Perseverance can be defined as persistent determination. Adults who persevere continue their language studies even though they may sometimes feel discouraged. They are committed to hard work. This attitude allows adults to learn from their mistakes and to purposefully participate in learning activities to increase their level of competency. Perseverance is a key attitude for the development of language and lifelong learning.</p>	

## Complementary Resources

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The following resources are provided as suggestions only and consist of references that may be consulted in learning situations.

Social Resources	Material Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Community centres</li><li>▪ Libraries</li><li>▪ Museums</li><li>▪ Theatres</li><li>▪ Retailers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Picture dictionaries</li><li>▪ Beginners' dictionaries</li><li>▪ Spelling reference books</li><li>▪ Beginners' grammar reference books</li><li>▪ Writing models</li><li>▪ Audio books</li><li>▪ High-interest/low-vocabulary adult content books</li><li>▪ Children's books</li><li>▪ Web sites</li><li>▪ Authentic teaching materials (e.g. telephone books, calendars, schedules, menus)</li><li>▪ Multimedia materials (print and non-print)</li></ul>

## Contribution of Other Subject Areas

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Essential knowledge from other subject areas is also useful for dealing competently with the real-life situations in this course. While this knowledge is pertinent, it is not subject to formal evaluation in this course, nor does it constitute a prerequisite.

In Literacy, the same situation can be treated in more than one course and can solicit essential knowledge from other subject areas such as Mathematics, Science and Technology.



## Andragogical Context

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It is understood that for learning to take place, adult literacy learners must perceive it as meaningful and relevant to their life. It is from this perspective that the English, Language of Instruction program of study has been developed. The content of the courses in the program has been organized around the real-life situations of the learners. Consequently, in order to make learning concrete and useful, all learning situations are based on these real-life situations.

Learning situations target the construction of the essential language knowledge and the development of the operational competencies necessary to deal competently with real-life situations. Adults develop these operational competencies with the help of the teacher who calls particular attention to the significant actions associated with them by engaging the adults in meaningful speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. As a result, adults build essential knowledge, solicit the appropriate operational competencies for the given real-life situation, and reflect upon their learning, the strategies used, the reinvestment and transformation of their existing knowledge and the attitudes adopted.

In this learning context, teachers play the role of facilitator, mediator and guide. They establish a safe learning environment for adult literacy learners where mutual respect and trust create a climate conducive to learning. With the support of the teacher, adult literacy learners share responsibility for their learning. They define their learning needs, taking into consideration their existing knowledge and experience. Emphasis is placed on the learning process used to

construct the essential language knowledge and to develop the operational competencies. It is therefore important that the learning situation be linked to the needs of the adult literacy learners. By participating in the learning situation that is linked to a real-life situation, adults perceive the relevance of their learning to their life, which in turn stimulates their motivation and involvement.

The learning situation occurs in the adult's place of learning. It is not specific to the needs of a particular adult; rather it is sufficiently open and global to allow all adults to explore important aspects of language related to dealing competently with the real-life situation. Throughout the learning situation, teachers observe the adult literacy learners in action, whether they are in small or large group discussions or interacting with peers. They guide and advise them on the appropriate strategies for constructing the necessary resources and give specific instruction to individuals and groups as needed. The teacher encourages the learners to make links between new knowledge and existing knowledge, and to reflect on and evaluate their learning process and the degree to which they have developed their competencies.

The courses in the English, Language of Instruction program of study are especially designed to promote adult literacy learners' active participation in their own learning. It encourages them to develop their autonomy by providing them with the opportunity to build the language skills required to function competently in real-life situations.

## Learning Situation

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The learning situation that follows is provided as an example to show teachers how the principles of pedagogical renewal can be applied in the classroom.

It is authentic, in the sense that it addresses a real-life situation, taken from the class of situations in the course, in which adults may find themselves. It is sufficiently open and comprehensive to allow adult literacy learners to explore several important aspects related to dealing with this real-life situation.

The examples of actions presented in the course help the teacher to identify those actions that an adult would take to deal with the real-life situation. The teacher can then refer to these examples in order to develop pertinent learning activities.

The learning situation is organized in terms of the three steps of the teaching-learning process, namely:

- planning learning
- actual learning
- integrating and reinvesting learning

These steps highlight the principles of pedagogical renewal insofar as they encourage adults to be active, to reflect on their learning and to interact with their peers when the learning context is suitable. They include learning activities and may also include evaluation activities intended to support adults in the learning process.

These activities help learners to construct knowledge related to the compulsory elements of the course that are targeted by the learning situation concerned: one or more categories of actions, essential knowledge and the actions of the operational competencies associated with the categories of actions.

The example provided also refers to certain teaching strategies—pedagogical methods and techniques—that can be selected according to the learners, the context and the learning environment. Certain learning strategies may also be suggested, as well as a variety of material and social resources.

## Example of a Learning Situation

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### Identifying Prescription Labels

In the class of situations *Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning*, one of the examples of situations is *Taking medication*.

Considering the year-round problems encountered with allergies, the flu, or rashes, a short television commercial or magazine ad serves as a springboard for discussion on the difficulties encountered when taking prescription medications. To deal competently with this real-life situation, adult literacy learners engage in different learning activities in order to recognize specific information on prescription labels. In this learning situation, students fill in personal drug profile cards with key information found on prescription labels. While doing so, they engage in three categories of actions : interacting orally, reading to decode meaning and writing to encode meaning. They also call upon and further develop their operational competencies *Communicates* and *Acts methodically* by engaging in the significant actions associated with them.

The first learning activity consists of a brainstorming session in which the teacher elicits from the learners the type of information that is usually found on a medicine label. He or she asks the appropriate questions (e.g. What type of medication have you taken? How often? How much? How did you take it?) to activate their existing knowledge and experience. With guidance from the teacher, adults identify various elements that are commonly found on a prescription label. As they provide their answers, the teacher writes on the board the appropriate vocabulary associated with the information they are supplying, such as dosage, frequency and so on.

The teacher then uses multimedia support, such as an overhead projector, to teach the learners how to locate the important information on medicine labels. He or she instructs them to recognize key vocabulary and language structures, such as the name of the person for whom the prescription is prepared, the name and phone number of the pharmacist, the name of the doctor, the dosage, the instructions and the expiry date. The teacher presents different strategies, such as word recognition, visualizing and recognizing models, and together they discuss the most appropriate ones to use and how to apply them in order to decode and encode meaning. To help reinforce the specific vocabulary and related abbreviations, the teacher gives students cloze and matching exercises that they complete individually and then compare and discuss with a partner. The teacher moves around the class observing and helping the learners.

For the third learning activity, the teacher distributes empty prescription bottles or packages (brought in by students) or photocopies of drug labels. He or she also provides them with blank personal drug profile cards that they will have to fill in with the pertinent information from the labels.

The following table is meant to serve as an example only:

Personal drug profile card: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Name of medication	Dosage	Frequency	Instructions
-----	<i>One tablet</i>	<i>Twice a day</i>	<i>Take with food</i>
Medication 1			
Medication 2			

Learners scan the labels to locate the specific information and write it on the card so as to create a personal reminder of the essential facts to retain when taking medication. In pairs, they then review each other’s card and provide feedback.

While brainstorming in a large group or collaborating in pairs, adult literacy learners exercise their communicative competency by determining a purpose for communicating, for example, providing information about their experiences with taking medication and listening attentively to their interlocutor when receiving feedback. They use simple features of oral discourse, such as proper articulation and pace, and appeal to compensatory techniques, such as approximation, to repair any communication difficulties they may encounter. When deciphering labels and filling out cards, they act methodically by applying appropriate reading and writing strategies, techniques and procedures such as memorizing and using models.

At the end of the learning situation, the teacher animates a discussion with the whole class on the value of the learning situation. They discuss the information they learned, the strategies they applied, and the problems they encountered. The learners also reflect on the knowledge gained and on the effectiveness of the strategies, techniques and procedures used. They keep a log of new words learned to facilitate any reinvestment and adaptation of constructed knowledge to a real-life situation related to taking medication.

## Elements of the Course Addressed by the Learning Situation

### Class of Situations

Using language in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning

### Learning Situation

Identifying Prescription Labels

### Categories of Actions

- Interacting orally in the immediate environment to decode and encode meaning
- Reading informative, expressive and aesthetic texts in the immediate environment to decode meaning
- Writing informative, expressive and aesthetic texts in the immediate environment to encode meaning

### Operational Competencies

- Communicates
- Acts methodically

### Essential Knowledge

- Types of discourse (informative)
- Discourse cues and features
- Speaking, listening, reading, writing strategies, techniques and procedures
- The sound system
- The writing system
- Language functions
- Sociolinguistic features
- Grammar and syntax
- Vocabulary pertaining to the immediate environment

### Complementary Resources

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|---|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Copies of prescription drugs labels     | ▪ Writing models              |
| ▪ Empty prescription bottles and packages | ▪ Multimedia support material |



