

Course  
**Accessing Services**  
**ENG-B124-4**

Literacy





“Literacy is... the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.”

Kofi Annan (1938- )

## Presentation of the Course *Accessing Services*

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The goal of the course *Accessing Services* is to help adult literacy learners use oral and written discourse to deal competently with real-life situations related to obtaining access to public services.

This course develops adult literacy learners' language proficiency by involving them in a variety of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities that provide them with an opportunity to put basic language skills into practice in situations related to contacting and using the public resources in their communities.

By the end of the course, adults will be able to understand and produce some basic informative discourse related to accessing public services. They will, for example, produce short, plain texts such as notes and notices, keep simple records and fill out simple forms. They will also understand some basic information in texts such as schedules and public announcements containing familiar, concrete language. They will locate some specific information in written texts such as directories, ads and flyers and will be able to ask for, obtain and give basic information, instruction and advice, state needs, request assistance and express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with respect to accessing public services.

## 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 to access public services.*

This class of situations includes a wide range of familiar real-life situations in which adults are required to use simple oral and written discourse related to accessing public services. Dealing competently with such situations requires adults to decode and locate specific information contained in written texts and to write simple messages and fill out forms related to accessing public services. In their oral interactions, they use common, everyday vocabulary and simple language structures to ask for, obtain and give basic information,

instructions and advice, state needs, request assistance, and express feelings, opinions, satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Some examples of real-life situations include contacting legal aid, accessing social services or public transportation, and finding out about garbage collection.

Class of Situations	Examples of Real-Life Situations
Using language to access public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accessing health care services</li> <li>▪ Accessing public transportation</li> <li>▪ Accessing services for work-related injuries</li> <li>▪ Accessing social services</li> <li>▪ Accessing popular educational services</li> <li>▪ Accessing employment services</li> <li>▪ Accessing customer services</li> <li>▪ Finding out about garbage collection and recycling services</li> <li>▪ Contacting legal aid services</li> <li>▪ Using postal services</li> <li>▪ Using banking services</li> <li>▪ Using daycare services</li> <li>▪ Using library services</li> <li>▪ Using recreational services</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 to access public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Asks for, obtains and gives basic information (e.g. from health care professionals, service representatives)</li> <li>▪ Expresses satisfaction, dissatisfaction (e.g. regarding mail delivery, customer service)</li> <li>▪ Requests assistance (e.g. telephone operator, bank teller)</li> <li>▪ Asks for, obtains and gives basic instructions and advice (e.g. on locations, how to access workmen's compensation)</li> <li>▪ Expresses needs using basic vocabulary and some routine expressions and terms (e.g. concerning health, legal aid, educational services)</li> <li>▪ Expresses opinions (e.g. regarding health services)</li> <li>▪ Shares feelings and emotions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listening to informative texts to access public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listens to public announcements for specific, basic information (e.g. arrivals/departures)</li> <li>▪ Listens to recorded messages for specific information (e.g. opening/closing hours)</li> <li>▪ Listens to short, basic instructions (e.g. telephone recordings)</li> </ul>

Categories of Actions	Examples of Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reading informative texts to access public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reads short instructions (three- to- five steps) with pictures (e.g. regarding garbage disposal, recycling)</li> <li>▪ Reads ads and flyers for specific information (e.g. dates, fees, locations)</li> <li>▪ Reads short, simple forms (e.g. school registration, library membership)</li> <li>▪ Reads simple notes, posters and notices for specific information (e.g. pertaining to libraries, hospitals, community centres, recycling)</li> <li>▪ Reads simple schedules, fares/fees (e.g. for bus, train, pools)</li> <li>▪ Locates specific information in directories, ads and flyers (e.g. department store flyer, Yellow Pages)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Writing informative texts to access public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fills out simple forms (e.g. pertaining to postal services, school registration, job applications, licenses)</li> <li>▪ Keeps simple records (e.g. regarding medications, immunizations)</li> <li>▪ Writes short, plain messages (e.g. to work colleague)</li> <li>▪ Writes three- or four- step instructions (e.g. to babysitter, caregiver)</li> <li>▪ Writes simple schedules (e.g. regarding library activities and programs)</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 to access public services

### Categories of Actions

- Interacting orally to access public services
- Listening to informative texts to access public services
- Reading informative texts to access public services
- Writing informative texts to access public services

### 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
- Uses strategies, techniques and procedures to encode meaning in the production of written texts
- Uses compensatory techniques to repair communication difficulties
- Observes conventions for initiating, sustaining and closing the exchange



## Essential Knowledge

- Types of discourse (informative)
- Oral and written discourse cues and features
- Speaking, listening, reading and writing strategies, techniques and procedures
- The sound system
- The writing system
- Language functions
- Sociolinguistic features
- Grammar and syntax
- Vocabulary related to accessing public services

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 to access public services*, adult literacy learners use basic language skills and continue to read and write simple texts with more confidence. Whether they are speaking, listening, reading or writing, adults determine a purpose for communicating.

When interacting orally, adult literacy learners use a variety of language functions to achieve their communicative purposes, such as asking for and giving basic information, instructions, and advice. They state needs, request assistance, express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, using basic vocabulary and routine expressions, and share feelings and personal experiences on matters related to accessing public services. They listen attentively to their interlocutors, maintain conversation by responding appropriately to their interlocutor's interventions and observe the appropriate conventions for initiating, sustaining and closing the exchange. They use features of oral discourse, such as articulation, volume and tone, to enhance the effectiveness of their communication. If necessary, they use compensatory techniques, such as circumlocution and approximation, to repair communication difficulties.

When listening to informative texts such as short, basic instructions, adult literacy learners use listening techniques, such as guessing from context, and attend to discourse cues, such as keywords and phrases, in order to obtain specific information from public announcements.

While reading, adult literacy learners use their knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence to make sense of print. They use print-decoding strategies, such as recognizing sight words and syntactical cues, and other meaning-making strategies, techniques and procedures such as referring to their existing knowledge, self-questioning, and rereading. They read informative texts such as ads, flyers and directories to find specific information, three- to five-step sequential instructions with pictures, simple notes, posters, schedules and short forms.

When writing, adult literacy learners use pre-writing techniques, such as brainstorming, and continue to develop and apply writing techniques and procedures such as observing basic writing conventions and rereading their drafts. They write informative texts such as short, plain messages three-to four-step instructions and basic schedules, using simple grammatical structures and vocabulary. They also keep simple records and fill out simple forms, observing writing conventions such as correct punctuation and spelling.

Adult literacy learners respect the sociolinguistic features of discourse by adapting their language to the level of formality of the situation. They understand and use vocabulary associated with accessing public services.

## 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 real-life situations in which people exchange meaning and is linked to the class of situations *Using language to access public services*.

Adult literacy learners exercise their communicative competency by determining a purpose for communicating. When interacting orally, they listen attentively to their interlocutor 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 related to accessing public services.

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

The operational competency *Acts methodically* involves the effective 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 to access public services*.

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, techniques and procedures, 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>▪ Government agencies</li><li>▪ Non-government agencies</li><li>▪ Museums</li><li>▪ Theatres</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>▪ Authentic teaching materials (e.g. schedules, calendars, phone books)</li><li>▪ Multimedia materials (print and non-print)</li></ul>

## Contribution of Other Subject Areas

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**E**ssential 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, that adults may find themselves in. It is sufficiently open and comprehensive to allow adult 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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### The Train Reservation

In the class of situations *Using language to access public services*, one of the examples is *Using public transportation*.

Referring to the upcoming field trip to another city in which the students are participating, the teacher leads a discussion on the importance of careful planning for such an activity, focusing especially on the importance of obtaining the information necessary to make a train reservation and emphasizing the important role that language plays in communicating information. In order to deal competently with this real-life situation, adult literacy learners engage in different learning activities in order to make their travel arrangements. To do so, they use reading, writing, speaking and listening resources and reinvest essential knowledge, such as vocabulary and elements of the sound system constructed in previous learning situations. In this learning situation, adult literacy learners engage in two categories of actions: reading and interacting orally to access public services. They call upon their operational competencies *Communicates* and *Acts methodically* and further develop them by engaging in the significant actions associated with them.

To begin, the teacher, together with the class, establishes the time of departure as Friday evening and a return time as Sunday evening before six o'clock. The teacher then leads a brainstorming session to elicit from the adult literacy learners what factors they need to consider before carrying out their task. The teacher encourages them to activate their existing knowledge, to identify what information they need to obtain and to predict what information they may expect to find when making travel arrangements. To help them

with this learning activity, the teacher writes the list of their suggestions on the board and leads a discussion with the class on the pertinence of each suggestion. They conclude that they need to obtain information such as the exact times of arrival and departure, the train number, the gate number and the cost of a round-trip ticket. To help them build new vocabulary and terms related to travel arrangements (e.g. economy class, passenger, adult, child, student, date, fare, and discount), the teacher involves the adults in learning activities, such as word games (e.g. crossword puzzles, word search problems) or exercises (e.g. cloze exercises) that the teacher has already prepared.

To prepare for the first reading activity, the teacher groups the learners in pairs and distributes a very simplified version of the train schedule that she/he will have adapted for the route. The learners read the schedule individually, and in pairs compare their comprehension. The teacher walks around the class encouraging the learners to apply their knowledge of reading techniques and proposes new strategies, techniques, and procedures if necessary.

Then the teacher guides the whole class on how to scan the page in order to see how the information is organized, pointing out how to use discourse cues such as titles and headings to find specific information. As well, the teacher discusses the use of graphics as a method of displaying information, pointing out that information in schedules or timetables may be read horizontally or vertically.

The teacher then distributes another schedule, perhaps a bus schedule, in a slightly different format, so that students can compare

the two and formulate some generalizations about what schedules look like. The teacher reviews print-decoding strategies, such as word-recognition, to help the learners read for specific information (e.g. days of the week) and introduces the use of abbreviations and digital time in schedules and timetables, providing appropriate exercises for learners to practice decoding and encoding strategies and construct new knowledge regarding abbreviations and digital time.

In the next activity, the teacher distributes a fictitious train schedule, with some of the essential information missing (e.g. an arrival time, or a train number, etc.). Individually, the students listen to a recorded telephone exchange between a customer and a ticket agent, in which the customer asks for information about travel times, days of the week, fares, etc. and the agent gives them information. The students' task is to fill in the missing information in their schedules. This activity helps them to associate information given in spoken and written forms. It puts them in a situation where real information is being exchanged and gives them a realistic purpose for listening and reading, namely, to obtain information. The tape can be played a second time, to facilitate the students' task. After they have filled out their schedules, they compare their answers with a partner. There may be discrepancies, and they should identify these. The teacher then plays the tape a final time, and students will probably be able to resolve the discrepancies.

The teacher then distributes a printed copy of the telephone exchange and students read along silently while they listen to the tape. This again reinforces the connection between the written and spoken words. Students can underline words that they don't recognize, and afterwards the teacher can address questions and help them with decoding strategies, techniques and procedures.

In the final activity, the students engage in a paired role-play, in which one of them plays a customer and the other a ticket agent. They use the former exchange as a model, perhaps acting out the model with each other first. Then the teacher sets the problem and its constraints (e.g. the customer wants to go to Toronto on a weekday and return on a weekday, they have to be there by a certain time, and they have to be back at home by a certain day and time, etc.). The ticket agents have a schedule (which they don't show to their partner). The pairs then role-play the conversation, with the customer asking questions, expressing needs and preferences, and the ticket agent giving information, making suggestions on the basis of the information given in the schedule. When interacting, they have to listen carefully to their interlocutor to make sure they understand the question or the answer. They have to respond appropriately to their interlocutors' interventions, follow turn-taking rules and repair any communication difficulties by asking for repetition or reformulating. Their conversation demonstrates the sociolinguistic features (e.g. politeness, degree of formality) appropriate to an exchange between a customer and a salesperson. By the end of the exchange, the customer has to make a decision about which train trip to reserve. A second role-play can also be introduced so that students can reverse their role as customer or travel agent. This time, the problem and constraints, as well as the schedule, would be slightly different.

At the end of the learning situation, the adult literacy learners come together in one large group and discuss with the teacher the value of the learning situation. They discuss the information they learned, the strategies, techniques and procedures they applied and the problems they encountered. Individually, each learner verifies the achievement of the task by filling out an evaluation grid previously

prepared by the teacher. The learner also reflects on the knowledge gained and on the effectiveness of the strategies, techniques and procedures used to facilitate any reinvestment and adaptation of constructed language knowledge to a real-life situation.

## Elements of the Course Addressed by the Learning Situation

Class of Situations	
Using language to access public services	
Learning Situation	
The Train Reservation	
Categories of Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacting orally to access public services</li> <li>Reading informative texts to access public services</li> </ul>	
Operational Competencies	Essential Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates</li> <li>Acts methodically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of discourse (informative)</li> <li>Oral and written discourse cues and features</li> <li>Speaking, listening, reading and writing strategies, techniques and procedures</li> <li>The sound system</li> <li>The writing system</li> <li>Language functions</li> <li>Sociolinguistic features</li> <li>Grammar and syntax</li> <li>Vocabulary related to transportation</li> </ul>
Complementary Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authentic teaching materials (e.g. schedules, calendars)</li> </ul>	

