

# **Empowering literacy and teaching a new language**

A practical guide  
to the use of  
Easy to Read books  
in language education

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# Learning a new language

## 1. How we learn

1. Our brains learn through **perception**. Then we do a more precise **reasoning**. Finally we make **conclusions** and **organise** the information into **categories**.
2. Learners can find out **on their own** both rules and the functioning of a new language. This helps them **remember** words and structures better.
3. Learners need **specific** and **authentic materials to read** – such as Easy to Read books. Through simple language and interesting texts learners can **identify** how the new language functions and learn the rules.

**\*see the glossary**

## 2. Motivation

1. Motivation is an **inner drive**, which makes us perform a specific action.
2. **Interest** and motivation are needed throughout the whole language learning process.
3. **Authentic, engaging, colourful** and **varied didactic materials** usually keep learners interested.

## 3. Every learner is different

When you **know your learners** well, you can suggest activities for different **learning styles** and **strategies\***, personality traits and combinations of **intelligence types\***.

## 4. Ludic (game) methodology

1. **Games** are ways of learning, which promote the learners' global understanding.
2. Games boost **dialogue** and **interaction** among learners.
3. Games encourage learners to **use** the new language without fears.
4. An authentic and **pragmatic method**, and lots of fun!



## 5. Translate

1. Use translation as a **tool for analysing** and **comparing** languages. Let learners find differences and similarities.
2. Focus on **practical, social, emotional and cultural expressions** in the languages the learners already know, and the new language they are learning.



# Cooperative learning

## 1. Use cooperative learning

1. A teaching and learning method, in which learners **work together** in groups. They **learn** with the help of **mutual interaction**.
2. We learn better and faster through **dialogue** and **discussion**, when we use new words and expressions in a **real situation** and **together** with others.
3. Learners develop more **learning autonomy** and **responsibility**.

## 2. Make it effective

1. The participants in a group **depend** on each another to accomplish a task.
2. Effective groups consist usually of three or four learners. **Mix the members** in the groups - they should have different knowledge level, social, cultural and linguistic background, language proficiency, personality traits, learning styles etc.
3. Anyone in the group can take on the **leading role**. There is **no authority**.
4. All members in the group **share responsibility** for learning and make an **evaluation** of what they have learned.
5. Group work develops **social competences**: active listening, self-control, effective communication, understanding and management of emotions.
6. **Solve any social conflicts in the class before** starting to work with cooperative learning.

## 3. Teacher role

1. The teacher can make cooperative learning easier by **guiding learners** when they need help.
2. Explain clearly the **key rules** and **strategies** of the task in the beginning.
3. Give **clear** and **attainable tasks**. They must be concrete and meaningful.
4. Create **mixed groups** and assign **specific roles** to each member.

## 4. The jigsaw model\*

The **benefits** are:

- Peer-to-peer learning
- Responsibility and autonomy
- Development of social skills
- Increased motivation

Try out this model when **reading** an Easy to Read book, or let your learners **research** a specific topic from the book.



# Inclusive education

## 1. Include all

1. All learners and their contexts are **included** in the learning process.
2. Every learner is different, but **differences are valuable**.
3. Learning happens through **effective cooperation** among teachers, learners, parents and their social connections.
4. Creating **mutual respect** and an **accessible educational process** for every learner are the main goals.

## 2. Develop

1. The **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is an educational approach, which provides all learners with **an accessible curriculum**.
2. UDL is a model to design and plan **different tools and strategies** to accomplish the **same learning objective**.



## 3. The three UDL principles: Provide multiple means of...

### 1. representation

Learners perceive and understand information in many different ways. Offer several options to represent and explain what they are learning.

### 2. action and expression

Learners express in very varied ways what they know. Offer many possibilities to act and show what they have learned.

### 3. engagement

Learners get involved in the learning process in different ways. Many reasons influence their engaging in learning – previous knowledge, background, personal interests etc. Offer a wide range of alternatives to participate in the learning.

The [UDL guidelines](#) offer strategies to provide learners with inclusive education based on these principles.

# Vocabulary I

## 1. Musical memory & Total physical response

1. **Memory** is linked to **music** and **rhythm**. Learning a new language with the help of music and **movements** makes the learning process quicker.
2. If you sing or play an instrument, create together a **melody** or a **song** about a story or topic from an Easy to Read book.
3. **Connect words** and sentences with physical movements – **dance**, clap hands, act the words through movements, **beat the rhythm** etc.
4. Select relevant vocabulary from a chapter in an Easy to Read book. **Connect each word with a specific movement** and let the learners copy your movements or guess them. Then the learners create their own movements and now the others guess the meaning.

## 2. Flashcards

1. Cards help learners **memorise words and symbols** more easily and quicker.
2. **Link** the most important **words** of a chapter in the Easy to Read books **to expressive pictures**. Make the learners memorise vocabulary through games.
3. Use [Quizlet](#) to create engaging and attractive **digital flashcards** for vocabulary. Add **audio** files for revising **pronunciation**.



## 4. Spidergrams

1. **Choose a specific theme** from an Easy to Read book and the **relevant vocabulary**.
2. Learners in pairs or groups **write** down and **circle** the word on a paper.
3. Then they find and add all the **vocabulary related** to the word or topic.

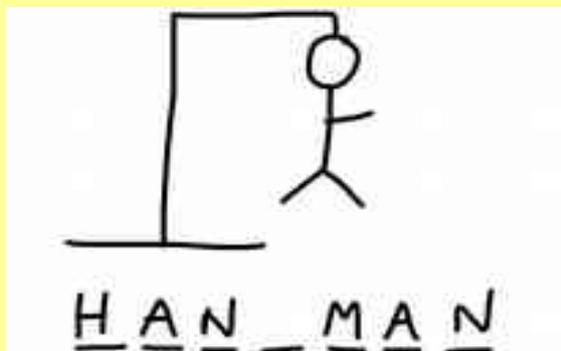
See example here. ⇒

4. Use spidergrams to work on **synonyms, antonyms, connotations** and **denotations\*** of words for advanced learners.



# Vocabulary II

## 5. The hangman game



## 6. Bingo

1. Prepare a **board** on which you choose pictures, which represent the words to be learned.
2. Make a **second board** and write the corresponding words.
3. Print out two copies of each board and **cut out** the words of the second board.
4. Divide the class into pairs. **Hand out** the boards with the cut words.
5. Learners take the words one by one and **stick** them onto the corresponding picture.

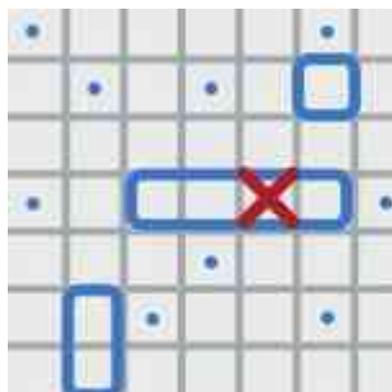
## 7. Scrambled letters

1. **Mix up the letters of the basic vocabulary** from a chapter in the Easy to Read book you are using.
2. Ask learners to **rebuild the words** in groups or in pairs.



## 8. Battleship game

1. This game is played on **grids**, on which **fleets of ships** are marked. The other player cannot see the location of the fleets.
2. The grids are **assigned letters** in alphabetical order. The goal is to **guess** where the fleets of the other player are.
3. In the linguistic version, **fleets of ships are dots** written by each learner, while **letters** are replaced by the **vocabulary** they are learning.



# Reading and listening skills I

## 1. Reading comprehension

Often the reading comprehension process follows this order:

1. **Exploration** of the book **paratext\*** to create **expectations** about the content. Hypotheses can be raised through keywords, book illustrations, previous knowledge, titles or plot summaries.
2. **Listening** and **skimming reading** to catch the general meaning of the text. Make few and simple questions to check the learners' understanding.
3. Use **follow-up activities** for more detailed and precise reading or listening.

## 2. Expectancy grammar

1. The first step for reading comprehension skills is to **create expectancy grammar**.
2. Stimulate learners' **curiosity and motivation** to keep reading and to find out what comes next. This can be done in many ways – through book discussions, researching the topic of the book etc.
3. Develop **previewing skills** about the book in different ways: make learners questions about paratext\*, **illustrations**, title and layout; highlight keywords, and **activate** their already existing knowledge and experiences.

## 3. Shared reading

1. **Read aloud** an Easy to Read book to the group - just like a bedtime story.
2. Read the chapter **slowly** and with **emphasis** and several **breaks**.
3. Provide learners with **extra linguistic clues** to catch the general meaning. Voice, **tone**, rhythm and **body language** can help them understand.
3. If necessary, read the text a second time. Then let learners **read the text** individually and silently.
4. Do **follow-up activities**.

## 4. Cloze and jigsaw

### Cloze

1. Choose a chapter from an Easy to Read book. Copy the text and **blot out (erase)** some words, for instance every seventh word.
2. **Simplified cloze:** the teacher suggests the words to fill in the gaps.
3. **Audio cloze:** record when you read the story or read aloud. The learners fill in the words in the breaks.
4. Learners **create their own cloze** and exchange clozes between groups.

### Jigsaw

1. **Split the text** into many parts and put the words or paragraphs in a random order. Learners **guess** and re-create the correct sequence of the events or sentences.
2. Use jigsaw activities for **words** of the same sentence; **paragraphs** of the same chapter; or **lines** of the same dialogue.

## 5. Quiz

1. Use for instance [Kahoot!](https://kahoot.com/) to create an interactive and engaging **live** or **remote quiz** to practise reading comprehension.
2. Create your own quiz on sheets of paper. There are lots of options, for instance **multiple choice questions** with three-four options or questions, which require yes/no answers.

# Reading and listening skills II

## 6. Code conversions

1. This method implies the **transformation** from a linguistic code – written or spoken – to a visual element or a physical movement.
2. Learners draw something, which **represents the content** of a chapter in an Easy to Read book.
3. Learners **write a story** about an element or a picture from the book.
4. Learners draw a picture about a **word** you speak.

## 8. Role play

1. After reading a chapter from an Easy to Read book, learners **act** it as if they were doing a film.
2. **Dramatize** the chapter or the events in the book in groups. Each group presents their own drama to the class.

## 9. Matching activities

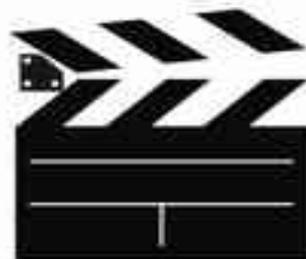
Design engaging and attractive matching activities: learners **make associations** between **images** or photographs and the **paragraphs** of chapters of the Easy to Read book you are using.

## 10. Pass the buck

1. After reading a chapter, let learners **write a summary** of the chapter, to show what they have understood.
2. This can also be a **joint** activity: each learner writes **one line**, which is related to the previous ones. The learners can also write in groups the summary of the chapter.

## 7. Picasso dictation

1. **Describe an illustration** from an Easy to Read book aloud and clearly.
2. Learners **draw** what they understand from your description.
3. Use a **back-to-back activity** for increased difficulty. Divide the class into pairs. Each pair stands or sits back to back.
4. Each learner draws the **content** from a chapter from an Easy to Read book.
5. Each learner **describes** the picture to their pair, who **draws another picture** according to the explanations.



# Speaking skills



## 1. Talk show

1. Learners **choose a topic** from an Easy to Read book – environment, climate change, bullying, intercultural issues, poetry, food etc. Create **lively talk shows** in groups or in the class.
2. Learners provide **arguments** for and against a certain topic and debate in groups.
3. Write **keywords** from a chapter or from a book on the board. Learners discuss in groups.
4. Hand the keywords out **worksheets**, where which you have written **guiding questions** to help them debate.

## 2. Interview

1. **Make interviews** in the group, with friends, classmates and families, about a specific theme chosen from an Easy to Read book.
2. Learners **present their results** and **conclusions** in class.

## 3. Biography

Ask learners to **imagine** and then **tell** the class the **biography of one of the characters** in the Easy to Read book.

## 4. Placemat consensus

This is a cooperative learning activity.

1. Each group receives a **sheet of paper**. It is made of **four squares** and a **circle** in the middle.

See the picture. ↘

2. Give the groups a **discussion topic** related to the Easy to Read book you are reading.

3. Each group member **writes on their own square** what they think about that topic. Limit the time to a few minutes.

4. In turns, each group member **tells the others** what they wrote. The group discusses the topic.

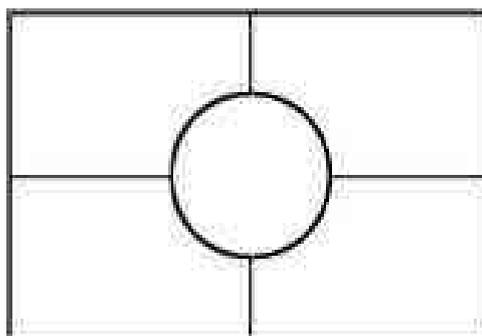
5. Every time the members find a **shared topic** on which everybody agrees, they **write it in the circle** of the paper sheet.

6. Finally each group **presents the shared topics** they have found to the whole class.

## 5. Speak, speak, speak

1. Give **some time for speaking activities** in the new language during every lesson. Make speaking regularly with others and in front of the class a **regular activity** and a **habit**.

2. When asked to speak in a new language, learners usually lack self-confidence. If speaking turns into a normal task, it becomes a **powerful tool** for better learning results.



# Writing skills

## 1. Biography

Learners **write a biography** or a story about their **favourite character** in the Easy to Read book you are reading together.



## 2. Follow-up research

Learners write a **follow-up research** or report about the main **themes** of the Easy to Read book you are using.

## 3. Poetry

When you are reading *A hundred poems*, ask learners to **write their own haiku poem**.

The poem can be based on one of the illustrations in the book, or the learners can use their imagination.



## 4. Rewrite the story

1. **Delete the first or last sentence** or paragraph from a chapter of an Easy to Read book.

Learners write their own beginning or end of the story.

2. Learners **rewrite the story** or a topic related to it **in their own words**.

## 5. Code conversions

1. Choose an illustration from an Easy to Read book. Learners **write a short story** or create a **comic strip** about it.

2. Read the chapter together. **Compare** their version with the original one in the book.

# Glossary



## 1. Learning styles and strategies

1. **Learning styles** are the way each individual acquires and organises knowledge and skills. They can vary a lot.

Typical learning styles are: **analytical** or global style; **theory** or practice-driven style; capability or difficulty with **creating** expectancy grammar.

2. **Learning strategies** are a set of action plans, designed or created by every person to deal with tasks and to reach learning goals.

**Every brain learns differently!**

## 2. Theory of multiple intelligences

According to research, there are at least **nine different types of intelligence**. They are combined in different ways in every individual. Some of them are important for language learning:

1. **Linguistic** intelligence
2. **Logical** intelligence
3. **Musical** intelligence

## 3. Jigsaw model for learning

This method deepens the understanding of learned materials.

1. All groups in a class are given the **same learning materials**. The materials are split into parts. Each member of a group gets an individual part to study.
2. When every member has learnt or researched their part, they **explain** to the others what they have learned and answer questions from the others.
3. Then the groups are split and **new groups** are created. Here the learners explain once more what they have learned, to another group, and answer their questions.
3. Now the learners **sum up** their findings, answers and any new questions.
4. All members go back to their original groups and explain to the others in the group the different topics from a **new point of view** and **with the additional information**.

## 4. Denotations and connotations

**Denotations** represent the direct relationship between the **word** and the **object**.

**Connotations** are all the **hidden** and **metaphorical meanings** a word can possess.

## 5. Paratext

Paratext consists of all the **textual and graphic elements** of a text, for instance cover, title and subtitles, illustrations and table of contents.