

Starting off

**Guidelines for tutors and
adults learning together**

ACE Aotearoa publication

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1 Introduction

There is always a need in the adult education field for a set of introductory guidelines to help new tutors in adult education and community learning programmes. The fact that ACE organisations are still requesting these guidelines which were first published well over 20 years ago is a testimony to their usefulness. They provide simple and practical information for the beginning ACE tutor.

Since the guidelines were first published there have been considerable developments in the training of tutors. The ACE Aotearoa website (www.aceaotearoa.org.nz) in the Professional Development section, lists all the education programmes available to adult educations. CLASS is now beginning to fill the need for more basic training locally, through the provision of a 15 hour training course. Information about where this training is available is also provided on the ACE Aotearoa website.

But many tutors will still find this booklet a great starting point. The original guidelines were developed as a result of consultation with experienced adult educators. In this edition the only changes made reflect the changes in our ACE environment.

Starting off is not subject to copyright.

ACE Aotearoa would welcome suggestions for any future revisions.

The booklet is available from ACE Aotearoa; 192 Tinakori Road; PO Box 12 114 Wellington; phone 04 473 6625; email admin@aceaotearoa.org.nz. Or you can get an electronic copy from www.aceaotearoa.org.nz.

2 You as a tutor

You have been asked to become a tutor because you have knowledge and skills to share.

Your learners will come to you because they are interested in your programme.

You will naturally feel a responsibility to meet the needs of your learners, but remember that the learners also have a responsibility to the course. As participants, your learners as a group will have much to contribute and to share as well.,

You will find that adult learners appreciate being involved with the sessions when their experience and ideas are acknowledged.

The essence of effective adult tutoring is to set people on the road to confident learning

When choosing teaching and learning methods to use, you need to bear in mind that:

- People choose to learn for different reasons
- Different people learn in different ways
- Our attention span is short
- We take in information through a number of senses
- We learn best when actively involved.

Effective tutors:

- Have a range of teaching skills
- Have a variety of teaching styles and are able to select appropriate methods for each occasion
- Understand adults as learners. Adult education is student-centred
- Are ready to learn
- Share their knowledge and skills with enthusiasm.

It is always helpful to discuss your plans and ideas with other people doing similar work. Discuss your course with your manager – and share ideas with other tutors

Keep in touch with others who might help you

Whaia te huarahi pai ma nga tauira

3 Adult learners – who are they?

Any group is likely to include both women and men from a range of ages (from 16 – 95). Naturally you will wish to make sure that all learners take a full part. Here are some characteristics based on theories of adult learning.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS	HOW THIS MAY HELP YOUR PLANNING
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<i>Adults bring a wide variety of life experiences</i>	Start your course with discussion which gives opportunities for group members to share why they came to the course, what their expectations are and what they already know. Allow time for your learners to share experiences.
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<i>People will come from different cultural backgrounds</i>	People will have their own values and ways of working which can enrich your course. Tutors need to acknowledge and respect cultural differences. For example, work at pronouncing Maori personal names and place names correctly
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<i>Adult learners will have different language experiences</i>	Vary your presentation and teaching methods to avoid overload of formal talk or reading and give opportunities for course members to question and explore ideas.
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<i>Adult learners are usually well-motivated volunteers</i>	Your course members are keen to cooperate. Encourage them and provide ample time for them to share in the learning experience
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<i>People have a variety of outside pressures</i>	Some are fully committed to our course but some may not be able to give so much time
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<i>Some people may have lost a lot of personal confidence and feel quite apprehensive, while others find participating much easier</i>	Be relaxed yourself and establish a friendly atmosphere so that people feel free to ask questions and become involved. Adult learners need to feel they have a safe environment.
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<i>People vary in their physical abilities, especially hearing, sight and concentration</i>	Speak clearly, write plainly, bring people close to each other for discussion and frequently check that people understand what is happening
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<i>Adult learners usually know what they want to learn</i>	Check regularly to see if you are meeting their needs. Be prepared to revise your course planning if required
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Kei te hari koa nga taurira

4 Some key ideas about learning

There are many theories about how people learn and from the studies that have been done it is possible to sort out some important ideas which apply in most situations.

People respond to praise Make a point of saying something encouraging about work done and suggest amendments only after you have commented on good points. "Yes, a good idea. Would you consider....? What about....?"

People need success Organise your sessions so that learners experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction from small steps successfully taken.

All contributions in a group have value Thank people for their ideas and opinions and ask others to add to what has been offered. If they have special knowledge, welcome what they can bring to your course.

The way material is presented is as important as the actual information People learn best when they work actively in ways such as trying out techniques, working in a group, talking about ideas, presenting information in their own words or acting out situations.

People learn well when they are clear about their goals Start each session by letting people know what you expect to achieve (objectives or expected outcomes) and how it fits in with the overall plan of the course.

Learning is enhanced when it is the result of direct experience Field work, hands-on practice, demonstrations, games, videos and other active or visual means help learning.

Learning is more effective if information is presented in more than one way Involve your learners in a variety of listening, looking, talking and doing activities. Give opportunities for people to question and talk about the material

People need time to come to grips with new material Introduce only a few ideas in each session.

Effective learning changes people Check how your learners will use their learning outside the course. Challenge them to put their learning into practice.

Kei te ako koe I nga wa katoa

5 You and your co-ordinator

In many cases you, as a new tutor, will be supported by your manager. It is helpful to meet with this person before the course begins.

Make sure that you are clear about:

- The dates , day time and number of sessions allocated to your course
- The number of learners and composition of your group. What can you find out about the levels of prior knowledge or skills, ages, cultural background?
- The room or spaces allocated to you (refer to *Planning your course*)
- Any responsibilities such as keeping a register, locking up, or organising the room
- The services such as photocopying and what equipment may be available
- The availability of resource materials
- Who to contact if anything goes wrong
- What other support is available to you as tutor
- What policies of the organisation you should be aware of.

Where appropriate you may wish to ask about other classes which are offered in the same facility and perhaps make contact with one or two other tutors. It is good to know some friendly faces when you first arrive.

Always feel free to contact your co-ordinator.

Kaua e awangawanga i au mahi

6 Planning our course: Before you meet the group

1 ORGANISING OUR PROGRAMME - *CONTENT*

You will need to compile a course outline, which will help you determine the appropriate structure, objectives and length of the course. you may need to alter this once you know your learners.

Think about the logical order of material and begin to break it up into manageable sections for the number of sessions allotted. Remember that your course title catches the attention of potential learners, and a well-written description convinces them to enrol. Be creative but honest. Consider what can be achieved in the time you have available for the course and decide what resources may be useful.

PREPARE A FLEXIBLE SKETCH OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT
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2 STRUCTURING THE SESSIONS – *PROCESS*

Recall what you know about adults and learning and try to put yourself in the place of a person learning an entirely new subject.

Think about the purpose of each session. What do you hope the learners will have achieved by the end of each session? What are the best methods to convey your material? Plan to vary your presentation over the session to involve the learners and use their experiences to stimulate their interest.

Find ways to check out how things are going. As for and observe learners' reactions.

Prepare more than you think you will need BUT be sure to discard or defer some parts rather than cram everything into too little time. Flexibility – the skill of making important changes as you go – is gradually learned through experience. However, it pays to have prepared some alternative approaches that may be needed.

You can use part of your first session to plan with your group. This makes it possible to plan with more certainty for the next session.

Revise your planning. What do you want to cover (content)?

How will you do this (process and method)?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT – GOOD PLANNING PAYS OFF

3 ORGANISING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Before the course begins, discuss the following points with your manager:

- Opening and closing the rooms
- Keeping registers and any other administrative requirements
- Availability and use of equipment and resources (Request any training or instruction if necessary and practice before the class meets).
- Word processing and photocopying
- Handling money, receipts etc
- Evacuation and emergency procedures and reporting of accidents
- Any budget allocated for the purchase of materials.

Look at the venue to make sure you have everything you need for your course. Things to check could include seating, lighting, electric points, heating, ventilation and availability of tea-making facilities.

Ensure access is available for a person who may have special needs e.g. wheel chair access).

The way people are seated can affect your teaching and their learning (for example: rows of seats tend to focus attention on the tutor rather than the learners; circles will help to increase learner interaction and participation). Other arrangements could be tried. What arrangement best suits your course and your group/ do not hesitate to rearrange the room to your requirements – but remember to leave it the way you found it. Note: adults require more space than younger people!

Remember that many adults do not have good memories of their schooling. Ensure that your learning environment is learner-friendly and that the learners are treated as adults.

YOUR GROUP WILL BE MORE AT EASE IF YOU ARE ALL COMFORTABLE IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Kia taut e rangi marie

7 Getting started – your first session

1 CREATING A FRIENDLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Use your own personality and style. Your enthusiasm and interest in your subject will be infectious.

Arrive early so that you can be ready and reasonably relaxed. Arrange seating as you want it. Organise any equipment needed. You are now ready to begin.

Greet people as they arrive and introduce yourself.

Try to start on time but remember that people of different cultures and circumstances may follow different time scales. If there are late comers, welcome them, give them time to settle in, and then bring them into the group by telling them what you are doing.

Be friendly and help people feel comfortable.

Establishing a friendly atmosphere

Introduce yourself to the group. Write your name clearly on the board and give just enough information for them to know who you are and why you are tutoring this course. Start people talking by introducing themselves to others in the group. The way you do this will depend on the type of the course you are tutoring, the size and confidence of the particular group and the degree of personal involvement expected. Here are some suggestions:

- In some small groups people may be happy to introduce themselves to the whole group
- Others may be more comfortable introducing a partner after a few minutes discussion. You may suggest a framework for a brief conversation, e.g. give your name, where you live, explain why you are taking this course. Remember, people will tell you as much as they want you to know
- Ice breaker activities may be useful. As your coordinator, supervisor or experienced tutors for ideas and examples (See Icebreaker – resource)
- Begin to learn names and use them. Name tags, labels or seating plans may be useful

IN ALL SITUATIONS BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS BREAK THE ICE

2 WHERE APPROPRIATE INVOLVE THE GROUP IN THE COURSE PLANNING

Ask the course members to say why they have come and what they expect to gain from the course. Discuss how these ideas fit into your general plan for the course. amend you plan if possible to incorporate the new ideas. Talk about any recommended resources.

In a two hour session this could be a good time for a brief break.

3 DEAL WITH ANY ADMINISTRATIVE AND HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS

Mark the register.

Discuss smoking/parking requirements and arrangements

Discuss accident or emergency procedures.

Point out facilities such as library, common room and toilet provisions.

4 DO SOME WORK!

Make sure that people feel they have achieved something in all sessions, including the first introductory session. Again, ensure they are involved. Your first sessions set the tone, style and expectations for the course.

5 ROUND OFF THE SESSION

Recap on what has happened so far, check how your students are feeling about the course and invite any suggestions for future sessions.

Preview the next session.

Finish on time.

Leave some time at the end of the sessions that shy students can approach you privately with their questions. You may wish to speak to individuals who may have difficulties with the course.

By the end of the first session(s) learners should feel:

- They have enjoyed themselves
- You are interested in them
- They are comfortable in the surroundings and with one another
- They are involved in contributing to the group and to the course
- They know what to expect and what will be expected of them
- They are learning what they want to learn
- They are keen to come back next time.

(a)What changes will you make for the next session?

(b) How would you change this session? (Record this for next time)

TRY TO MAKE A POINT OF TALKING TO EACH PERSON IN YOUR GROUP IN THESE EARLY SESSIONS
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Kia kaha kia maia kia manawanui

8 Maintaining the momentum

YOUR PLAN

Make sure that you have a clear idea of exactly what you want to cover in each session. How will you do this? How long should each activity take?

Work out what your learners can be expected to cope with in the time available.

Prepare more work for each session than you expect to use and thus allow for flexibility. Sometimes your learners will complete the work you have planned in less time than you expect. On other occasions the opposite may be true.

At the beginning of each session, again briefly tell your learners what you aim to cover.

At the end of each session briefly review what has been achieved and indicate what has been planned for the next session.

Interest is heightened if teaching/learning methods are varied.

I HEAR AND I FORGET. I SEE AND I REMEMBER. I DO AND I UNDERSTAND OLD CHINESE PROVERB
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Consider different approaches and resources. You may wish to try:

Individual or group presentations	Slides
Group discussions	Audio tales/CDs
Working in twos or threes	Models and or diagrams
Practical workshops	Pictures/posters
Panel discussions	Demonstrations
Guest speakers	Simulated experiences
Role play	Case studies
Controversial readings	Video/DVD

Handouts may be useful – to summarise the material covered or to provide extra material.

Each session needs to be broken up to give a variety of approaches. Try to ensure that every learning occasion involves using as many learning methods as possible – hearing, looking, talking and doing.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SESSIONS ARE THOSE IN WHICH LEARNERS FEEL THEY HAVE TAKEN AN ACTIVE PART

Kei kana kite mahi waihanga

9 Taking stock

It is important for you to pause from time to time and think about how the course is going.

This can be done by giving consideration to the following questions.

1 MONITORING (CHECKING AS YOU GO)

- Am I happy with the way the course is going?
- What do the learners think about the progress of the course? Regularly invite feedback. Ask key questions. Observe what the learners are doing. Observe their body language
- Are we achieving what we set out to achieve?
- Have I been catering adequately for the range of different people on the course?
- Am I making use of a range of resources and teaching methods?
- Does everyone get a chance to take part in discussions and activities?
- Can I adapt when I need to do so?
- Am I enjoying the challenges of this job?

If you have doubts about the answers to those questions discuss the issues with your manager, another tutor or a friend who understands what you are doing. In a long-term or academic course you may wish to use diaries, self-evaluation checks, student interviews and other techniques.

2 EVALUATION AT THE END OF YOUR COURSE – OR AT KEY POINTS IN LONGER COURSES

Ask each member in the group to consider these questions: (you can do this verbally, or in a group or with individuals – or you can compile a written evaluation form)

- What did you like best about this course?
- What did you like least about this course?
- Was there any aspect you would like to have covered more fully?
- Was there any aspect you think should have been covered in less detail?
- Would you recommend this course to others? Why? Why not?

Challenge learners to go on to further learning.

BE YOUR OWN CRITIC

See Appendix B for more information on evaluation.

10 Summary of course and session planning

BEFORE

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- PLAN AN OUTLINE
- ORGANISE THE CONTENT INTO MANAGEABLE PORTIONS
- GATHER RESOURCES

DURING

CHECK UNDERSTANDING BY:

- OBSERVING THE GROUP
- ASKING FOR COMMENT
- ASKING KEY QUESTIONS
- ENCOURAGING SHARED PROBLEM SOLVING

AFTER

REVIEW:

- WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
- HOW COULD IT BE IMPROVED?
- HOW DID THE LEARNERS FEEL
- ADAPT/AMEND YOUR PLANS FOR NEXT TIME

11 Where to from here?

Congratulations, you are on the way to becoming an effective tutor of adults.

However, Starting Off is merely an introduction to the field of adult learning and teaching.

To discover more about adult learning and to further develop your skills as a tutor, ask your manager for information about organisations that provide training in the teaching of adults (including correspondence courses), or any further reading that you might consider.

Or you could go to the ACE Aotearoa website (www.aceaotearoa.org.nz) where you will find, in the Professional Development section, a list of courses that are available nationally.

Appendix A: icebreakers and energisers

The use of icebreakers and energisers help us to create a positive, friendly and non-threatening atmosphere for group interactions. Some examples are listed to get you started.

- **Find another Person Who.....?** provide a paper with 12-20 statements (.....sings in the bath, .has tried bungy-jumping,....., has green fingers etc). people move around and note the names of those who admit to the statements.
- **Provide each person with a sticky label** on which is written in large letters the name of some other person in the group. Place the label on the correct person.
- **Use a koosh ball or a speaking stick to pass from person to person** as they introduce themselves. Repeat with added statements – where I live, something special/unique about where I live, a smell/sound relating to where I live etc.
- **Introduce another.** Divide the group into pairs. Each person speaks about themselves to their partner. After a few minutes, the partners introduce their new friends to the group (Note: Don't expect people to remember names/details of any more than 2-4 others in a group in the first session). Variation: provide a specific topic for partners to focus on, e.g.; The one thin I fear the most is..., my best holiday was spent....
- **Each person introduces themselves** to the group, and then states who they would most like to be. I am....but today I would like to be.....and why I would like to be.....
- **Who am I? (a)** Place a sticky label on the back of each person with the name of a famous person/cartoon character/historical figure/story book character etc. Each to ask questions of others – to be answered yes or no until they discover who they are.
- **Who am I? (b)** People draw themselves doing something they enjoy. Drawings are shuffled. Guess the owner.
- **Tell a lie!** In pairs, introduce yourself and tell a lie!
- **Clearing circles.** Respond around the group quickly to set topic – e.g. My colour is....., I am feeling....., My favourite pastime is....
- **Brain gym.** Across body/stretching/energising movements – great as starters or for an energiser break during a session. For more information Google *Brain Gym*, there are a number of sites with specific exercises.

Acknowledgement – Auckland Schools Community Educators Association (ASCEA)

Appendix B: evaluation

Here are some ways you and your learners can check on progress. Choose methods to suit your group and your course. Some may be more appropriate at particular times of the course.

- **Observations.** This is a useful way of assessing how things are going on a day-to-day basis and is something experienced tutors tend to do automatically. If you sense an activity has not worked well, pause and ask the group for feedback, including any suggestions on improvements. Record things that go particularly well, for future reference.
- **Verbal feedback.** This can take the form of an evaluation round with the whole group, for example, at the end of the first sessions or at the end of the course to check up on the achievements of course objectives. You may speak to shyer participants individually or have pairs or small groups discuss particular aspects of the course and report back
- **Continuum.** The continuum evaluation process involves getting people to stand on an imaginary line across an area, with a zero ranking at one end and a 100 percent ranking at the other. Ask people to place themselves in the appropriate place on the line, in relation to specific questions eg How enjoyable did you find x? using the continuum concept can also be useful as an indicator of group energy levels, and can be followed by an energising activity if necessary
- **Picture evaluations.** These are less threatening and simpler than written evaluation forms and can be used early on in a course to check you are on the right track
- **Written evaluations.** These can be open-ended (e.g. Please tell us how you found this course?); or can ask for a rating (e.g. not so good, good, very good, excellent); or be a list of specific questions. Written evaluations are usually used at the end of a course to allow participants to comment anonymously. Many organisations will provide a standard written evaluation sheet for tutors to use
- **Self evaluation.** The questions listed under Monitoring on page – will be helpful as a check list. You may also find it useful to keep a diary to note down what worked well in your course and what could be done differently another time. Taping or videoing a session (with the class's permission) can give you a record of how you come across to a group.

<p>EVALUATION IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS- SEEK FEEDBACK FROM THE VERY FIRST SESSION!</p>
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