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# Reading for pleasure

## Ideas to inspire new readers 1

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# Ideas to inspire new readers up to Adult Literacy Entry Level 2

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**'The National Year of Reading gives us a great opportunity to work together to promote reading for pleasure to adults who are improving their skills.'**

*David Lammy MP, Minister for Skills,  
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills*

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**'If you read, the world has never been more accessible and more exciting. If you don't, the door on opportunity has never been more firmly shut. By starting with what people love – be it sport, music, film, family history, magazines or adventure gaming – the National Year of Reading is a perfect opportunity to weave a rich variety of reading into all your work with learners.'**

*Honor Wilson-Fletcher, Project Director, National Year of Reading*

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**'I can underestimate learners' understanding until they tell me about a book they have read.'** *Adult literacy tutor*

Start with what you love. This is the message of the National Year of Reading. And this is the message for adult learners as much as for any other audience.

The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme, together with the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), have created a series of ideas packs for practitioners working with adults in a range of different settings. **This pack contains ideas to inspire adults who are new to reading, most likely to be at or pre Adult Literacy Entry Level 2. There is a full list of all the packs available on page 9.**

The aim is to support you in introducing learners to reading in all its forms – books, magazines, websites, lyrics – not just this year, but every year. We need to widen people's concept of reading so that they can think of themselves as 'readers' whatever kind of reading they enjoy. We know that learners can get the reading bug if they are encouraged to choose what they read and can share their experience of reading with others. Reading needs to fit into their busy lives, be relevant to their interests and concerns but also to surprise them with new ideas and ways of looking at the world.

Research tells us that reading for pleasure 'helps to increase enjoyment, self-confidence, motivation and the acquisition of functional literacy skills'. Libraries are ideally placed to support learners as they discover an enjoyment of reading of all kinds. But other organisations also have expertise and resources to offer, which can help to engage people in a love of reading. Local authorities, colleges, prisons, trade unions, businesses and voluntary organisations have all made a commitment to use the National Year of Reading to create new readers.

Please make good use of these ideas while the profile for reading is high and help us to make 2008 an exciting point in their reading journey for adult learners across the country.

**Genevieve Clarke**, The Vital Link and **Jenny Cobley**, NIACE

See [www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk) for more information about the National Year of Reading.

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# Introduction

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In order to help adults who don't normally read or aren't confident readers to find purpose and pleasure in their reading, you can introduce simple but appealing material on topics that interest them. Enthusiasm for a subject can spur them on to improve their skills and read more.

Remember that reading for pleasure can be interpreted in its widest sense. Adult literacy learners are likely to assume that they should be reading novels in order to qualify as a 'reader'. It's important to stress that information about any subject, in whatever format they find most accessible – online or in newspapers or magazines as well as books – all counts as 'reading'.

The challenge is to find enough resources for new readers up to Adult Literacy Entry Level 2. The length of time readers spend decoding words means that the storylines need to be very straightforward. Talented storytellers can do a great deal with very little. An example is Roddy Doyle's *Mad Weekend* in the Open Door series published by New Island (see [www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk](http://www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk)). This tale uses very spare writing, with a good deal of repetition, but manages to make this part of the humour.

Paired reading, reading aloud and reading in groups are all useful ways of supporting new readers. The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) investigated the range of strategies used to teach reading in adult literacy classes. It describes how those who engage in pair and group work make better progress than those who work mainly alone. Another determining factor is those who do some self-study between classes. Reading for pleasure as well as functional literacy has a good contribution to make here. For more about the NRDC's research findings and their practical suggestions about materials to use and how to organise reading in the classroom, see the Resources section on page 8.

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## Top ten ideas

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1. Encourage learners to write messages, bring them into class to share, and get as many people as you can to write messages to them as well. Examples are of learners writing to their MP about local issues and to the Queen to wish her happy birthday – and getting replies they are proud to read. Reading and writing postcards is an authentic activity that all readers can engage with.
2. Learners can bring in their own material to make scrapbooks about personal interests or family histories. One tutor regularly downloads and simplifies football reports for a learner. He is supported in reading them, and then adds his own comments on the match (sometimes as cloze sentences with a word bank for support). He keeps a file on his team's performance throughout the season.
3. Leaflets offer an opportunity for reading which can be relevant to individual needs. The Post Office, the library, the health centre and tourist information centres are all useful sources. Pick out the logos, read the bullet points and text boxes and extract information from captions, pictures, diagrams and maps.
4. Using an interactive whiteboard, a group of learners can build up a story and you can type it up, reading it together as you go along. Then you can print out copies for everyone and use it as a reading source.
5. Find the photo of an interesting face in the newspaper or on the internet. The learners can describe the face, decide who the person is, and invent a history for them. They can record their ideas in any appropriate way, using a tape, a word bank, a cloze sheet, a writing frame or a personal scribe. Share the stories and collect them into a book, which then becomes another reading source.
6. Books in the Quick Reads series (see Resources) which are not continuous narratives can be used in very short chunks. *RaW Voices* tells personal stories in just a few pages. John Bird's two books give advice in bite-sized sections. *The Sun Book of Short Stories* has a wide variety of pieces, each only a few pages long. Each chapter of *The Team* reflects a different aspect of 'the beautiful game'. These books are beyond the independent reading ability of Entry 1 and 2, but if tackled with a reading partner or an audio tape, might give a sense of achievement and enrichment which simpler texts may fail to do.
7. Use newspaper stories, looking at headlines and captions too. A news sheet, written specially for new readers, with teaching resources, can be downloaded from [www.talent.ac.uk](http://www.talent.ac.uk) (see Resources). Produce your own news sheets on the computer, which can become an additional reading resource.

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## Top ten ideas cont...

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- 8.** Adult graphic novels are harder to follow than you might imagine, but it is worth looking to see what is available as they offer very visual support and may appeal to younger adults. Most libraries will have a section you can browse and there are some listed at [www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk](http://www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk)
- 9.** Some women's magazines have quite simply told stories. Sometimes these are fictional, sometimes readers' own stories, sometimes told largely through pictures. Some hobby magazines and 'fanzines' have texts that are well supported by pictures, captions and simple graphics. Free own-brand magazines from supermarkets are another source.
- 10.** Ask your library about audio stories. They usually have a good selection, including audio versions of the Quick Reads books produced by W F Howes. New Leaf Books offer slower reading versions of their books as well as listening speed ones. Readers can then listen and follow the printed texts at the same time.

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## Case study 1:

# Everyone has a story to tell

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Everyone has a story to tell. One of the oldest fictional narratives in English – *The Canterbury Tales* – starts from this premise, so why shouldn't we?

My group of learners attend a literacy class in a social services day centre. They all have learning difficulties and some have physical disabilities too. The age range spans thirty to over seventy. Mostly their educational history has been in special schools or classes and their life experiences are quite restricted. But when one of them recalled how he had once been cleaning in a public toilet when he discovered an IRA bomb, I realised that they could all tell me something interesting about their lives, if only I could coax it out of them.

We began by talking about the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. I didn't read Chaucer with them, but they could all relate to a group of people who met up in a pub and told each other stories to while away a journey. To set the scene we began discussing our local cathedral and how people come to visit it.

I wrote a very simple and short outline of the Prologue, mentioning just a few of the colourful characters Chaucer describes, such as the Good Wife of Bath – again a character they could all imagine. I typed this up on the computer, using very large, well spaced text and a few pictures and we read it as a group, in short sections over several weeks.

Then I asked each member of the group to come up with some story of their own. Each week, one person told their story and I scribed it for them, then typed it up on the computer. We collected them into our own book of Tales from the Centre. On the last day we invited the Centre Manager in to read them. In Chaucer's story, the best one is to win a free dinner, but the story never reaches that point. Ours didn't either! We did, however, display all our stories on the notice board and our learners seemed quite proud of their association with a literary legend.

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## Case study 2:

# Reading, speaking and listening

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I had a fantastic session using *The Sandals* by Sheila Ryan with a group of Foundation teenagers. Published by New Leaf Books, who publish stories written by and for beginner readers, it tells how Sheila's sister buys her a pair of sandals to wear at a wedding. On the morning of the wedding Sheila discovers to her horror that they are both left feet. This short tale, sad and funny at the same time, kept them occupied for well over an hour, mostly because of the discussion it provoked.

I asked them to each read it alone or in pairs to begin with. Then I allocated each student a pair of page numbers. Next I went round and asked each student to explain in their own words what had happened on their allocated pages.

My learners particularly enjoyed listening to the audio CD which accompanies the book. They were fascinated by the author's voice and thought she came from Manchester as she sounded just like the actors on *Coronation Street!* They also decided she must be at least 90 if still alive.

Many titles in New Leaf's beginner readers series are infused with humour, witty anecdotes about everyday life: looking after a dog, going out for a drink and starting a new job – all commonplace events. Written by adults who are developing their literacy skills, they do not contain over-complex language, and tend to avoid the stilted and repetitive language of traditional graded readers, which can speak down to the reader.

There are several ways to follow up on stories like this. They can be used as a focus for targeted work with individual learners to improve particular reading and writing skills. They provide an integrated context for meeting all elements of the core curriculum and can be used to develop text, sentence and word focussed reading skills. The line-broken layout of the books can be used to demonstrate the purpose and principles of sentence structure clearly and examples of colloquial grammar used to highlight the differences between Standard English and the syntax of regional dialects, speech and more informal and creative uses of writing.

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## Resources

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**Effective Teaching and Learning: Reading** outlines the findings of the NRDC's research into what methods are effective. The document is available via the website [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk). For the companion volume drawing out the practical implications, see below.

**Reading** is part of the *Developing Adult Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Guides* series. It has useful advice about organising reading with new adult readers which combines findings from research about what is effective and examples of different ways to organise reading drawn from good practice. It is published by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) and distributed by [www.niace.org.uk/publications](http://www.niace.org.uk/publications)

**Quick Reads** books are listed on [www.niace.org.uk/quickreads](http://www.niace.org.uk/quickreads). Although these titles are for Entry Level 3 and above, you may be able to use extracts from some of the non-fiction books such as the two John Bird self-help books, *RaW Voices* and the *Sun Book of Short Stories*, and the football book *The Team*. Audio versions are available from W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programme (sales@wfhowes.co.uk 01664 423000) or try your library. Downloadable files providing ideas for using the books can be found via [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk)

**RaW** The website for the BBC's Read and Write campaign at [www.bbc.co.uk/raw](http://www.bbc.co.uk/raw) includes games, quizzes and other fun activities for new readers. The RaW Reader allows you to listen to and read the first chapters from the Quick Reads titles. BBC RaW has published three 'comics' for less confident readers – *My Story*, *Moving On* and *Tips for Storytelling*.

**New Leaf Books** publish short, high quality titles written by and for adult learners who are developing their reading and writing skills. Their list includes titles suitable for Entry level readers and audio CDs are available to accompany all beginner readers. [www.newleafbooks.org.uk](http://www.newleafbooks.org.uk)

**Avanti Books Resources Guide** A useful guide to the huge variety of basic skills support materials that are available, including those produced by Avanti and by other publishers. [www.avantibooks.com](http://www.avantibooks.com)

**Gatehouse Media** publishes Gatehouse Books – adult beginner reader books and resources for use in Adult Literacy and ESOL, and also audio-cassettes, interactive CD-ROMs and educational resources. [www.gatehousebooks.co.uk/beginner](http://www.gatehousebooks.co.uk/beginner)

**Readability** is a free, downloadable leaflet from the Basic Skills Agency (now part of NIACE) giving advice on preparing reading material for new readers. On the same site you can find a quick calculator for SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook), which gives a reading level for existing texts. [www.basic-skills.co.uk/resources](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk/resources)

**The Starter pack** (The Basic Skills Agency 2007) contains a wealth of teaching ideas for new and experienced tutors. See Resources section of the archived Basic Skills Agency website at [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

There are several **websites** which share ideas and resources for use with new readers. These include the UK Adult Basic Skills Resource Centre website at [www.skillsworkshop.org](http://www.skillsworkshop.org), the talent website at [www.talent.ac.uk](http://www.talent.ac.uk) and the Skills for Life Network at [www.skillsforlifenet.com](http://www.skillsforlifenet.com)

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# Full list of *Ideas to inspire packs*

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**New readers 1 (up to Adult Literacy Entry Level 2)**

**New readers 2 (Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 – Level 2)**

**Parents and carers of young children**

**Dads and male carers of young children**

**ESOL learners**

**People in prisons and young offender institutions**

**People in the workplace**

**FE college students**

**HE students**

**Readers with additional needs**

These packs are available to download as individual PDF files from [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk) or [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

## ***Ideas to inspire new readers 1***

Writer: Gill Moore

Case study 2 contributed by Maggie Harnew

Photographs of braille reading and flower-seller reading novel by Sim Canetty-Clarke

We welcome all feedback on these ideas and on how you are promoting reading to your learners. Please contact [genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk)



The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. See [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk)



NIACE is a non-governmental organisation working for more and different learners. See [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)