



‘How To’ Guide to teaching English My Way

Part 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This guide has been written to support teachers and volunteers (from hereon included in the term ‘teacher’) teaching **English My Way** to beginner ESOL learners. It covers practical delivery methods and approaches that best enable such learners to develop their English language skills. The approaches are inclusive for learners with a range of different abilities, backgrounds and learning aims.

Although the guide is designed primarily to support teachers who are new to teaching beginner ESOL learners, more experienced teachers will also find it useful for reference and refreshing their skills. It covers approaches to teaching speaking, listening and writing skills to people with limited educational experience.

The **English My Way** programme is for learners resident in the UK, whose English language abilities are below Entry 1 of the national ESOL core curriculum.

Participatory Methods

People enrol in **English My Way** programmes because they want to communicate in English in their everyday lives. It is important, therefore, to include learners as **active participants** in every way possible, rather than as passive absorbers of knowledge. They need to be enabled to communicate their needs and be supported to develop language that they can use immediately. Using participatory activities that shift the focus onto the learner and away from the teacher, should encourage learners to use what they have learnt more readily and help develop fluency. Whenever possible, teachers should act as facilitators, setting up activities then stepping back, while observing and managing active participation through pair and group work at the appropriate level and pace. Such activities help to build learners’ confidence to produce language, rather than just listen and repeat, and create space for them to form a dynamic, supportive community within the classroom. In the longer term they should be empowered to play a more active role within the wider community.

Learners’ expectations of what an ESOL course entails and of the teacher’s role may make them reluctant to participate actively at first. Teachers may have to ‘hand over power’ gradually. This means you should, as far as possible, involve learners in making decisions about room layout, types of activities they find most effective and enjoyable, out of class activities, break times, timetabling as well as contributing content, evaluating sessions and assessing their own work and that of their peers. Negotiating these elements with them will help develop their speaking skills and understanding of learning processes.

Getting learners to talk

There should be more learner talk in an effective ESOL class than teacher talk. This is because “talk is work in an ESOL classroom”¹. As such, you will need to use tasks and methods that maximise opportunities for learners to talk to each other in small groups as well as in whole class discussions. Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and the more confident do not dominate discussions. Their ESOL class may be the only opportunity they have to communicate in English at their level. As **English My Way** learners will have limited English language repertoires, you will need to establish routines and frameworks that enable and empower them to speak out, regardless of errors and hesitations. Encouraging mime and gesture, through modelling, can help shed inhibitions and develop fluency. The section on Speaking and Listening contains plenty of ideas on how to get your learners talking as much as possible.

If you speak the same language as your learners, you may be tempted to use it for explanations and in discussion, or to let learners respond to you in their home language. Resist temptation! It is important to keep this to a minimum as it can slow down progress considerably and encourage dependence. When giving instructions, for example, it is better to use demonstration or mime before resorting to home language if they still don't understand.

Classroom Silences

Beginner ESOL learners may be reluctant to speak for many reasons, including lack of confidence, not having the words to say what they want and not understanding what is expected. Frequently, it is simply because they need more time to process new language and skills. It is tempting to fill silences by prompting or rephrasing a request. Be patient. Give learners more time; count to 10 in your head from the moment you would normally intervene if this helps².

Creating dialogue with students about language

English My Way learners may speak more than one language and, subsequently, be aware of differences in language features and structures, even if they cannot name them. Having discussions about language at any level will help co-construct meaning and develop a critical awareness of how their new language works.

Noticing language

Another effective ESOL learning technique is noting when learners use particularly apt, innovative or impressive language. Draw attention to this when appropriate. You could use board work, quick drills or other activities to highlight the relevant language

¹ *English for Speakers of Other Languages(ESOL) - case studies of provision, learners' needs and resources* Roberts, C et al NRDC Research Report 2004 http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_302.pdf

² The above sections draw on findings from the report *Whose integration?* Bryers, D, Winstanley, B, Cooke, M, ESOL Nexus, British Council 2013 <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ldc/publications/workingpapers/the-papers/WP106-Bryers-Winstanley-Cooke-2013-Whose-Integration.pdf>

at text, sentence and word level for learners take away with them and consciously include in their growing repertoire.

Learning Check 1.1 - Introduction

You have completed the Introduction section of the **English My Way** Teacher Guide.

Now take the opportunity to reflect on your understanding of what you have read.

Reflection Activity:

- Do you feel comfortable with the terms and methods mentioned?
- Is this way of teaching similar or different to the way you normally teach?
- What impact do you expect this way of teaching to have on your learners and their learning?
- Is there anything that you find unusual in this way of teaching?

Questions:

Try to answer these questions and then check your answers at the end of this section.

1. In what ways do participatory methods make learners take a more active role in their learning?
2. How can you reduce teacher talk while still ensuring effective lessons?
3. How can classroom silence be effective in the EMW classroom?
4. How can you talk about language with EMW learners?
5. Why is noticing language important for EMW learners?

1.2 Who are the English My Way Learners?



The Department for Communities and Local Government has funded **English My Way** for learners who:

- are operating at beginner levels in spoken English
- have a very limited command of English literacy practices
- are not familiar with the Roman script
- have limited educational experience

This is not to say that the learners will be a homogenous group. They will, of course, differ greatly in many respects, including:

- reading and writing abilities in their first / other languages
- learning preferences
- prior educational / life experiences
- positions in social / family groups
- confidence
- age
- gender

The programme prioritises learners who are not literate in English or any other language. It is also suitable for learners who can read and write to some extent in other scripts (such as Arabic, Bengali, Chinese or Urdu) because, whilst they will be able to transfer some of their literacy skills to reading and writing in English, they need to learn Roman script and sounds. Learners who can read and write fluently in a language that uses the Roman script (such as Italian / French / Polish) require different teaching approaches and are likely to progress more quickly than learners with limited literacy skills in a Roman script. If you have a class with

learners at different levels of literacy but are beginner English language learners it will have implications for class management and differentiation. To learn more about how to adjust your teaching activities to cater for different abilities have a look at our online training module on [Differentiation](#).

Try reading and then writing the different phrases below (each says 'how are you?') to get a taste of the difficulties EMW learners may experience when using a new script.

Arabic

كيف حالك؟

Bengali

আপনি কেমন আছেন?

Urdu

آپ کیسے ہیں؟



Some of the skills required to read or write using a new script include:

- The formation and joining of letters
- Getting the height and letter width right, in relation to the shape of the word and the line
- Pen control
- Letter combinations (that form a different sound) in contrast to single letters
- Understanding sound-letter relationships
- Correct seating position
- Good hand-eye co-ordination
- Understanding the direction the script follows (right to left, left to right, top to bottom)

Learning Check 1.2: Learners

You have now completed the **Who are EMW learners?** section of the English My Way Teacher Guide.

Take the opportunity to reflect on what you have read.

Reflection Activity:

- Have you worked with learners with the needs specified before?
- What challenges do these learners face compared to ESOL learners working at higher levels?
- What challenges do you think you will face working with these learners?

Questions:

Try to answer these questions and then check your answers at the end of this section.

1. What are the key features of EMW learners?
2. Why is it important to recruit the appropriate learners for EMW courses?
3. In what ways will EMW learners be diverse?
4. What skills does a learner who already uses Roman script in their first language bring to learning English?
5. What challenges are there for a learner who is learning a new script at the same time as a new language?

1.3 The English My Way Syllabus

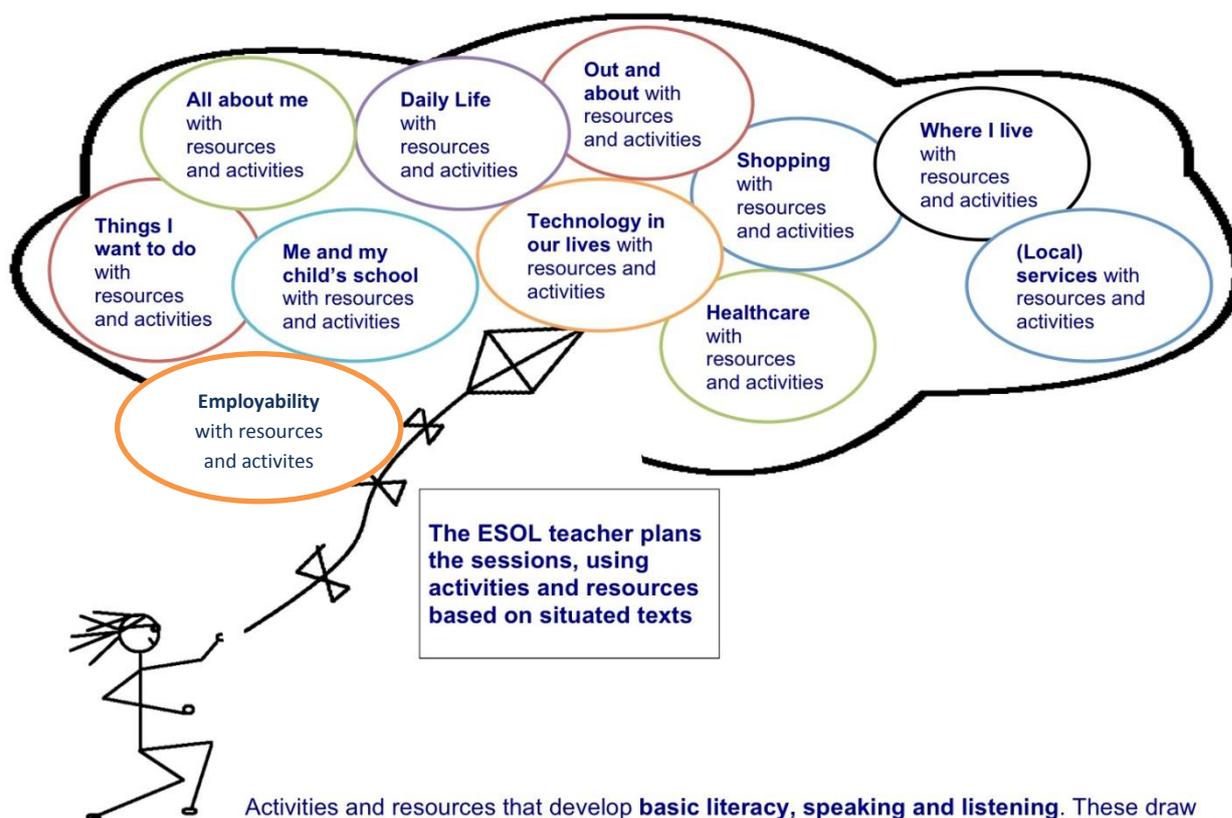
The **English My Way** syllabus is divided into eleven everyday topics, that follow introductory 'Getting Started' sessions to assess speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. These topics can be integrated with and supplemented by other materials. Learning objectives (called 'I can outcomes') are recycled throughout the programme. This is because beginner ESOL learners need to practise newly acquired language regularly. For example, where a learner may cover 'making a request' by asking for an appointment at the doctor's in week 6, he or she may recycle the structures learnt in week 8 when asking for vegetables in the local grocer's. The course ends with 'Next Steps' assessment activities and additional learning to extend and celebrate achievement and progress to higher level provision.

The order in which the topics are delivered is also flexible to accommodate local priorities. For example, learners at one centre may have been recruited from a local school so prefer to do the *Me and my child's school* topic early in their programme, while those at another may have been referred by the job centre and wish to prioritise the employability topic (see example below):

Class 1 Week 3 / 4 = Me and my child's school. Week 5 = Healthcare

Class 2, Week 3 / 4 = Employability Week 5 = Technology in our lives

The diagram below shows the 'cloud' of **English My Way** topics:



Learning Check 1.3: Syllabus

You have now completed the Syllabus section of the **English My Way** Teacher Guide.

Now reflect on what you have read.

Reflection Activity:

- What types of syllabuses have you used before in your teaching?
- Is this syllabus similar or different to others you have followed? How?
- What challenges do you think you will face in delivering a programme of work in line with this syllabus?

Questions:

Try to answer these questions and then check your answers at the end of this section.

1. How many topics are included in the EMW syllabus?
2. Do the topics need to be delivered in a specific sequence? Why/why not?
3. Why are learning outcomes recycled throughout the syllabus?
4. Why is there a 'cloud' diagram representing the EMW syllabus?

1.4 English My Way Resources

The **English My Way** resources include:

- Teacher's notes for each session outlining the best way to deliver the session.
- Videos and audios that go with particular sessions.
- Resource sheets with activities, image and word flashcards and scripts for each session.
- Online modules for reinforcing and checking learning from each topic.

In addition there are Learning Circle materials with videos, group leader notes and learner activities that link to the English My Way topics.

We have also produced online training modules and further guidance documents for **English My Way** teachers which are available here

<http://www.englishmyway.co.uk/help/professional-development>

Teacher Notes

You must read these before you start planning your session. It is particularly important that inexperienced teachers, or those who are new to teaching beginner ESOL learners with limited literacy, follow these notes. They have been written by highly qualified teachers with considerable experience of teaching learners at this level. They have also been trialled and quality checked to make sure that they work effectively for teaching EMW learners at the right level and pace. You will also save a lot of time by following them as closely as possible.

The notes begin by specifying aims and objectives for the session - what we expect each learner to be able to do by the end of the session. They also tell you what you need to prepare or bring to each session.

Next the notes specify the steps you should take to ensure that the learners achieve the objectives for the session. We have included guidance on the amount of time you need to spend on each step. Some, or all, of your learners may need more or less time than is suggested. Even if learners do appear to make quicker progress, it is still important to go through each stage as they build on each other and increase the likelihood of retaining what has been learned.

The materials and activities described in the teacher notes are designed to recycle learning and use multiple techniques to give variety and to help learners develop all four language skills. Therefore, teachers should follow the session plans unless they are confident that any amendments they make will enhance/improve the teaching and learning in a specific lesson.

The pace of learning will vary between individual so we have included suggestions for differentiating activities to stretch and challenge some and provide support, or a

scaffold, for others. Our online module on [Differentiation](#) provides further guidance on how to cater for different learning needs.

Resources

We have provided resources for all the sessions which are clearly referenced to each step in the session plan. In most cases you will just need to print out paper resources, cut some up, and provide paper and other stationery. To save paper you may wish to project some of the resources, you could insert others into plastic envelopes or laminate them.

In some cases we suggest you provide everyday items, posters or leaflets (realia) that are relevant to the topic, or add local images and other information. While we encourage the inclusion of resources relevant to your learners lives do be careful not to overwhelm with too much information.

You will notice that each session introduces a limited amount of new vocabulary and language structures. Inexperienced teachers, and some learners, might feel that this is insufficient. For learners with little educational experience and limited literacy, i.e. our target group, this is rarely the case. They are not just learning new words and phrases but also new structures, pronunciation, intonation and, perhaps, new cultural concepts too. The steps in the session plan enable them to learn and practise the new language in a variety of ways thus increasing the potential for securing it in their long-term memories.

If you do create your own resources, do follow the model of ours. These contain the optimum amount of information necessary for each task and include just a few words all of which are practised in the session. It is fine to use real posters or leaflets which may have a lot more writing on them but if you do just focus on the key information relevant to your learners and the session – e.g. what's being promoted, dates, times, prices, and try to use material with large fonts and images.

Videos and audios

We have produced session plans and resources to make most use of the audios and videos. These include online activities with their own teacher notes that appear at the bottom of the webpages for the associated session. The Learning Circles also contain a video for each session along with guidance and activities. In addition to using these for developing speaking and listening skills, you could use the scripts for different literacy activities. We have provided further suggestions for using audio and video in part 3 of this guide and our online professional development module on [Speaking and Listening Development](#)

Learning Check 1.4: Resources

You have now completed the Resources section of the **English My Way** Teacher Guide.

Now reflect on your understanding of what you have read.

Reflection Activity:

- What types of resources have you used before in your teaching?
- Are the teacher notes and activities similar or different to others you have used? How?
- What challenges do you think you will face in following the guidelines and using the resources in **English My Way**?

Questions:

Try to answer these questions and then check your answers at the end of this section.

1. What are the different types of resources produced for **English My Way**?
2. What is the purpose of the steps in the Teacher notes?
3. When might it be appropriate for teachers to use their own additional material to supplement the syllabus resources?
4. Why are Learning Checks included in the Teacher notes?
5. How are the videos and audios used in English My Way?

Answers

The following are suggested answers to the questions in the Learning Checks. They are not exhaustive and you may have thought of other ideas. Why not raise them on the [English My Way forum](#).

Learning Check 1.1 – Introduction

1. *In what ways do participatory methods make learners active participants in their learning?*

Participatory methods are designed to allow learners to be part of the language learning process. Learners and teachers are 'co-constructors' of the language input and output in the classroom. The main point here is that learners should be involved in contributing to and deciding on content. An approach such as Language Experience provides a good example of how this works for all four skills at each learner's level. For more information, go to [Participatory methods](#)

Learners should be encouraged to contribute vocabulary, and sometimes the grammar. Learner-generated content involves them in choosing and using the language that is appropriate and relevant for them in terms of their ability, life experiences and immediate communication needs.

2. *How can you reduce teacher talk while still ensuring effective lessons?*

Teacher Talk or Teacher Talking Time can be reduced by the teacher being consciously aware of what language is of value in the classroom.

Teachers should avoid lengthy and complex grammar and vocabulary explanations as having to listen to and understand too much language can be difficult to process and confusing.

Another area to focus on is how you set up tasks. It is better to give a demonstration of the activity (i.e. model and describe what learners need to do). In this way learners have a visual and oral representation of how the task works. Try to be consistent in the language you use to help learners learn and remember the language of instruction more quickly.

We highly recommend that new/less experienced teachers script instructions while lesson planning and look at whether the language being used can be modified and simplified to suit the group of learners. Teachers should be careful that while simplifying the language, they still provide a natural model of English.

Ensuring there is a balance between teacher-led instruction (where the teacher works with the whole class) and group/pair activities (where learners work together without teacher intervention), helps to reduce the amount of time the teacher talks and gives more time for learners to talk and practise the language they are learning during a lesson.

3. *How can classroom silence be effective in the EMW classroom?*

Many teachers feel uncomfortable with classroom silence, particularly the space that can exist between a teacher asking a question and learners responding. Teachers may feel that this silence means that learners don't understand or do not have anything to contribute. However, at beginner level in particular learners need time to process questions and formulate answers, and leaving space for the learners to do this helps. Learners will soon understand that you are waiting for a response and will therefore try to supply it rather than waiting passively for you to do so.

4. *How can you talk about language with EMW learners?*

Teachers should not expect learners to be able to provide explicit explanations of how language works. Learners at this level do not yet have the metalanguage nor the awareness to do this. A way to encourage 'talk about language' is to ask simple questions when working on a text. Some examples of this could be:

- *How many sentences are in the text? How do you know this is a sentence?*
- *Why is a capital letter used here? Is this the name of a person? How do we know this?*
- *Which words describe / give information about the house? Do they come before or after 'house'? What do we call these words?*

5. *Why is noticing language important for EMW learners?*

This question is linked to number 4. When a learner starts to notice language, they become aware of patterns in language. This helps them understand the way a new language works even when they might be restricted in talking about it. Some examples of noticing at this level might be:

- Plural words add -s
- Singular/plural of the verb to be
- Recognition of stress in a word
- Word classes / part of speech e.g. what is a noun, a verb

It should be noted that it is not necessary to use metalanguage (e.g. names of tenses, names of parts of speech, pronunciation features such as intonation) with learners when working on noticing. However, the introduction of grammatical terms (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives) at a gradual pace and on a regular basis as the course progresses, can allow for more language discussion to take place.

Learning Check 1.2: Learners

1. *What are the key features of EMW learners?*

EMW learners are beginners in terms of speaking, understanding, reading and writing. Most will have a first language background that does not use Roman script. Some learners will have no literacy in their first language.

2. *Why is it important to recruit the appropriate learners for EMW courses?*

There are a number of reasons why it is important not to recruit learners who display skills higher or different to those recommended for EMW programmes.

- They will find the pace of learning too slow and this could impact on the pace in the classroom as teachers try to accommodate their needs.
- They are likely to dominate in the group, giving less time and fewer learning opportunities to those the course is aimed at.
- Learners at beginner level may become demotivated and lack confidence if they feel that others in the group already understand everything.
- They may also become dependent on the higher-level learners.

3. *In what ways will EMW learners be diverse?*

Learners will be diverse in terms of their nationalities, first language backgrounds, personalities and life experience. They will also have different levels of educational experience and the language skills. This diversity offers a rich learning environment where all these factors can be exploited.

4. *What skills does a learner who already uses Roman script in their first language bring to learning English?*

Learners who use Roman script will be able to transfer the skills they have when learning English. They will be aware of sound / spelling correlation and have the ability to form letters in the new language. Much of this course focuses on teaching basic literacy in the Roman script so would be of limited relevance to learners who can already write it competently.

5. *What challenges are there for a learner who is learning a new script at the same time as a new language?*

There are a number of challenges facing learners dealing with a new script. Some of these include:

- Developing fine motor skills to form letters and to make sense of these at letter, word and sentence level.
- Difficulty in understanding a lot of written script on the board.
- A limited oral and visual vocabulary and not understanding the link between spoken and written language.
- Coping with work which has a written component (this includes reading). The development may be at a slower than you expect.
- Recording what they are learning and remembering what the written record represents when they are outside the learning environment.

Learning Check 1.3: Syllabus

1. *How many topics are included in the EMW syllabus?*

There are 11 topics in the EMW syllabus, in addition to Getting Started (diagnostic assessment) and Next Steps (final or summative assessment). Teachers (and learners) select 9 of the topics to create their EMW programme

2. *Do the topics need to be delivered in a specific sequence? Why/why not?*

The teacher and learners can decide together on the sequence they use the topics. This allows the content delivered to be contextualised and appropriate for the group. For instance, the topic **Me and my child's school** could be less relevant to groups where there are few, or indeed no, parents in the group. Also, certain topics might be more usefully included at different times of the year.

However, certain topics (**All about Me** and **Daily Life**) should be done first, at the beginning of the learning programme (i.e. immediately following the **Getting Started** sessions). This is to allow for some basic content to be input and also because there is a lot of 'getting to know each other' involved in these topics so they will facilitate the development of group cohesion.

3. *Why are learning outcomes recycled throughout the syllabus?*

Language learning is a cyclical process. Just because a learner has been exposed to a piece of language does not mean that they are able to remember it at the next session or use it in real life situations. Regularly recycling language structures and vocabulary in a variety of everyday contexts encourages learners to become more aware of how language works, consolidates learning and develops both fluency and accuracy.

4. *Why is there a 'cloud' diagram representing the EMW syllabus?*

The cloud is used to highlight that the topics and the materials have inbuilt flexibility. This is not a linear syllabus just as language learning is not a linear process.

Learning Check 1.4: Resources

1. *What are the different types of resources produced for **English My Way**?*

Teacher notes, task sheets, flashcards, videos, audio, online learning modules, Learning Circle videos, activities and guidance notes, and professional development modules.

2. *What is the purpose of the steps in the Teacher notes?*

The steps outline the appropriate activities for each stage in the language learning process that are necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the session. While language learning is not linear, it is important that learners have a good foundation on which to build their skills. Even where the objectives are concerned with reading or writing, it is important to start with oral activities to

ensure learners understand the language they will be using and build up to a reading/writing activity.

The activities are varied to maintain interest and allow learners to practise different ways of using the target language. They also help teachers to monitor progress.

3. *When might it be appropriate for teachers to use their own additional material to supplement the syllabus resources?*

There are times when it is appropriate, even necessary, to adapt resources. It is crucial that materials are locally relevant and so, for instance, changing the names of towns / streets / buildings / people will better reflect the learners and their environment. Teachers could also find that certain techniques work better with their learners and decide to adapt resources or activities to more readily reflect this. Teachers should be careful that they do not eliminate the variety that exists in the materials if they do so.

Teachers should be aware that learners might struggle with understanding new language and learning to read it. Be flexible in what is expected of learners and aware of what are essential and non-essential items at this level.

4. *Why are Learning Checks included in the Teacher notes?*

Learning Checks are used for formative assessment or progress monitoring. They should be used to find out what learners have learnt and what they still need to work on, which should inform planning. If learners have not achieved the lesson objectives, the teacher might decide to revisit the area they are struggling with in the next or future session, or adjust the session to deal with the issue immediately and suggest practise activities for homework.

5. *How are the videos and audios used in English My Way?*

They are used to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Learning Circles and online modules for learners also contain video and audio resources. The scripts can be used for paired reading, comprehension, a variety of writing tasks, as well as practising dialogues before undertaking a role play.

Annex 1 Useful materials for EMW classes

Paper	Writing implements	Realia	Other
lined paper	thicker based / gripped pens	images, including learners' photos	sticky tape / masking tape glue sticks
unlined paper	large marker pens	items from topic e.g. a cup	sticky notes in different colours if possible
blank books for project & journal work	different coloured felt tip pens	maps – world, UK in particular street map of the local area / city / town	scissors
tracing paper	pencils	timetables – bus, train, sports centre	coloured string or wool (e.g. for creating a class map)
picture and letter flashcards	computers – desk/laptops or tablets	leaflets / flyers from local services, including education providers, and amenities	coloured card
flipchart paper / large sheets of paper		magazines (e.g. free from councils or supermarkets)	