

Guide to the Multi-Sensory Literacy Programme.

The MSL programme is designed specifically for pupils who have not developed reading and writing fluency using conventional methods. The MSL programme focuses on developing word level fluency, phonological awareness, processing speed and working memory. It also teaches a number of key rules and literacy concepts. The programme is taught on a one-to-one basis through two lessons of half an hour each week. The lessons are structured to ensure teaching is multi-sensory.

The literacy assessment and tracker tool and the reading and dictation passages will determine where your learner starts on the programme. The programme is cumulative and should only include skills being taught or that have been taught.

Where to start

Use the Multi-Sensory Literacy Assessment and Tracker and the reading and dictation passages to establish a starting point, the assessment may need to be done over a few sessions (refer to [MSL Assessment Pack](#) for more information and the resources you will need to carry out the assessment). These tools assess the learner's letter and sound knowledge for both upper and lower case letters, their word reading and spelling skills and their ability to read and write a passage of text. The assessment will determine your teaching points for both reading and spelling.

The lessons

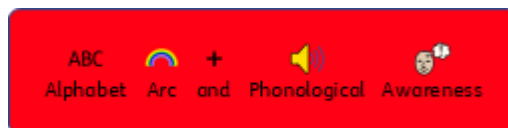
Each lesson has six components, which include reading and spelling. However, you can focus primarily on the spelling elements if a pupil's spelling skills are much weaker than their reading skills.

The Components of Lesson 1

Alphabet Arc and Phonological Awareness – 5 minutes

The Alphabet Arc is a multi-sensory approach to help learners develop letter and sound automaticity. It supports the development of phonological awareness,

syllabification, sequencing and word building. It also supports the development of letter formation. If the pupils is insecure in sequencing the alphabet, use a model to support them and focus on small sections to gradually build their knowledge. If you are only teaching the first quartile, for example, the latter three quartiles should be set out for the learner before the lesson or you can do it together.



It is important not to spend more than two minutes setting out the Arc so that you can spend at least three minutes developing phonological awareness.

Resources needed:

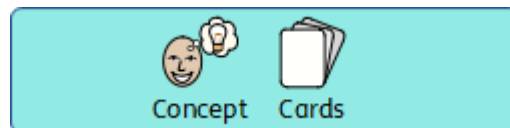
- Lower and upper case letters – wooden, plastic, foam (the set of letters you use will vary depending on the age of the child).
- Extra letters for word making
- Post it notes to write
- Models of the alphabet.
- White boards and dry wipe pens.
- Feely bag
- Sand tray

Some **activity ideas** for this section are:

- Set the latter 3 quartiles of the Arc out for the pupil and put the remaining letters in a feely bag. The pupils feels the letter, says its name and sound and places it in the Arc (you can use a model to support the pupil if necessary).
- Removing a letter/letters from the alphabet sequence, which are missing?
- Quick arm – point to a given letter.
- Reversing letters in the arc, can they spot which ones?
- Identify initial sound in words, ask the learner to find the letter and tell you the sound and name.
- Identify final sound in words, ask the learner to find the letter and tell you the sound and name.
- Say a word e.g. /cat/ can the learner make the word? What words rhyme with it? Can they make any other words with their letters?
- Onset and rime ladder slides. For example, get out the letters **a** and **d**, then the letters **l, b, h, m**. The learner slides the letters up and down to make words. Get the learner to touch the letters, says the letter sounds or names and then say the word.
- Take letters out of the arc and ask the pupil to make as many words as they can.
- Syllabification activities – can they make a one syllable/ two syllable word?

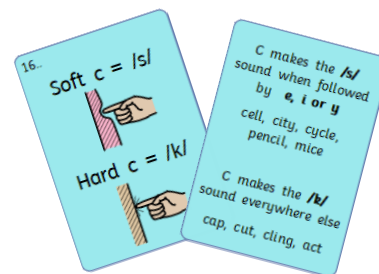
Concept Cards

These introduce key literacy concepts and run throughout the programme. Use your knowledge of your pupil and the concept card checklist to select which concepts need to be directly taught. Suggestions of where to introduce concepts are indicated on the Multi-Sensory Literacy Assessment and Tracker.



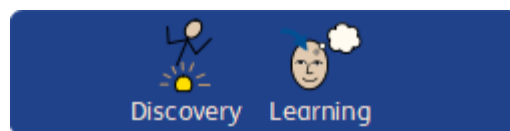
Introducing concepts

Normally, one concept will be introduced in a lesson but sometimes more will be introduced, especially at the beginning of the programme. The amount of concepts introduced will depend on the pupil and the teacher's judgement. The concept card routine is similar to the reading routine (see page 4). The pupil looks at the front of the concept card and explains the concept. Concept cards will need to be practised in both lessons. The concept cards are also there for the learner whenever they need them, like using their literacy fact file.



Discovery Learning – 5 minutes

New learning is ideally introduced using guided discovery. Pupils are more likely to remember and understand new learning if they have discovered it themselves. Discovery learning involves the teacher presenting examples of the learning to guide the pupil to discover the fact, rule, concept or grapheme.



Introducing graphemes using discovery learning

1. The pupil identifies the grapheme using either auditory, visual or kinaesthetic channels.
 - a. Ideas using auditory channels:
 - i. The teacher reads out a list of words, asking the pupil to identify a common sound in the list. For young learners always use initial sounds but for older learner the sound can be anywhere, dependent on the pupil's ability.

- ii. The teachers give 3 or 4 clues to the pupil who has to guess the word, e.g.,
 1. It is an animal.
 2. It lives on a farm.
 3. It has a curly tail.
 4. It is sometimes pink.
 - iii. Alternatively, give a description of a number of words including the target sound. The pupil has to work out the words and then the common sound, e.g.,
 1. An elephant is this. (BIG)
 2. You can kick me. (BALL)
 3. You can hit a ball with it. (BAT)
 4. Monkeys like this fruit. (BANANA)
 - b. Ideas using visual channels:
 - i. Give a set of printed words and the pupil is asked to identify the grapheme being taught. The pupil does not have to read them.
 1. Younger pupils: POT PAN PET PIT
 2. Older pupils: PAT, SPOT, HELP, SHOP

} depends on the pupil's ability
 - ii. The pupil looks at a set of objects or pictures, names them and identifies the common sound.
 - iii. The pupil looks at an alliterative sentence, e.g. the angry ant ate the alligator, and names the target sound (this could be auditory, if the teacher says the sentence).
 - c. Ideas using kinaesthetic channels
 - i. Put the letter in a bag. The pupil feels it and identifies the target letter and sound.
 - ii. A number of objects which begin with the same sound are placed in a bag.
2. Consolidate the new knowledge by using an alternative channel. For example, if you introduce the target grapheme by auditory channels, you then need to use a visual or kinaesthetic channel. A visual activity might be a tracking sheet; an auditory might be, 'where can you hear the sound in the following words?' E.g. Beginning, Middle, End (BME) activity. A kinaesthetic activity might be writing the grapheme on the pupil's back or hand.



The Reading Section - 7 minutes

Please note that you can introduce concepts or tricky words in this section as well as, or instead of a reading card.



Reading Cards

The ultimate aim of the reading pack is for the learner to respond immediately to the grapheme (letter) by producing the sound (phoneme). This helps develop quick and accurate decoding of regular words.

Making the Reading Card

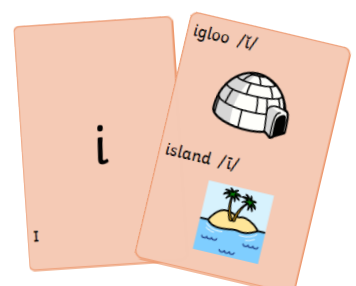
Cards should be approx 8 x 5cm. Use different colours for vowels and consonants.

On the front of the card:

- The teacher writes the lower case letter/grapheme in the centre and the upper case letter in the bottom left-hand corner
- If the grapheme only occurs at the end of the word, use a hyphen before the grapheme (-ck, -ss).

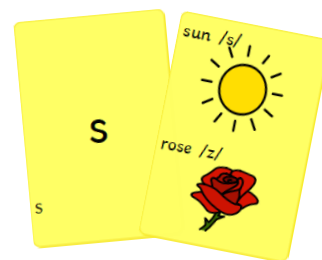
On the back of the card:

- The teacher writes the pupil's chosen clue word at the top of the card and the sound in slanted brackets. Sometimes you will need more than one clue word if the grapheme represents more than one sound (see S example). If you are not introducing both sounds in the lesson, make sure you leave enough space for subsequent sound responses to the grapheme.
- The pupil then draws a picture to illustrate the clue word.



The Reading Card Routine

1. The pupil holds the pack.
2. They look at the front of the card and say the clue word and sound, e.g. "hat /h/".
3. The pupil turns the card and places it on the table to check if they are correct.
4. If the pupil is incorrect or hesitates, they put it back into the pack to practise again.
5. When the card has more than one response, the pupil looks at the front of the card and says each clue word and sound, e.g. "sun /s/, rose /z/" or "igloo /i/, island /i/".



NB: The pupil does not always need to say the clue word, especially as they become more confident and fluent; they can just say the sound or sounds. Also, it doesn't matter whether they say the sound or clue word first, although saying the word first may help them remember how the clue word is pronounced.

Reducing the pack

As the pupil progresses through the programme, you can take out the reading cards where the response is automatic.

Blend cards

You can make blend cards if you feel it is appropriate. You can put clue words on the back of the card if it is helpful. These go straight into the reading card pack. The pupil looks at the card, says the blend, and then the clue word (optional). The aim is to say the blend as quickly as possible.



Tricky Word Reading Cards

You can make tricky word reading cards (irregular high-frequency words) as you come across them in the sets; use a different coloured card. There is no need to have clue words for these but you can write a sentence on the back if the pupil finds this helpful. These can go straight into the reading pack. The aim is for the pupil to read the card with automaticity.

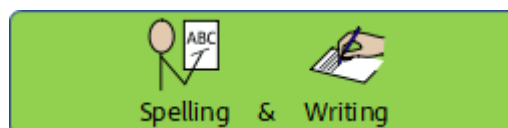


Once you have made the reading card(s), the pupil reads words with the target grapheme. You can use sentences from the "Sets Words and Sentences" document or create your own.

Only use words with the grapheme/sound correspondences that the pupil has learnt or is learning.

Spelling and Writing – 7 minutes

The Spelling Cards



A spelling card is made for each new sound (phoneme). As the pupil progresses through the programme, the pupil will be taught alternative spellings for sounds (phonemes). These are added to the spelling cards as you go through the programme. For example, /s/ can be spelt using the following graphemes (written letter/s) **s** as salt; **ss** as in dress; **ce** as in dance; **c** as in city.

The spelling pack aims to achieve automatic grapheme response to sounds, so for example, when your pupil hears /p/, they write the letter **p** automatically without hesitation. To achieve this, your pupil will need repeated and regular practice.

Creating a spelling card.

A spelling card is made for each new sound. Cards will be the same size as the reading cards but landscape and a different colour. The cards for vowels and consonants in the spelling pack are all the same colour.

You make a spelling card after teaching your pupil how to write the grapheme. Each sound has its own spelling card. As there may be more than one way to spell the sound, new spelling choices (graphemes) are added to their spelling card as the pupil progresses through the programme.

Making cards for consonants and short vowel sounds

1. The teacher draws a line on the left-hand side and writes the sound using slanted brackets in the left-hand column.
2. In the main body, the teacher writes the grapheme (spelling of the sound) in a cursive script (ideally) and a clue word at the bottom (optional). The clue word is crucial for the teacher to prompt the pupil when there is more than one spelling option – although the teacher will have to provide a clue word when doing the spelling routine, it doesn't have to be written on the card, as in some cases there are too many grapheme choices to fit all the clue words on the spelling card.
3. Remember to use the breve, e.g. /*ö*/ to denote the short vowel sound on the short vowel cards.
4. Some sounds will only have one spelling. As the pupil becomes fluent with these they are removed from the pack.
5. Where sounds have more than one spelling option, cards are kept in the pack to be added to. If the pupil is fluent using the initial grapheme (spelling choice), the card can be put to one side and brought back into the pack when the new grapheme is introduced.

/ <i>ä</i> /	a	apple	
/s/	s	sun	
/z/	s	rose	
/s/	s	c	-ss
sun city dress			
/j/	j	g	
jug giant			

Making cards for long vowel sounds

As there are a number of different graphemes (spelling choices) for long vowel sounds, the spelling card incorporates a 'Beginning, Middle and End' grid (BME), which helps the pupil choose graphemes based on where the sound is positioned.

1. The teacher draws a line on the left-hand side and writes the sound using slanted brackets in the left-hand column. Remember to use the macron sign to denote the long vowel sound, e.g. /*ü*/.
2. As shown, the teacher draws lines to create the BME grid
3. The spelling choice being taught is added to the appropriate column(s) on the card, e.g. /*ē*/ the grapheme 'e' could be at the beginning (even) or end (be). As new ways of spelling the sound are taught they are added to the same card, e.g. in Set 3 the grapheme 'ee' would be added to the middle (sheep) and end (see).

/ <i>ä</i> /	B	M	E
	a (apron)		
/ <i>ä</i> /	B	M	E
	a (apron)	ai (rain)	

The spelling pack routine

The teacher holds the spelling pack and the pupil uses a whiteboard, or paper, or book to write the grapheme.

1. The teacher says the sound with the clue word, e.g. /b/ as in **bed**, /s/ as in **city**, /*ē*/ as in **seat**.
2. The pupil repeats the sound, and names the letter or letters of the corresponding grapheme - using the above e.g.s, /b/ is 'b' (letter name); /s/ is 'c' (letter name); /*ē*/ is 'e' 'a' (letter names).
3. The pupil writes the grapheme, ideally in cursive script (**2 are 3 are simultaneous**)
4. The teacher places the card on the table so the pupil can check if they have written it correctly.
5. If incorrect, model writing the grapheme correctly, discuss and return to the pack to try again.

Routine when multiple graphemes correspond to a sound.

1. The teacher says the sound and the clue word, e.g. /ā/ as in acorn.
2. The pupil repeats the sound, says the letter name(s) for grapheme and writes it, /ā/ is 'a' (letter name).
3. The teacher then says the sound and clue word for the next grapheme choice, e.g. /ā/ as in wait
4. The pupil repeats the sound, says the letter name(s) for grapheme and writes it, /ā/ is 'a' 'i' (letter names).
5. Once all the grapheme choices have been revised, the pupil then checks the card.

Word Spelling

Once the pupil has made the new spelling card and completed the spelling routine, they will then practice writing words with the new grapheme.

Use the [Repeat, Segment, Write, Check routine \(RSWC\)](#) to embed the new spelling pattern in words. The pupil says the word, segments the word into sounds, writes the word whilst naming the letters, then reads and checks it.

Words with suffixes. When the pupil is spelling a word with a suffix. The pupil should split the word before writing it, e.g.

1. They segment the word e.g. *read ing*.
2. They then write each segment, naming the letters. If necessary, they may need to segment each syllable before writing it.
3. They read and check.

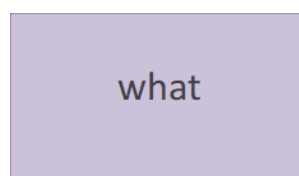
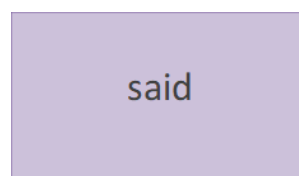
Cards for Tricky Words (common exception)

If the pupil struggles to read or spell a tricky word, create a tricky word spelling card to add to their pack.

When making the card, discuss what they find difficult about spelling the word.

You will then help them think of a strategy to spell the word. This could be:

- A mnemonic using an acronym, e.g. **big** elephants **can't** always **understand** **small** elephants for **because**. This could be for the whole word or just the tricky part of the word. If using a mnemonic, it helps to write it on the card, see example for 'said'.
- For some learners, acronyms can be too difficult to remember and just cause a memory overload. In this case, help the learner think of an alternative memory aid or strategy to remember the tricky spelling:
 - e.g., *what* is hat with a **w** in front, or just simply begins with **wh**
 - Exaggerated pronunciation – wed nes day; fri end,
 - Using colour or capitals to emphasize tricky parts of a word
nec **ess** **ary** (or simply **c** then double **ss**), be CAUSE



Routine for spelling tricky words.

1. The teacher says the word.
2. The pupil repeats the word and says the mnemonic or memory aid/strategy for the spelling.
3. They then name the letters as they write the word.
4. They check the spelling using the card.

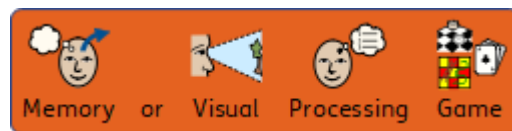
When to remove a word from the pack

You can remove it when your pupil can read or spell the word and has done this correctly and fluently at least five times. You can use a smiley face, tick or sticker to show this. The removed cards can then be revised randomly. A good way of doing this is to put them in a party bag and use it as a 'lucky dip' in each lesson (the pupil would choose one or two words depending on time). Occasionally, you may have to return a card to the pack – this is fine. Always ensure you include words they **have learnt** and are learning in dictation activities.



Memory or Visual Processing Game – 3 minutes

Below are some targeted activities that can be built in to support memory and visual processing. Not all pupils may have difficulties in these areas. You will get to know your learner and be able to adapt this section as appropriate.



Difficulties with short-term verbal or auditory memory can impact working memory, which is key in developing reading, spelling and writing. Weaknesses in visual processing can lead to difficulties discriminating between visually similar letters and causing reversals and tracking errors. Below are activities you can choose to develop aspects of memory and processing:

Visual Memory Ideas

- Showing a sequence of 2/3/4 letters – can they find in the arc?
- Kim's Game
- Pass the action
- Repeat a sequence of actions/pictures etc.
- Letters pegged on a line – show, remove – can they peg them back up?
- Pairs games - pelmanism
- Complete the picture activities
- What can you remember game

Auditory Memory Ideas

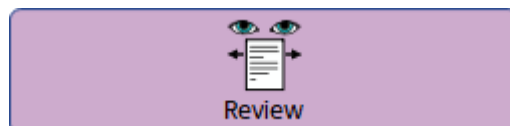
- Say a sequence of letters/numbers/objects – can they recall in the same order?
- Shopping list game
- Auntie Barbara went to Scarborough
- Simon Says
- Following instructions to draw a picture
- A Journey to Remember
- Barrier Games

Visual Processing Ideas

- Tracking activities – letters/words
- Reversed letters in the arc – can they spot?
- Spot the difference
- Where's Wally?
- Puzzles, jigsaws, visual-spatial memory activities
- Word searches

Review – 3 minutes

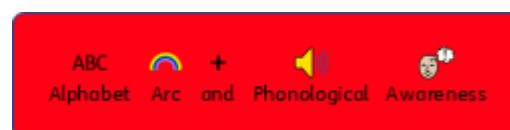
Make sure you leave enough time at the end of the session to focus on metacognition and review learning, e.g. What has the learner learnt? What has helped the learner? (metacognition). This is really important as it promotes self-esteem and encourages motivation.



THE COMPONENTS OF LESSON 2

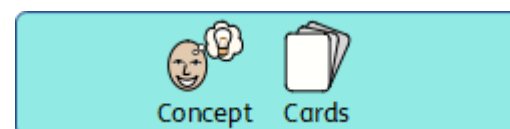
Alphabet Arc and Phonological Awareness – 5 minutes

This is the same as Lesson 1.



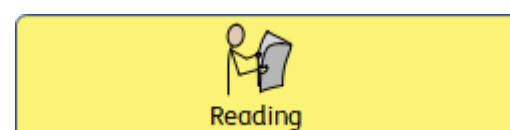
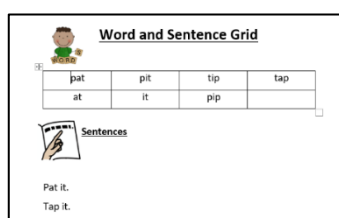
Concept Cards –3 minutes

Do the concept cards pack routine.



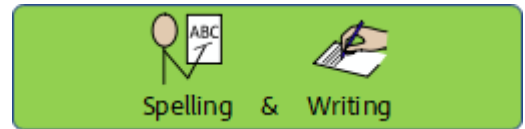
Reading – 7 minutes

Do the reading and word card routines as in lesson 1. Use the *Sets Words and Sentences* document to create words and sentences for reading.



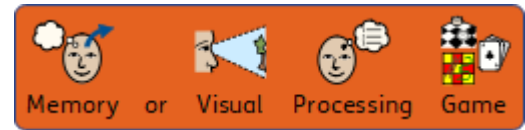
Spelling and Writing – 7 minutes

Do the spelling card routines as in lesson 1. Use the *Sets Words and Sentences* document to create words and sentences for dictation. The learner could also create their own sentences for writing using words from the spelling activities.



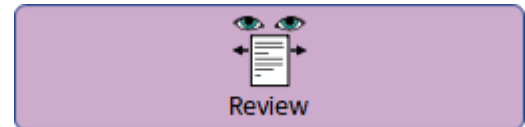
Memory and visual processing game - 3 minutes

This is the same as lesson 1.



Review – 3 minutes

This is the same as lesson 1.



References:

The Hickey Multisensory Language Course 3rd Ed, Edited by Margaret Combley, 2001, Whurr Publishers.

Teaching Literacy to Learners with Dyslexia - A Multi-Sensory Approach 2nd Ed., Kathleen Kelly and Sylvia Phillips, 2016, Sage Publications Inc.

Dyslexia Institute Literacy Programme, Jean Walker, Wendy Goldup and Sue Lomas, 2008, Dyslexia Action.