

STUDY SKILLS

for vocational qualifications

The aim of this booklet is to provide general support for your studies.

It is your reference guide and Luton Adult Learning encourages you to add comments, make notes or highlight anything of that would be of particular interest to you.



Contents

Becoming a successful learner.....	
Methods of studying.....	
Group activities.....	4
Tutorials.....	4
Independent research.....	4
Taught sessions.....	4
Making notes.....	4
Organising your learning.....	
Time management.....	
Presenting work.....	
Written work.....	8
Reflective writing.....	8
Feedback.....	9
Referencing.....	9
Presentation skills.....	10
Examinations.....	11
Development plans (CPD / PDP).....	12
Putting together your portfolio.....	
Suitability of evidence.....	
What is sufficient?.....	14
What is authentic?.....	15
What is relevant?.....	15
What is current?.....	15
Command Words.....	
Methods of assessment.....	
Writing a good Reflective Account.....	18
Writing a good Personal Statement.....	20
Writing a good Witness Testimony.....	21
Notes.....	
Luton Adult Learning.....	
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Becoming a successful learner

To become a successful learner, you should be able to....

- Manage your time and balance study with work and home life
- Produce work that meets the required standard
- Work in groups or individually
- Prepare for exams
- Reflect on your skills and identify areas to develop
- Liaise with colleagues to expand your knowledge

To excel and become a truly independent learner you will need to concentrate on developing these additional skills.

- Using the qualification outcomes to identify what you need to learn
- Consider how you are going to learn – individual study, buddying with a classmate, taught session
- Managing your time
- Use a wide range of opportunities and resources – printed material, online, shadowing, observation, reflection

As you become better at studying, the work that you produce will be more relevant and effective.

Methods of studying

Group activities – you may have to work with a number of other learners on tasks. This is an important part of the learning process and enables you to get to know each other, learn from each other, gain from others' experiences and develop team working skills. The group will need to decide how to communicate, to carry out the activity and share tasks.

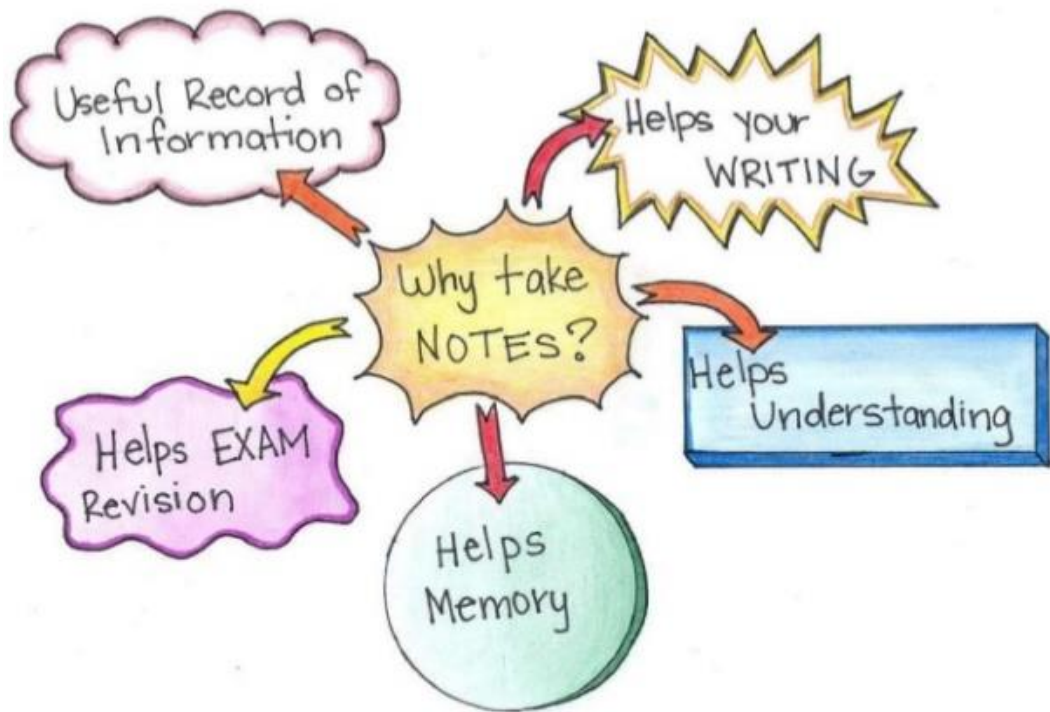
Tutorials – meetings between you and your assessor/teacher. These can be used to discuss specific issues, general topics or to give feedback.

Independent research – where you research and evaluate information from a range of sources. Always reference your source in your work. Make sure that you can trust the source, Is it reliable? Is it relevant? Is it up to date? Do **not** use Wikipedia, it can be unreliable and of doubtful quality as it is not peer reviewed

Taught sessions – group sessions which must be attended

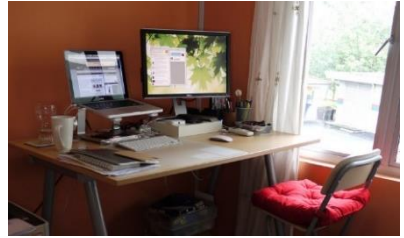
Making notes –

- List main topics
- Draw a mindmap or spider diagram
- Note down any specifics, facts or quotes
- Make sure you can read them
- Use arrows, symbols, diagrams to speed up the process
- Do not copy word by word from books or internet, to avoid unintentional plagiarism, read the section and then close it making notes in your own words
- Use highlighters, colour coding or underline



Organising your learning

Organise your study space, equipment and stationery to save time looking for things and reduce distractions. This will help you focus on the subject in hand.



Time management

- Identify your short term and long term goals
- Use a diary or wall planner, identify times when you are already committed
- Keep a to-do list
- Take time to learn about Smart Assessor (User guides)
- Make use of the support available to you (teacher, books, websites etc)
- Set yourself deadlines
- Keep to assessor/teacher deadlines and make them aware if there are any issues
- You may find it useful to plan by working backwards from key dates
- Make sure you put key dates on your planner / diary
- Prioritise tasks
 - Must do
 - Need to do
 - Nice to do
- Break tasks into smaller, achievable parts
- Allow contingency time for last minute technical problems
- Keep a backup of your work!
- Reflect on experiences and learn from mistakes, use a notebook to record instances



DISCARD PAPER PORTFOLIOS FOR LEARNERS



Home



Evidence



What's It For?



Come Meet Me



Expert Resources



News & Events



Clear Zone



Contact

User Guides

Click on any of the How To Guides...

Learner

[Learner Overview](#)
[Upload and Map evidence](#)
[Give Session Feedback](#)
[Access Resources](#)

[Add a Profile Picture](#)
[Access Actions and Activities](#)
[Access Progress Map](#)
[Change your Password](#)

[Create a CV](#)
[Sign documents](#)
[Add activity to Time log](#)

Presenting work

Written work

- Bear in mind the outcomes – read the question and ask yourself
 - What do I already know?
 - Have I already done this (if so cross reference)
 - Where can I find the information?
- Have you actually answered the question?
- Keep to the point
- Set the context, introduce the piece of writing
- Provide supporting evidence
- Watch grammar and spelling
- Reference any sources
- Keep to a word limit if given
- Before submitting work, re-read the outcome and make sure you have actually answered the question

Formatting written work

Word process where possible and use

- 'Arial' font
- Point 12
- 1.5 line spacing
- Include your name and date in the footer

Reflective writing

Reflection makes you think about your learning and develop skills. You should reflect on what you have learnt, what went well? what didn't go so well? and what will you do differently next time?

It is also a really good way to record critical incidents; these are occurrences that stand out. They could be a particularly

good example of work practice or a bad one. Reflecting on problems that have occurred can help you analyse why they happened, what contributed to the situation, how you were involved, the outcome and what would need to change in the future. For qualifications that use evidence to achieve the outcomes, this is an excellent source of evidence.

Feedback

Read the feedback you receive carefully, your teacher/assessor will guide you and suggest any areas where it can be improved. Use the suggestions to improve your next assignment. We aim to give feedback or for you to have teacher/assessor contact within 10 working days of submission.

Referencing

By referencing, you acknowledge the sources that you have used and prove that you are not trying to pass others' works as your own. This gives your work more credibility and demonstrates the research that you have put in. You must credit other people's ideas or work when quoting or summarising. Failure to do this is likely to lead to an allegation of plagiarism. If you are unsure whether or not to reference, provide one to be on the safe side.

Plagiarism is the use and presentation of somebody else's work as though it were your own. This includes plagiarism of a colleague's work, from a textbook, from the Internet, from a journal, or from other sources.

Presentation skills

Often presentation skills are used to communicate with others whether it is children in a classroom, in a meeting or at a job interview. Developing these skills will prove useful as you progress.

Planning the presentation

- Who is the audience?
- What is the objective of the presentation?
- How long do you have?
- What will you use - powerpoint, demonstration, props, flip chart, white board?
- Practise
- Have resources as a back up eg handouts of the presentation in case of technical problems

Giving the presentation

- Give yourself plenty of time
- Organise the room, think about seating
- Check that everything works
- Keep an eye on the time but don't rush, speak slowly
- Maintain eye contact with your audience
- Thank your audience at the end, invite any questions then calmly collect your materials together

Examinations

Some courses or units are assessed by examination. Plan your revision, some people like to revise small sections at a time, some cram right at the last minute in the hope it will be fresh in their mind. Refer back to any resources you have had, text books, your notes, past papers. Make sure you know what might be assessed and focus on those subjects.

Sitting the exam

- Make sure you know where to be and when
- Eat before the exam
- Have any equipment that you need
- Remember that mobile phones will not be allowed under exam conditions
- Read the questions carefully, think about the wording and what they are actually asking for
- Plan how long to spend on each question
- Make quick notes on the main points
- Start with an easy questions first
- Keep an eye on the time
- If you are running out of time, put something down in bullet points, something is better than nothing
- Check through, correct mistakes, add anything extra, make sure it reads sensibly and can clearly be read

Development plans (CPD / PDP)

A lot of courses expect you to maintain a development plan and you will find it useful to record your development as you do it. Whenever you undertake any form of training, it could be formal or shadowing within the workplace or in the form of research, record it somewhere and reflect on how you will use it. An example of how to record is below.

Record of Continuing Professional Development			
Date	Course / event title	Delivered by	Impact
June 2016	First Aid at Work	Red Cross	We covered CPR and how to deal with many different symptoms and injuries. This gave me a lot more confidence, if an accident occurs I will be able to effectively help.
July 2016	H&S check	Manager	I shadowed my manager on a H&S check, she explained step by step what she was looking for and how to record it. I feel I would be confident to do this alone next time possibly with someone shadowing me to make sure.

Putting together your portfolio

Your portfolio is something that you put together with support from your assessor. You need to demonstrate by producing evidence that you can meet the requirements of the qualification. The qualification is made up of units and each unit has specific knowledge and performance outcomes that you have to evidence, this is your portfolio.

Your portfolio should contain an outline of your work and the organisation that you work for, often this will be covered at the first meeting with your assessor. It will be useful for you to provide your assessor with an organisation structure at this point. The evidence provided should have a brief explanation of what it is and a declaration should be signed (or ticked on Smart Assessor) to state that the evidence is original, authentic and has been produced by you.

Evidence can be provided in a variety of ways

- Your performance observed by your assessor
- Projects or assignments
- Personal Statements
- Reflective Accounts
- Minutes of meetings, action plans, progress reports
- Product evidence – examples of work products, annotated photos etc
- Answers to verbal or written questions
- Video or audio recordings
- Witness testimonies from colleagues, managers or customers
- Previous achievements

- Attendance on training courses, this must be accompanied by an explanation of how it can help in your job role and relates to the outcomes
- Professional discussions that are in depth discussions, generally pre-planned targeting particular outcomes

Your evidence will often provide evidence across a range of units. If a knowledge outcome is fully evidenced it will only need to be 'ticked' off once but performance outcomes will need to be evidenced a number of times to show consistency.

Suitability of evidence

Your assessor will need to be satisfied that your evidence is:

- sufficient
- authentic
- relevant
- current

You need to ensure any evidence included in your portfolio meets these criteria.

What is sufficient?

Your evidence must cover all aspects of the assessment criteria for each unit you are seeking to achieve. Some qualifications require specific evidence and you should check your units to see what is needed. Sufficient does not mean a mass of evidence. It simply means collecting enough evidence to demonstrate competence.

What is authentic?

You must be able to explain and substantiate the evidence you put forward. It is important, therefore, to ensure you only submit evidence relating to your own performance. You will have to tick a declaration for each piece of evidence that you upload to Smart Assessor. There is also a declaration that is completed at the end of each unit to confirm your evidence is authentic.

What is relevant?

Any evidence must relate clearly to the qualification you are seeking to achieve. Assessors are only interested in evidence directly related to the requirements set out in the units. That is, evidence which clearly links a learner's performance with specific areas of their chosen qualification. You should avoid the inclusion of reference documents, training materials and other evidence that does not demonstrate competence.

What is current?

'Current' means evidence relating to skills, attitudes and knowledge you can currently demonstrate. Your assessor will be assessing your current level of competence so you must ensure that your evidence clearly relates to activities and areas of work you could still perform if required to do so.

Your assessor can help you to determine what is sufficient, authentic, relevant and current.

Command Words

Each outcome you have to evidence will start with a different command word. These are important as they provide guidance on how to answer the outcome and how much detail is needed.

Word	Meaning
Assess	Evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of <i>something</i>
Compare	Estimate, measure or note the similarity or dissimilarity between one thing and another for the purpose of explanation or clarification.
Consider	Think carefully about (something), typically before making a decision
Contrast	The state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.
Define	State or describe exactly the nature, scope, or meaning of <i>something</i> . Establish the character of <i>something</i> . Mark out the boundary or limits of <i>something</i>
Demonstrate	Show competence in, provide examples of
Describe	Give an account in words of <i>someone</i> or <i>something</i> including all of the relevant characteristics, qualities or events.
Discuss	Talk about <i>something</i> with another person or group of people or write about (a topic) in detail, taking into account different ideas and opinions

Word	Meaning
Evaluate	Form an idea of the amount, number, or value of <i>someone or something</i> .
Examine	Inspect <i>someone or something</i> in detail to determine the nature or condition.
Explain	Make an idea, situation or problem clear to someone by describing it in detail revealing relevant data or facts
Identify	Establish or indicate the origin, nature or definitive character of something
Justify	Show or prove to be right or reasonable
Outline	A general plan giving the essential features but not the detail. The main features or general principles of something
Suggest	Put forward for consideration a viewpoint

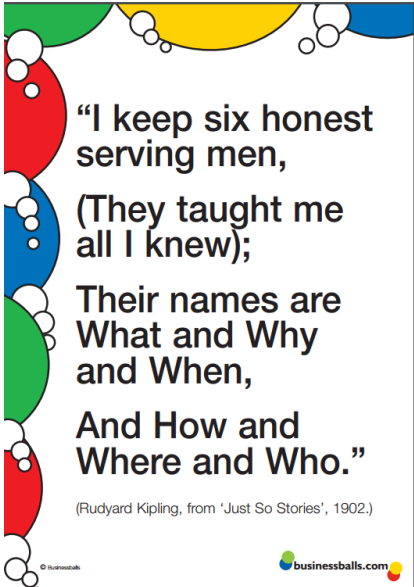
This is not an exhaustive list, read the outcome carefully, identify the command word and ensure you understand exactly what it is asking you to do.

Methods of assessment

Writing a good Reflective Account

A reflective account is usually a write up of how you have carried out part of your job in the past. It could be yesterday or a week, month or years ago as long as you use past tense. It maybe how you dealt with an emergency, a particular situation or how you have used a particular piece of equipment in the past.

- Your account will be a record of events that actually happened. It must be reflected in your style of writing as what you did not someone else.
- For example – I did this and then I did that
- It is not acceptable to write I **would** do this as this does not demonstrate that you have done it or have been doing it.
- If possible write about why you took the actions stated.
- For example –When I arrived at Mrs A's home I put on my gloves and apron to ensure I protect the service user and myself from infection.....
- Throughout your account you must maintain confidentiality by using Mrs A, R or any other alphabet rather than using their actual names or addresses.
- Think about a typical day at work or over a period of days and write a story on how you carried out those activities using the performance outcomes of the units within your qualification as a guide.



**“I keep six honest
serving men,
(They taught me
all I knew);
Their names are
What and Why
and When,
And How and
Where and Who.”**

(Rudyard Kipling, from 'Just So Stories', 1902.)

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You can use these words from the Rudyard Kipling quote to help you reflect on your practice Where did it happen, How did you do it etc. The trickiest question is usually WHY?

Write your account as soon as possible after the activity when your memory is fresh. Read the qualification outcomes and make sure that what you are writing is relevant to the performance criteria. Include the reasons for your actions e.g. why did you greet the child with a smile?

Where possible, include knowledge points in your reflective account. Link the knowledge points to the performance outcomes and make sure you give a clear explanation or description for the knowledge points.

Don't repeat yourself – one reflective account for each activity is enough if you have covered the performance and knowledge outcomes.

Re-read your accounts before you hand them into your assessor. Check to see if you have included as many performance and knowledge outcomes as possible. Sign and date your account. Include the date and time if necessary so that the assessor can link it to an entry in the accident/incident book or other work logs.

Writing a good Personal Statement

A personal statement is similar to a reflective account; it is a report of something that you do. It can be used to describe typical examples of performance showing how you completed the tasks.

- First of all, set the scene. Introduce the task and the context in which you carried it out. Include the date and time.
- Your personal statement should read as a story giving examples and explanations of actual job performance. Use “I” throughout, write about what you did and your involvement in the situation.
- If you mention others in your statement, ask them for a witness testimony to authenticate it.
- Explain any jargon or technical terms.
- Show understanding of knowledge by linking to theory or policies “the reason I did this was because of.....”
- Include screen shots, photos or original records in your statement as this will provide clarification and additional evidence.

Writing a good Witness Testimony

Guidance for witnesses –

Witness testimonies are an account of a situation detailing the learner's involvement in it. An account should be verifiable (either written on headed paper, signed and scanned, stamped with organisations stamp or sent from witness email address) and include –

- What happened
- What the learner personally did to deal with the situation/problem
- Whether company procedures were followed
- The outcome
- Witness name
- Witness relationship with learner (manager/colleague/customer)
- Learner name
- Date

Witness testimonies are a great way to capture evidence for an infrequent or unexpected situation and can be used for –

- Dealing with complaints
- Dealing with emergencies
- Dealing with difficult customers
- Getting feedback from a situation

Example -

Jane Smith, Manager
The Happy Gardner
1 High Street
Newtown

Witness testimony for Ann Learner

On 12th May, Ann was on customer service desk when a gentleman came in with a complaint about a faulty lawn mower. Ann listened carefully to the customer, asked both closed and open questions to clarify why the lawn mower was faulty, noted the conversation and apologised to the customer for the inconvenience. Ann offered the customer a replacement which they were happy to accept. Ann called over a supervisor to authorise the exchange. Ann also offered to find someone to help the customer out to the car with the lawn mower and asked an assistant to do this. Ann recorded the exchange in the return book, labelled the return and took it to the stock room ready to be returned to the manufacturer. Throughout Ann spoke to the customer in a pleasant and professional manner and carried out company procedures in dealing with the complaint and return.

Signature J Smith
Date 15th May 20XX

Notes

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