

# A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties

Part XIII

MAY 2002

# **A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties**

## **Diagnosis and Intervention Strategies**

### **XIII — Cognitive Field Module: Perception**

**MAY 2002**

**Direction de la formation générale des adultes**

English version

Direction de la production en langue anglaise  
Services à la communauté anglophone  
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec

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ISBN: 2-550-39382-1

Legal Deposit – Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2002

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## XIII—COGNITIVE FIELD

### MODULE: PERCEPTION

#### INTRODUCTION

“The cognitive field includes the cognitive skills that make learning possible. The existence of learning problems indicates a strong possibility of deficiencies at the cognitive level; if there is dysfunction at the level of cognitive skills, there is a strong likelihood of learning problems.”<sup>1</sup>

As this passage makes clear, cognitive skills have a major impact on learning. Skills such as attention, language, perception, memory as well as planning and executing tasks are a part of daily, ongoing learning, and are all directly related to learning basic subjects. During workshops, it is important to encourage adult learners to speak, to think, to use their memory and attention span, and so on.

Although the development of cognitive skills is an ongoing process, specific activities and exercises can help foster these skills. It is important to present the adult learners with the objectives of each activity, to help them make the connection between cognitive skills and learning and to repeat these activities as often as possible.

Activities should be varied in order to stimulate different cognitive skills. Special attention should also be paid to the immediate environment (the organization of physical space), to the ground rules established within the group, to the kinds of work habits being fostered among the adult learners, and so on. Organize workshops in such a way as to encourage participation, responsibility, cooperation and mutual assistance—remember, interaction and the development of cognitive skills go hand in hand.

In short, the suggested intervention strategies for the various aspects of the cognitive field are designed to incite adult learners to interact, not only with the other members of the group, but also with the specific object of learning (a text to read, a problem to solve, etc.). This way, the adult learners’ efforts to grasp the object of learning—through mastery of the necessary cognitive skills—will enable them to gradually understand the purpose of the activity and to successfully complete it.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from J. Jasmin, *Guide d’utilisation de la grille de dépistage de problèmes d’apprentissage chez les adultes* (Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, 1990).

## COGNITIVE FIELD

### PERCEPTION

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1.          | Does the adult learner have a good ability to perceive:  |
| 1.1.        | visual phenomena?  |
| <b>YES:</b> | The adult learner has a good ability to perceive what is in his or her field of vision, and a good ability to receive the sensory message. |
| <b>NO:</b>  | The adult learner seems to have problems with visual perception, and has difficulty seeing what is in his or her field of vision.          |

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Review the interventions suggested in sections 3.3, 9.1.2, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4 of the “English (Reading)” module.
- Suggest various spatial awareness exercises.
- Have the learners complete series of shapes, letters and numbers, and series consisting of combinations thereof.
- Have the learners find the differences between two virtually identical drawings. Present them with drawings with increasingly subtle differences.
- Present a series of drawings containing one drawing that is incomplete, and have the adult learners complete it.

**SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS (cont.)**

- Show two series of drawings, one with incomplete drawings and the other with complete drawings. Have the adult learners identify the elements that were added.
- Propose “mystery words” made up, if possible, of vocabulary that has been studied or that relates to a particular theme.

1. 1.2.	Does the adult learner have a good ability to perceive: auditory phenomena?	
<b>YES:</b>	The adult learner has a good ability to perceive what is in his or her hearing range, and a good ability to receive the sensory message.	<b>NO:</b> The adult learner seems to have problems with auditory perception, and has difficulty hearing sounds within his or her auditory range.

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Review the interventions suggested in section 9.1.1 of the “English (Reading)” module.
- Ask the adult learners to listen to sounds around them, and to describe each sound and identify its source.
- Have the adults learners listen to and identify recorded sounds.
- With the adult learners, identify mispronounced words: teach them the correct pronunciation and length of each word, using a recording if necessary.
- Have the learners listen to or learn a short rhythmic poem or song.
- Have the learners compose a short poem that rhymes.

1. 1.3.	Does the adult learner have a good ability to perceive: tactile phenomena?	
<b>YES:</b>	The adult learner has a good ability to perceive what he or she touches, and a good ability to receive the sensory message.	<b>NO:</b> The adult learner has problems with tactile perception, and has difficulty recognizing what he or she touches.

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Have the adult learners identify and describe the shape of raised letters by touching them with their eyes closed.
- Help the learners increase their sensory perception by encouraging them to:
  - ◇ trace a particular word or shape in the air
  - ◇ write or draw on various textures
  - ◇ trace a shape or a word already written down, by pressing hard with their pencil
- Ask the learners to manipulate objects that correspond to words they have just acquired, such as the names of unfamiliar vegetables or fruits.

2. 2.1.	Does the adult have a good ability to distinguish among: visual phenomena?	
<b>YES:</b>	The adult learner has a good ability to distinguish among phenomena within his or her field of vision, and a good ability to distinguish subtle details.	<b>NO:</b> The adult learner has difficulty distinguishing subtle details in his or her field of vision.

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Review the interventions suggested in sections 3.3, 9.1.2, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4 of the “English (Reading)” module.
- Ask the adults to identify the differences between two virtually identical drawings.
- Ask the adults to isolate a figure or a particular shape within a group of figures.
- Suggest activities using educational games available on the market.
- Carefully explain to the learners the objectives of this type of activity.

2. 2.2.	Does the adult learner have a good ability to distinguish among: auditory phenomena?	
<b>YES:</b>	The adult learner has a good ability to distinguish among phenomena within his or her auditory range, and a good ability to hear subtle sound modulations.	<b>NO:</b> The adult learner has difficulty hearing subtle sound modulations within his or her auditory range.

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Review the interventions suggested in section 9.1 of the “English (Reading)” module.
- Have the adult learners recognize differences in sounds, especially high and low pitches, by asking them to listen to various sounds in their everyday environment and to discuss these sounds.
- Pronounce a series of words with the same consonance, and ask the adult learners to repeat each word and to show the picture that corresponds to the word. For example:
  - ◊ man, pan, fan
  - ◊ sea, pea, tea
- Show the adult learners pictures arranged in two columns and ask them to match images with the same phonetic endings. For example:
  - ◊ feed and read
  - ◊ wood and hood

2. 2.3.	Does the adult learner have a good ability to distinguish among: tactile phenomena?	
<b>YES:</b>	The adult learner has a good ability to distinguish among tactile phenomena, and a good ability to recognize the subtle details of what he or she touches.	<b>NO:</b> The adult learner has difficulty recognizing the subtle details of what he or she touches.

### SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

- Explain to the adult learners how their tactile memory is also an important source of learning.
- With their eyes closed, ask the adult learners to distinguish between and describe similar objects. For example:
  - ◇ a pencil and a pen
  - ◇ an orange and an apple
- Recommend to the learners that they play educational games available on the market, such as puzzles. Carefully explain to the learners the objectives of this type of activity.

## XIII—COGNITIVE FIELD

### MODULE: PERCEPTION

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