

REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults

LEARNER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Assessing the needs, interests, and goals of learners is an integral part of the REEP Curriculum and is important in achieving the program's goal of creating "learner-centered" classrooms.

Class Goal Setting/Curriculum Negotiation: Each instructional level contains more lifeskills units than could reasonably be covered during one cycle of instruction. Through needs assessment activities, students negotiate which units will be covered. In other words, students decide the contexts through which they wish to learn language skills. Needs assessment is a component of the "Getting Started Unit", which is the first unit (and the only required unit) in each instructional level.

Unit Needs Assessment: Needs assessment is also a component within each lifeskills unit. See Unit Needs Assessment in this section for guidelines and suggested activities.

On-going Needs Assessment: Needs Assessment should be done routinely in order to ensure that learner needs and goals are being met and to assist the teacher in planning effective lessons that are relevant to the learners' needs. Final needs assessment should occur at the end of a course to take account of accomplishments and to help learners make decisions about educational goals for the future.

For information on designing effective needs assessment activities, see the  **Characteristics of effective needs assessment activities.**

Sample needs assessment activities:

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|  Picture Questionnaire |  Compositions |
|  Mind Mapping |  Achievement Charts |
|  Learner Generated Questionnaire |  Individual Education Plan |
|  Information Grids |  Four Corners/Vote with Your Feet |
|  Timelines | |

Choosing the right tool and implementing it effectively:

For suggested activities for needs assessment, organized by type, e.g. written or oral, including information on classroom management, what point in the course of instruction the tool would be most effective, calculating the results, and the levels that the tool would be most appropriate see the  **Needs Assessment Tools Chart.**

For sample Needs Assessment Lesson Plans, see Getting Started units of each instructional level. For a Needs Assessment Bibliography, see the Resources section of this curriculum.

Other resources: [Needs Assessment for Adult Learners](#) by Kathleen Santopietro and Carol Van Duzer, (has REEP example). Go to  **Individual Goal Setting** for process and resources for setting individual goals.

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Characteristics of Effective Learner Needs Assessment Activities

(Contributed by Suzanne Grant and Cathy Shank)

Effective needs assessment is vital because adult ESL learners who feel they are not learning what they need to know in English class are more likely to drop-out than to express their discontent.

Eliciting need assessment information from Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults and applying that information to course planning presents a challenge. Traditional questionnaires written in English may not be appropriate or effective for all learners, particularly those with limited literacy skills. In addition, the concept of participating in instructional goal-setting can be strange to adults from other cultural backgrounds where learners expect the teacher to set the course objectives.

The following characteristics help to ensure that needs assessment is effective:

- **Appropriate** for a particular group of students. For example, if reading and understanding the language of a written questionnaire is very time-consuming or impossible for learners, then another type of assessment tool should be chosen.
- Serve a **learning purpose** as well as an **information gathering purpose**. It is important that neither teacher nor learners perceive needs assessment as a waste of learning time. Effective activities can be incorporated into the class orientation or integrated into lessons. Learners should be actively practicing and using the target language while collecting and analyzing data.
- **Practical** in terms of time required and usefulness of the information collected. Many activities do not require a great deal of preparation or processing time.
- **Processed** with the group so that both teacher and learners become aware of the expectations of others in the class. When there are differences in expressed needs and goals, then negotiation and compromise must occur.

For learners to understand the purpose and value of needs assessment, the information gathered must be applied in obvious ways during the course so that learners feel that their needs are being met. Adults who feel that what they are learning is vital are more likely to complete a course and continue to seek future educational opportunities.

For a feedback form that assists in planning needs assessment activities that exhibit the above characteristics, see  **Needs Assessment Feedback Form**.

Additional resource:  **Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners** (with REEP sample).