

# How To Use the “Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials”

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## What is this document about?

### *How to Use the “Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials”*

- introduces you to the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* by
  - providing information on its purpose and development
  - detailing the six Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) principles on which it is based
  - describing the checklist’s five sections
- illustrates how to use the checklist by evaluating an actual learning material
- provides a blank checklist for evaluating your own learning materials

## Introducing the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials*

With the implementation of the new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum (OALCF), practitioners in the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program will need to evaluate the extent to which their program practices support adult learners in a task-based and goal-directed learning environment. Specifically, as a volunteer tutor, instructor, or program coordinator, you will need to evaluate your learning materials to determine their effectiveness within the OALCF.

To help you in your work, the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* has been developed. The checklist provides a set of standard questions to evaluate learning materials—ensuring greater quality and consistency of programming and a competency- and goal-directed program approach. You can use the checklist to evaluate both print and non-print learning materials, such as books, workbooks, video collections, software, and websites.

## How was the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* developed?

The following six principles guided the development of the OALCF:

1. Address learner needs first and foremost. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* identifies materials according to the learner’s culture, language, and goal path. Using the checklist will enable you to assess the match between the learning material and learner’s needs, interests, goal, and culture – helping to ensure that your programming is learner-centered, relevant, and meaningful.
2. Make practitioners’ jobs easier. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* will display the results of your evaluation in an easy-to-read format. Then, both you and the learners in your program can easily find learning materials that best match their needs.
3. Be appropriate for, and accessible to, learners and practitioners with diverse cultural needs. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* asks you to identify the cultural group of the target audience for the learning material. In this way, you can easily find resources reflecting the cultural values and language of learners.

4. Be accountable to the public. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* helps you evaluate a learning material that may already be in your delivery agency's collection or may be a resource that your agency intends to buy.
5. Be built on a specified, strong theoretical foundation consistent with andragogy. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* uses evaluative questions that directly reflect adult learning principles. Specifically, the questions take into account that learners
  - are self-directed
  - want to be engaged in decisions affecting them
  - have life experiences and knowledge
  - are goal-oriented
  - must see the reason for learning something
  - are practical
  - need to be treated with respect
6. Be clear to learners, practitioners, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), and other stakeholders. The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* makes explicit the connection between a particular learning material and the OALCF's competency- and task-based program approach.

The development of the checklist was informed by various educational and institutional sources. Specifically, the evaluative questions and the categories into which they are grouped were adapted from MERLOT-Multimedia Education Resource for Learning and Online Teaching. You can access this resource at <http://taste.merlot.org/evaluationcriteria.html>.

To further understand the key concepts and rationale that informed the development of the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials*, please read *Foundations of Learning Materials* ([http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF\\_Foundations\\_of\\_Learning\\_Materials\\_March\\_2011.pdf](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Foundations_of_Learning_Materials_March_2011.pdf)), available from the "Linking Learning Materials to the OALCF" web page of the OALCF website.

## How is the *Checklist* organized?

The *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials* is comprised of the following five sections:

1. Content
2. Quality of Content
3. Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool
4. Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)
5. Comments

The blank checklist at the back of this document shows the five sections.

## Examining the *Checklist* in detail

The first part of the checklist is the “Content” section. Here you identify the name of the learning material and its cultural orientation, the goal path to which it relates, and the predominant and secondary competencies it supports. You also indicate the date of your evaluation.

The “Content” section is followed by three sections, “Quality of Content,” “Potential Effectiveness as a Learning-Teaching Tool,” and “Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners).” These three categories organize the 13 evaluative questions that further determine the “fit” of a learning material within the OALCF. Taken as a whole, the questions help to ensure that the learning material matches the OALCF’s learner-centred, goal-directed, competency-based, and task-based approach to programming.

To answer each evaluative question, you will use the scale shown in Figure 1 to rate the learning material from low to high. Low indicates a “not at all” response to an evaluative question and high indicates a “most definitely” response.



Figure 1: Rating scale for use with the evaluative questions

### Describing the “Quality of Content” section

In the “Quality of Content” section of the checklist, you answer four evaluative questions to determine the extent to which the learning material is adult appropriate, has clear objectives, includes current, relevant, and accurate content, and is appropriate for the targeted cultural group or delivery sector. You then use the boxes on the right side of the checklist to rate your response to each question from low to high.

For example, to answer the question “Is the material appropriate for adults?”, some qualities that would inform a high rating are as follows:

- The subject is presented in a mature format
- Topics are of interest to adults
- Materials are designed so that learners can immediately apply the skills, knowledge, and behaviours they have acquired in class

Conversely, some qualities that would inform a low rating are as follows:

- The material is presented with children’s needs and interests in mind
- The activities consist of “drill and kill” exercises without providing any meaningful and relevant context
- Topics do not reflect an adult lifestyle

### Describing the “Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool” section

In the “Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool” section, you answer five evaluative questions to determine the extent to which the learning material can be adapted, satisfies different teaching and learning styles, reflects current, accepted methodology, and enables you to deliver task-

based learning that meets individual needs. You use the boxes on the right side of the checklist to rate your response to each.

For example, to answer the question “Does the material present options for meeting individual needs?”, some qualities that would inform a high rating are as follows:

- The material can be adapted to respond to the needs, interests, and goal of the learner
- Suggested out-of-class activities enable learners to apply what they have learned in authentic situations

Conversely, some qualities that would inform a low rating are as follows:

- The material provides no opportunity for learners to apply their newly acquired abilities in real-life situations
- Adaptation of the material is challenging

### **Describing the “Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)” section**

In the “Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)” section, you answer four evaluative questions to determine the extent to which the learning material allows you to easily identify OALCF competencies and task groups, presents the information attractively, and supports flexibility and self-directed learning. Again, you rate your response to each question from low to high.

For example, to answer the question “Does the material present information in appealing ways?”, some qualities that would inform a high rating are as follows:

- The layout of the material looks uncluttered; therefore it is not intimidating
- The use of visuals breaks up the text and helps the reader to understand it

Conversely, some qualities that would inform a low rating are as follows:

- The text is very dense, making the materials look cluttered
- The type is very small and difficult to read for some learners

### **Describing the “Comments” section**

In the “Comments” section, you have an opportunity to provide more detailed information about the learning material—information that might help other practitioners or learners evaluate and select appropriate learning materials.

## The *Checklist* in Action: *Kitchen Math* Example

To help you understand how to use the *Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials*, an evaluator at an LBS delivery agency has used it to evaluate *Kitchen Math*, an actual learning material. Developed by Lisa Campbell of the Northwest Territories Literacy Council in 2009, the *Kitchen Math* workbook is one of three in the Everyday Math Skills series. It is available for download at NALD (<http://library.nald.ca/item/8508>).

We will take you step-by-step through the evaluation process.

### Filling out the “Content” section of the checklist

Designed for anglophone and Native learners in Northern Ontario, *Kitchen Math* is used in community-based delivery agencies. Included in the workbook are activities to develop learners’ skills, knowledge, and behaviours to plan, select, purchase, and prepare food for meals – replicating the real-life tasks of feeding a family. These tasks relate primarily to competency *C. Understand and Use Numbers*. However, the tasks also relate to the two competencies Find and Use Information and Communicate Ideas and Information. The workbook uses authentic examples to provide a basis for learning and practicing basic math skills and includes activities outside the classroom to further contextualize learning.

### Answering the evaluative questions and providing comments

The following pages illustrate how the evaluator answered the 13 evaluative questions for *Kitchen Math*. For each question, we have provided the evaluator’s rating as well as descriptions to anchor the “low to high” rating scale for the response. The Evaluator’s comments have also been included.

## Quality of Content

## Is the material appropriate for adults?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- the subject was of interest to adults
- the topic was relevant to activities in which adults would participate
- basic skills were presented in a mature format; no child-like images or concepts were present
- learners could immediately apply the skills they had learned

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the subject matter was presented with children's interests, needs, and level of understanding in mind
- the topics were presented without context. For example, they contained isolated multiplication drills and spelling lists.
- the material indicated a grade level directly, such as a Grade 3 level

*Kitchen Math*

## Is the material appropriate for adults?

Low  High



## Evaluator's Comments

- Adults who would use this material are probably interested in nutrition and in learning the skills necessary to plan meals.
- The topic is relevant to adults since they need to prepare food for themselves and their families.
- Lessons and activities generally pertain to a typical adult lifestyle and most can be applied immediately.



## Quality of Content

## Are the learning objectives clear?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- the learning goals were clearly stated before each unit or lesson, as in “By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to . . .”
- an obvious connection existed between the material being taught, the reasons for teaching it, and the gains learners could make
- learners could understand and state what they were expected to learn

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- learners would be unclear about what they were supposed to be learning and why
- the materials had no reasonable pattern or flow

*Kitchen Math*

## Are the learning objectives clear?

Low  High



## Evaluator's Comments

- Adults who would use this material are probably interested in nutrition and in learning the skills necessary to plan meals.
- The topic is relevant to adults since they need to prepare food for themselves and their families.
- Lessons and activities generally pertain to a typical adult lifestyle and most can be applied immediately.

## Quality of Content

### Is the content current, relevant, balanced, and accurate?

#### You would give the learning material a high rating if

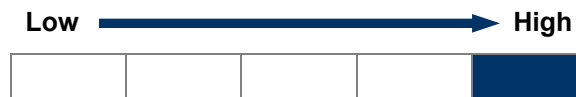
- the themes, messages, and concepts accurately reflected current social and economic realities
- learners could see themselves, their values, and their realities in the themes, messages, and concepts that supported learning
- ideas were presented without bias
- factual material was correct
- what was being taught was something learners could use

#### You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the themes, topics, and messages were outdated and did not reflect current beliefs, social structures, or realities
- obvious biases existed
- the material had mistakes

#### *Kitchen Math*

#### Is the content current, relevant, balanced, and accurate?



#### Evaluator's Comments

- Nutrition is an important consideration in this workbook, reflecting current global health concerns.
- Learners are introduced to modern information gathering and sorting tools for good health, such as the Body Mass Index (BMI) and food labels.
- The worksheet topics are timely, accurate, and reflect the interests and realities of individuals who live in the North.
- Prices listed accurately reflect food prices in the North.
- Recipes are provided and learners are encouraged to use them at home.
- The material has more drills than task-oriented lessons.

## Quality of Content

## Is the content appropriate to the needs of the cultural group or delivery sector?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- the subject matter and the way it was presented were sensitive to the socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic differences of learners
- concepts and messages were addressed with specific traditions or beliefs in mind
- learners could relate to what was being taught and the vehicle for teaching it

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- learners could not relate to or understand the subject matter
- obvious cultural biases existed
- learners' traditions and cultural norms were misrepresented

*Kitchen Math*

## Is the content appropriate to the needs of the cultural group or delivery sector?



## Evaluator's Comments

- The material introduces the concept of nutrition, an important consideration for all individuals, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.
- Marginalized groups are at greater risk for poor health, so information to improve their health is advantageous.
- Recipes make reference to a typical Northern diet.
- Much of the content in the first section was adapted from an anglophone resource; therefore, concepts and references within it reflect the anglophone culture.

## Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool

## Does the material present opportunities for task-based learning?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- skills were developed and taught as they related to the tasks the learner was required to complete
- the material emphasized completing tasks rather than on completing “skills and drills” or completing worksheets
- the tasks that learners completed reflected their immediate needs

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the material developed skills, but indicated no purpose for using them
- skill development was mostly in the form of drills, repetitive worksheets, or cloze exercises
- learners could not apply the skills they were learning in their lives

*Kitchen Math*

## Does the material present opportunities for task-based learning?

Low  High



## Evaluator's Comments

- *Kitchen Math* develops basic math skills by applying them to the tasks involved in meal preparation—tasks that learners completed outside the class.
- Learners are presented with opportunities to learn about related tasks that involve more than just math skills, such as making a shopping list, planning a workshop, or searching for food information on the Internet.
- *Kitchen Math* is a workbook that requires a great deal of pen- and-paper work; however, the author includes extended learning activities that are task-based.

## Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool

## Does the material present options for meeting individual needs?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

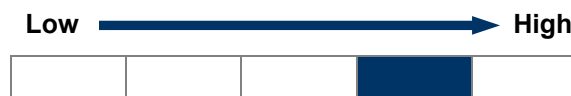
- the material provided suggestions for alternate activities or approaches
- lessons were set up so learners could advance at their own pace, even if they skipped ahead or spent more time on a particular unit

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the material was difficult to modify
- no opportunities existed for learners to apply what they had learned in authentic situations

*Kitchen Math*

## Does the material present options for meeting individual needs?



## Evaluator's Comments

- *Kitchen Math* is predominantly a pen-and-paper activity workbook; however, opportunities exist for learners to apply the skills they are learning in practical situations that may be more suited to their individual needs.
- The material is somewhat personalized and could be altered by the practitioner.
- The material provides opportunities for discussion, as the topics are timely.
- Practitioners can pick and choose activities or worksheets that best suit the needs and skills of the individual learner.

## Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool

# Does the material satisfy the various teaching and learning styles?

### You would give the learning material a high rating if

- lessons or tasks could be modified to address learners' individual needs. For example, the practitioner or another learner could read the directions aloud.
- lessons used multiple approaches to accommodate various learning styles

### You would give the learning material a low rating if

- lessons were presented in only one way, for example, with only written instructions
- the material did not include a visual or an audio component

#### *Kitchen Math*

### Does the material satisfy the various teaching and learning styles?

Low  High



#### Evaluator's Comments

- The material is presented in only a couple of formats; it uses only text and graphics.
- A practitioner or classmate can act as a scribe and help a learner complete the written portions orally.

## Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool

## Can the material be adapted to meet the needs of the targeted cultural group or delivery sector?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- lessons or tasks could be modified to address the social and economic differences of learners
- lessons or tasks could be changed to respond to the cultural and linguistic differences of learners

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- practitioners would have difficulty modifying lessons or tasks to respond to the social and economic differences of learners
- lessons or tasks could not be changed easily to respond to the cultural and linguistic differences of learners

*Kitchen Math*

## Can the material be adapted to meet the needs of the targeted cultural group or delivery sector?



## Evaluator's Comments

- *Kitchen Math* is predominantly a pen-and-paper workbook; therefore, alterations to content are limited to the amount of changes the practitioner can or wants to make.
- A learner who is not comfortable with pen-and-paper activities would be challenged by this material.

## Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool

## Does the content reflect current and accepted methodology?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- lessons reflected the various notions about how adults learned
- lessons were developed with learner input or were learner-directed
- lessons avoided methods, such as cloze exercises, that did not match activities that would be carried out beyond the classroom
- lessons relied on the learner's prior knowledge for building new skills

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the material did not reflect current practices and concepts associated with adult learning
- lessons did not take into consideration the learner's prior knowledge or skills

*Kitchen Math*

## Does the content reflect current and accepted methodology?



## Evaluator's Comments

- *Kitchen Math* is mainly a pen-and-paper workbook, a format that is usually less effective for adult learners.
- The workbook author has not recognized the importance of setting up activities outside the classroom to practice newly learned skills and to allow learners to take charge of their learning.



Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)

## Are OALCF competencies and task groups easily identified?

**You would give the learning material a high rating if**

- OALCF competencies and task groups could be clearly identified
- the competencies and task groups of the OALCF were stated

**You would give the learning material a low rating if**

- it was unclear what competencies and task groups could be aligned with the learning materials
- the competencies and task groups of the OALCF were not stated

*Kitchen Math*

**Does the content reflect current and accepted methodology?**



### Evaluator's Comments

- The title of the book clearly indicates that it will be dealing with numbers, so it helps learner work with OALCF competency *C. Understand and Use Numbers* and its task groups.
- After reviewing the material, it is obvious that the learning material helps to develop other competencies.

## Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)

## Does the material present information in appealing ways?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- the material was attractive and uncluttered
- the material looked easy to read and understand
- topics were current and of interest to adults
- materials included a variety of activities that challenged the learner

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- adults did not enjoy working with the material since it was unattractive and cluttered
- the text did not look easy to read and understand, making it appear intimidating

*Kitchen Math*

## Does the material present information in appealing ways?

Low  High



## Evaluator's Comments

- *Kitchen Math* comes across visually as a typical workbook with lots of instructions and drills.
- The variety of ideas for activities outside the classroom is interesting and likely to appeal to an adult audience.

## Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)

## Does the material provide flexibility in its use?

## You would give the learning material a high rating if

- it did not prescribe an order for teaching
- the material allowed the practitioner to use different media with the tasks
- the material allowed the practitioner to adapt it to meet learners' needs, interests, and goals

## You would give the learning material a low rating if

- the learner had to use the material from start to finish
- the material could only be used in one format, such as paper
- the context of the task could not be changed to meet the needs and goals of learners

*Kitchen Math*

## Does the material provide flexibility in its use?

Low  High



## Evaluator's Comments

- The pen-and-paper approach may limit some learners.
- The materials provide learners with an opportunity for outside class activities to practice what they have learned in class.
- Learners or practitioners can pick and choose worksheets according to the learner's prior knowledge and skill levels.
- The practitioner can use the worksheets as a guide to help create more suitable, task-based activities, based on the learner's needs and goal.

Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)

## Does the material support self-directed learning?

**You would give the learning material a high rating if**

- the material supported learners working on their own
- it provided a lot of opportunity for learner input

**You would give the learning material a low rating if**

- learners had to rely on the instructor to complete the lessons
- the material did not allow for learner input

*Kitchen Math*

### Does the material support self-directed learning?

Low  High



#### Evaluator's Comments

- The "Math Projects" pages encourage learners to practice what they have learned by completing activities outside the classroom.
- Answer pages in the back of the workbook support learners working on their own.
- Learners do not have to rely on practitioner support to get through the activities.

# Checklist for Evaluating Learning Materials

Name of Learning Material	Date of Evaluation

1. Content						
	Anglophone	Deaf	Francophone	Native		
Cultural Group						
	Employment	Apprenticeship	Secondary School Credit	Postsecondary	Independence	
Goal Path						
	A. Find and Use Information	B. Communicate Ideas and Information	C. Understand and Use Numbers	D. Use Digital Technology	E. Manage Learning	F. Engage with Others
Predominant Competency						
Secondary Competencies						

2. Quality of Content	Low				High
Is the material appropriate for adults?					
Are the learning objectives clear?					
Is the content current, relevant, and accurate?					
Is the content appropriate to the needs of the targeted cultural group or delivery sector?					

3. Potential Effectiveness as a Teaching-Learning Tool	Low				High
Does the material present opportunities for task-based learning?					
Does the material present options for meeting individual needs?					
Does the material satisfy the various teaching and learning styles?					
Can the material be adapted to meet the needs of the targeted cultural group or delivery sector?					
Does the content reflect current and accepted methodology?					

4. Ease of Use (for Practitioners and Learners)	Low				High
Are OALCF competencies and task groups easily identified?					
Does the material present information in appealing ways?					
Does the material provide flexibility in its use?					
Does the material support self-directed learning?					

<b>5. Comments</b>