

# Module 5

## Teaching basic skills to children with special needs



### The importance of talk



1 hour 30 minutes

#### Aims:

- to stress that children learn in different ways
- to stress the importance of talk in the classroom
- to provide some ideas how to help children who have difficulty talking
- to provide some ideas how to promote talk in the classroom.

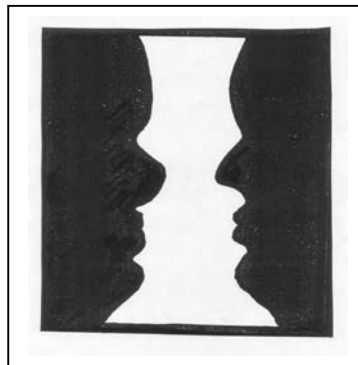
#### Task 1

#### Warm up



15 minutes

1. Put the following picture on the board.



2. Ask the trainees: "What do you see?"
3. Listen to their ideas. Some people will see a vase; some people will see two people looking at each other. Who is right? Who is wrong? It depends on how you look at the picture.
4. Ask the trainees: "Do people learn in the same way?"
5. Listen to their answers.

Answer

### ***Do people learn in the same way?***

No. Everyone learns differently. Some people remember things if they see them written down, other people prefer to listen rather than read. Children who cannot hear well learn more through sight. Children who cannot see well rely on hearing and touch.

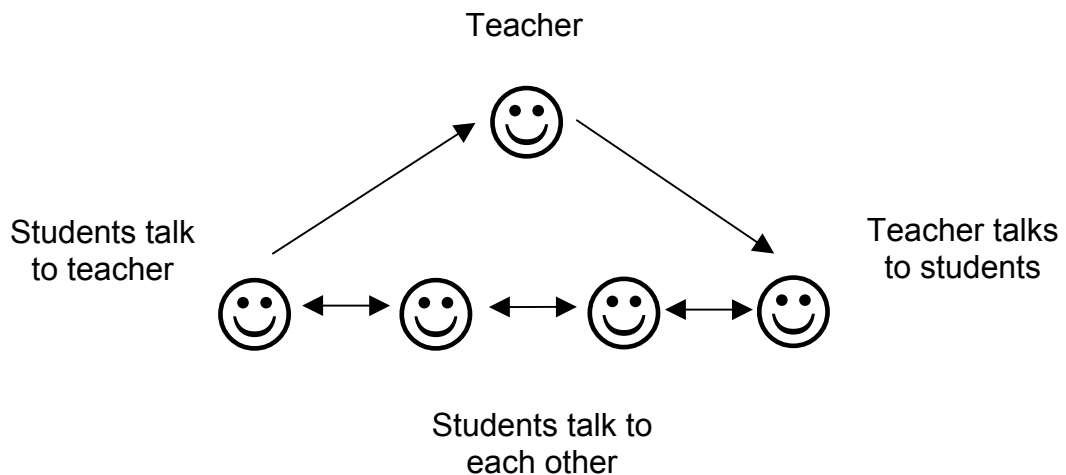
## **Task 2**

### **The importance of talk in the classroom**



**20 minutes**

1. Draw the following diagram on the board and present the information given below:



## **Presentation**



Talk is very important for learning. In the classroom, about 70% of the teaching and learning is done through talking. The teacher can talk to the students. The students can talk to the teacher. The students can talk to each other.

Good teaching and learning depends on a balance between these interactions. If the teacher talks all the time it is not good. It is important for the students to talk to the teacher, to ask and answer questions. It is also very important for the children to talk to each other by working in pairs and in small groups.

## 2. Ask the trainees:

“In your lessons, how much time do you spend talking? How much time do the children spend talking to you? How much time do the children spend talking to each other?”

## 3. Listen to the answers from a few trainees.

## 4. Inform the trainees:

“It is very important for a child's development that they learn to talk about their ideas and feelings. Good teaching encourages children to talk to their teacher and each other. In groups of four or five people think of ways that you could promote the use of talk in your lessons.”

## 5. Trainees brainstorm their ideas.

## 6. Listen to their ideas and write them on the board.

**Task 3****Ways to promote talk in the classroom****30 minutes**

## 1. Explain and demonstrate to the trainees some ideas for promoting talk in the classroom:

- correcting mistakes
- talking about experiences
- describing what they see
- games eg, Show and Tell, Story Chain, Picture Sequencing

(See handout, ‘**Promoting talk in the classroom**’ for details)

## 2. Answer any questions the trainees have.

## 3. Ask the trainees: “Which of these ideas could you use in your lessons? Which ideas do you like the best?”

## 4. Listen to the trainees' ideas.

**Task 4****Helping children who have difficulty talking****25 minutes**

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**Presentation**

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Some children have difficulty talking in class. This may be caused by a physical impairment such as a cleft lip or a child may have a hearing problem, which will affect how they learn to talk. Some children have an intellectual problem, which delays their development of speech and will affect how they express their thoughts. Some children may have a speech impediment they may stammer or it may be difficult to understand what they say. Other children are shy and nervous.

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1. Ask trainees: “How can you help these children to be included in talking activities?”
2. Trainees discuss their ideas in groups.
3. Listen to the trainees' ideas.
4. Tell the trainees to read the handout, ‘**Promoting talk in the classroom**’
5. Answer any questions the trainees have.



## Promoting talk in the classroom

Talk is very important for learning. In the classroom, about 70% of the teaching and learning is done through talking. The teacher can talk to the students. The students can talk to the teacher. The students can talk to each other.

Good teaching and learning depends on a balance between these interactions. If the teacher talks all the time it is not good. It is important for the students to talk to the teacher, to ask and answer questions. It is also very important for the children to talk to each other by working in pairs and in small groups.

In your lessons, how much time do you spend talking? How much time do the children spend talking to you? How much time do the children spend talking to each other?

It is very important for a child's development that they learn to talk about their ideas and feelings. Also, by encouraging talk in the classroom a teacher can then assess the progress of the student. If a child is having difficulty, a teacher can then adapt the teaching methods to help the child improve. Good teaching encourages children to talk to their teacher and each other.

### *Ways to promote talk in the classroom*

- **Correcting students mistakes**

When a child makes a mistake, don't just say, "That's wrong" and give the correct answer. Point out the mistake and see if the child can correct it. A lot of mistakes are simple ones. If they can't, see if other children can give the correct answer. Try to explain to the child *why* something is wrong.

For example a child has written the word "dae" like this:

Most teachers would say that this is wrong and tell the child the right way. A few teachers would ask why the child wrote "dae" in this way. Perhaps the child thought that the vowel sound "ay" comes after the consonant sound "d" because that is the way it is spoken. The better teacher will explain that the vowel "ay" is always written before the consonant. He might then ask the child if they know any other vowels that were always written before the consonant, such as "sra ei".

- **Encouraging students to talk about their experiences**

#### *Weekly news*

On a Monday spend a few minutes to talk about what happened at the weekend. The children can talk to each other in pairs or small groups first, then the teacher can ask a few children to tell the class what happened.

#### *Daily news*

Encourage the children to tell you and the rest of the class any exciting news they have. It could be that one child has a new brother or sister, or their father bought a new cow. Tell the children your news too. Every day you should ask, "Has anyone

got any news to tell?" Encourage other children to ask questions when they are listening to someone's news.

- **Encourage children to describe what they see**

There are a lot of pictures in the school textbooks. When you start a new lesson in the textbook ask the children to look at the pictures and talk about them. You can use questions to prompt the children (eg, What is the man doing? How many cows are there? Are the people happy?).

If the children draw any pictures get them to describe their drawings to each other.

- **Talking games**

There are a lot of games you can play to encourage talk.

#### *Show and Tell*

In this game you ask the child to bring in something to school that means a lot to them. It could be a toy, a photograph, or a necklace. The child must tell the class about the object. They should describe what it looks like, how they got it and why it is important to them.

#### *Story Chain*

In this game the children make up their own story, sentence by sentence. The teacher gives the children the first sentence of the story (eg, A long, long time ago there was a lonely elephant). The teacher then points to a child who must add a sentence to the story (eg, The elephant was lonely because he had no one to talk to.) Children take it in turns to add another sentence to the story. This game works best if the children work in groups of 6 -8 children.

#### *Picture Sequencing*

In this activity the teacher shows the children 4-6 pictures in a sequence, which tell a story. The children must describe what they see in the pictures to make up the story. In a variation the teacher can put the pictures on the board in the wrong order. The children must try to put the pictures in the correct order to tell the story.

### ***Identifying children who have difficulties with spoken language***

Some children have difficulties talking. Many children who have difficulty producing speech are easily identified because they have physical impairments or hearing impairments. Other children may have difficulties translating thought into speech.

#### *Indicators of a child with spoken language difficulties*

- may show poor use of grammar
- unable to express himself in complete sentences; gives one word answers
- difficulty remembering words
- may repeat words
- may talk too loudly or softly
- may use gestures, mime and facial expressions to communicate
- has difficulty describing things
- reads better silently than orally

- may use abbreviated speech eg, “Me - go- house”

### ***Helping children with speech difficulties***

- Use small group work. Children who are shy or who have difficulties speaking find this less intimidating.
- Look to see which other children in the class the child with a speech difficulty talks to. Let the child with a difficulty work with friends.
- Provide a good speech model.
- Use simple words that the child knows.
- Be cautious about always correcting the child's speech.
- Avoid competitive games that require spoken answers.
- If asking the child questions in front of the class, the answers should be simple short phrases or one word.
- Give plenty of encouragement.
- If a child has a stammer who has difficulty saying a word don't supply the word or complete the sentence for them.
- Describe activities as you do them eg, "I am writing the answers on the board".




**Unit 2**

## Teaching reading



**1 hour 30 minutes**

### Aims:

- to explain the reasons why some children have difficulty reading
- to demonstrate some techniques to help children to read.

### Task 1

#### Reflection



**15 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees: “There are many different ways teachers use to teach children to read. What techniques do you use?”
2. Listen to trainees' ideas and makes a short list on the board.
  - matching words and pictures
  - teaching the letter sounds
  - learning to read by reading
  - learning to recognise words by sight.

### Task 2

#### Learning to read and to understand what you read



**30 minutes**

#### Presentation



No one really knows how children learn to read. It seems to be different for each child. Even when you think back to how you learnt to read it is hard to remember exactly when and how you acquired the skill. For slow learners it must be very discouraging to watch their friends learning to read while they are still struggling to learn the secret. As they realise they are falling behind they can become discouraged. The more they fail to read, the more discouraged they become and they feel embarrassed. A teacher must take care to avoid the child falling into a cycle of failure.

Sometimes teachers make the situation worse because they confuse reading the sounds of words and sentences for reading for meaning. It is essential children understand what they read.

1. Demonstrate what is meant by understanding what you read.
2. Put the Japanese word "watashi" on the board.

わたくし

3. Point to the individual letters in the word and the trainees repeat.

wa	ta	shi
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4. Ask some trainees to 'read ' the word.
5. Ask the trainees: "Can you read this now?"
6. Point out that they can decipher the sounds of the word but they don't know what it means. Only when they know the meaning can they really be said to be reading.
7. Trainer tells the trainees:

"Here are some important things you should remember when teaching children to read:

- Don't let children become discouraged when they do not learn to read as easily as other children in the class.
- Keep reading meaningful by putting it in a context which is relevant (eg, reading the labels on cans, reading instructions and then acting them out).
- Use a variety of techniques in teaching reading.
- Remember that simply reading aloud without understanding is not meaningful reading."

### Task 3

### Techniques for successful reading



**40 minutes**

1. Explain and demonstrate different activities (see next page):
  - pre-reading
  - matching words and pictures
  - topic words
  - matching sentences
  - sequencing sentences
  - reading commands
  - reading without vowels.
2. Answer any questions the trainees have.



## Demonstration

- **Pre-reading**

Pre-reading are simple activities the teacher does before the children start reading a piece of text. It is hard to read and understand a text if you have no idea what it is about. Before the children read talk about the pictures that accompany the text, this will help to give some context to what the children are going to read.

- **Matching words and pictures**

Put some pictures on one side of the board. On the other side write the words that accompany the pictures in the wrong order. Children take it in turns to come to the board read a word and point to the picture of the word.

- **Topic word**

The teacher writes three topics on the board (eg, colours, animals, vegetables) in three large circles. Around the board are written words in those topics. The children have to read a word and put it in the correct circle.

- **Matching sentences**

Write the first part of some sentences on one side of the board; write the end of the sentences on the other side of the board in the wrong order. Children have to match the sentences. This can be done individually, in pairs or as a whole class activity.

Eg:

I clean my teeth	→	at 7 o'clock
We start school		with a brush
My sister is		in Svay Rieng
My school is		7 years old

- **Sequencing sentences**

The teacher writes some sentences on the board. The children have to read the sentences and put them in the correct order.

Eg:

**Teachers writes:**

I wash my face  
I get up at 6 o'clock  
I walk to school  
I eat baw baw for breakfast  
I put on my clothes.

**Children rearrange into this order**

I get up at 6 o'clock  
I wash my face  
I put on my clothes  
I eat baw baw for breakfast  
I walk to school.

- **Reading commands**

Teacher writes some commands onto pieces of paper. One child comes to the front and reads the command and all the other children do the action. You can increase the difficulty of the commands:

Eg:

Stand up ..... Pick up your pen ..... Put your left hand on your head and your right finger on your nose.

- **Reading without vowels**

In this technique children work in pairs. Each member of the pair is given a different piece of text; a couple of sentences are enough. The children rewrite their text but they miss out all the vowels.

Eg:

Th ct st dwn n th chr nd flr slp. Th ms rn crss th flr nd t th brd.

The pairs then exchange their texts and try to read them at first individually and then later in discussion with their partner.

This exercise forces the reader to look ahead in the text for context clues to help them understand. Using context to understand what we read is an important skill. The activity also makes the children more aware of the importance of vowels.

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**Task 3****Consolidation****10 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees to read the handout, **'Teaching reading'**
2. Answer any questions the trainees have.



## Teaching reading

There are many different ways teachers use to teach children to read.

- matching words and pictures
- teaching the letter sounds
- learning to read by reading
- learning to recognise words by sight etc.

No one really knows how children learn to read. It seems to be different for each child. Even when you think back to how you learnt to read it is hard to remember exactly when and how you acquired the skill. For slow learners it must be very discouraging to watch their friends learning to read while they are still struggling to learn the secret. As they realise they are falling behind they can become discouraged. The more they fail to read, the more discouraged they become and they feel embarrassed. A teacher must take care to avoid the child falling into a cycle of failure.

Sometimes teachers make the situation worse because they confuse reading the sounds of words and sentences for reading for meaning. It is essential children understand what they read.

Here are some important things you should remember when teaching children to read:

- Don't let children become discouraged when they do not learn to read as easily as other children in the class.
- Keep reading meaningful by putting it in a context which is relevant (eg, reading the labels on cans, reading instructions and then acting them out).
- Use a variety of techniques in teaching reading.

Remember that simply reading aloud without understanding is not meaningful reading.

### Activities to teach reading

- ***Pre-reading***

Pre-reading are simple activities the teacher does before the children start reading a piece of text. It is hard to read and understand a text if you have no idea what it is about. Before the children read talk about the pictures that accompany the text, this will help to give some context to what the children are going to read.

- ***Matching words and pictures***

Put some pictures on one side of the board. On the other side write the words that accompany the pictures in the wrong order. Children take it in turns to come to the board read a word and point to the picture of the word.

- **Topic word**

The teacher writes three topics on the board (eg, colours, animals, vegetables) in three large circles. Around the board are written words in those topics. The children have to read a word and put it in the correct circle.

- **Matching sentences**

Write the first part of some sentences on one side of the board; write the end of the sentences on the other side of the board in the wrong order. Children have to match the sentences. This can be done individually, in pairs or as a whole class activity.

Eg:

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We start school		with a brush
My sister is		in Svay Rieng
My school is		7 years old

- **Sequencing sentences**

The teacher writes some sentences on the board. The children have to read the sentences and put them in the correct order.

Eg:

<i>Teachers writes:</i>	<i>Children rearrange into this order</i>
I wash my face	I get up at 6 o'clock
I get up at 6 o'clock	I wash my face
I walk to school	I put on my clothes
I eat baw baw for breakfast	I eat baw baw for breakfast
I put on my clothes.	I walk to school.

- **Reading commands**

Teacher writes some commands onto pieces of paper. One child comes to the front and reads the command and all the other children do the action. You can increase the difficulty of the commands:

Eg:

Stand up ..... Pick up your pen ..... Put your left hand on your head and your right finger on your nose.

- **Reading without vowels**

In this technique children work in pairs. Each member of the pair is given a different piece of text; a couple of sentences are enough. The children rewrite their text but they miss out all the vowels.

Eg:

Th ct st dwn n th chr nd flr slp. Th ms rn crss th flr nd t th brd.

The pairs then exchange their texts and try to read them at first individually and then later in discussion with their partner.

This exercise forces the reader to look ahead in the text for context clues to help them understand. Using context to understand what we read is an important skill. The activity also makes the children more aware of the importance of vowels.




**Unit 3**

## Teaching writing



**1 hour 30 minutes**

### Aims:

- to analyse some of the difficulties children have in writing
- to demonstrate techniques to help children write.

### Task 1

## Components of writing



**20 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees the following information and demonstrate, with examples, the different components of writing.

### Presentation



Talking, reading and writing are closely linked. A child learns to talk first. Most children learn to talk by listening to family and people around them. They do not need to be taught talking formally. However most people only start to learn reading and writing when they go to school. Reading and writing need to be taught. Usually reading and writing are taught together.

The ability to write involves several things:

- physical ability to hold and move the pen (motor skills)
- ability to recognise letters and differentiate between different letters
- ability to recall the letter and reproduce it (visual memory)
- ability to distinguish different sounds (auditory perception and categorisation)
- ability to associate the sound with the letter (spelling)
- appreciation of the relationship between shapes
- ability to follow instructions and organise thoughts

Writing is a complex activity. Many children have difficulties learning to write.

2. Tell the trainees to get into groups of four or five people.
3. Ask the trainees: “What are some of the difficulties children have with writing?”
4. Trainees discuss in groups.

5. Listen to the trainees' ideas and makes a list on the board.
- poor spelling
  - poor handwriting
  - writing letters the wrong way round.

## Task 2

### Ways to help difficulties with spelling



20 minutes

1. Write the following words on the board and ask the trainees, "What is the difference between these two sets of words?"

cat

pen

jump

near

pigeon

knife

climb

neighbouring

### Answer

The first set of words are spelt as they are pronounced. The second set are not.

2. Tell the trainees the following information:

### Presentation



**Spelling** = the matching of sounds to the letters they represent

Children who have difficulty spelling may not be able to:

- distinguish between different sounds
- distinguish between different letters
- recognise the link between a sound and the letter that represents it.

Children who have difficulties speaking or hearing will often have difficulties spelling. In Khmer words are not always spelt how they are pronounced. The spelling of some words has to be specially memorised.

### Guidelines for helping children with spelling

- ***Always teach a letter with the sound it represents***

Make sure the children have plenty of practice saying the sound before they learn to write the letter.

- **Encourage children to sound out new words when reading**

Don't tell a child how to say a new word when reading, encourage the child to sound it out letter by letter. Likewise encourage children to guess at the spelling of new words by sounding out the words.

- **If children are having difficulty spelling try to find out the cause**



Check that the child can hear the difference between sounds. Check they can tell the difference between letters. Check that they know which sound is represented by which letter.

- **Teach children spelling rules**

For example in Khmer  is always silent at the end of a word, and some

vowels always go before the consonant, above the consonant, below the consonant, etc.

- **Don't just correct mistakes give explanations**

Some children often write letters or words the wrong way round. For example in Khmer the child might write:  instead of 

In English the child might write **b** instead of **d**

Show the child the correct way and the wrong way. Ask the child to compare the two. This will help the child to recognise the difference.

- **Make spelling fun**

Use games and songs and give lots of encouragement.

3. Ask the trainees: "What things do you do to help children with spelling?"

4. Listen to their ideas.

### Task 3

## Helping children with their handwriting



**20 minutes**

1. Ask: "What are some of the problems children have with handwriting?"

2. Trainees brainstorm their answers. Write their ideas on the board.

- writing slants
- letters too small or too big
- letters not uniform, some letters bigger than others
- children can't write in a straight line

- children press too hard or too softly
- taking up too much space

3. Give the following presentation:

### \_\_\_\_\_ Presentation \_\_\_\_\_



- **Posture**

Check the child is sitting correctly. They should sit with their back straight; their shoulders should be relaxed and bent slightly forward. Their head should not be too close to the book.

- **Pencil grip**

Show children how to hold their pencil correctly. Children should use the tripod grip (the index and middle finger and thumb hold the pencil. The wrist should rest on the paper. Children who have difficulty gripping a pencil can be helped by wrapping tape around the pencil stem.

- **Paper position**

For a right-handed person slant the paper to the left. For a left handed person slant the paper to the right. Hold paper in place with the free hand.

- **Learning to form letters**

Children should first practice copying simple patterns. For example:

- Children can practice letters by drawing them in the sand or tracing them in their air with their fingers or writing the letter on each other's backs with their finger. This will give the children a tactile or physical memory of the shape of the letter.
- Make special worksheets to help children who are having particular difficulties. On these worksheets children can write letters by joining up dots. If you cover the worksheet in plastic and give the child a white-board marker to use, then it is easy to wipe away what the child has written and the worksheet can be used again and again.

### Common handwriting problems and what the teacher can do

- **Letters are slanted**

Correct the position of the paper.

- **Very large letters**

Give the child practice tracing over smaller letters. Check the position of the wrist and arm. The child may be moving the whole arm to write, or the wrist may not be resting on the paper.

- **Very small letters**

Correct the hand movement, the child may be gripping the pencil too tightly or the wrist may be too rigid.

- **Not writing on the line**

Draw thick lines for the child to write between.

- **Taking up too much space**

Check the child's arm movement.

- **Letters not uniform (some bigger than others)**

Draw guiding lines for the child to use.

- **Improper pressure, the child presses too hard or too softly**

Check the child's pencil grip.

#### Task 4

### Helping children with expressive writing



20 minutes

1. Tell the trainees: "Write three sentences."  
(The trainer must NOT help the trainees by telling them why they are writing the sentences or what their sentences should be about.)
2. After two minutes ask a trainee to read his/her sentences.
3. Ask the trainees: "How did you feel? Was it easy to write the sentences?"
4. Give the following presentation:

#### Presentation



It is not easy to write something if:

- you don't know what you should write about
- you don't know why you should do the writing
- there is not enough time.

Good preparation is essential if you want children to write sentences or short stories on their own.

Before children start to write:

- explain why you want them to do the writing
- talk about the subject you want the children to write about. For example, if you want children to write about their family, ask them questions first. Get children to work in pairs to tell each other about their families.
- ask the children to list useful words they will need and write them on the board

- tell the children clearly how much they should write and give them enough time.

### Expressive writing activities

- **Parallel writing**

In this activity the teacher gives the children a model to follow. Children change individual words or sentences.

Eg,

*Model*

My name is Chanthorn. I am 7 years old  
I live in Beoung Thom village.  
I have two older brothers.

My father is a teacher.  
I like drawing.

*Child writes*

My name is Sok. I am 6 years old.  
  
I live in Samroang village.  
I have one older sister and three brothers.  
My father is a farmer.  
I like to look after the cows.

This activity is very good for mixed ability classes. Clever children will make more changes and write more. Weaker children can follow the model closely only changing individual words.

- **Unfinished sentences**

The teacher writes an incomplete sentence. The children must finish the sentence.

Eg,

Yesterday I went to the market and I bought .....

At the weekend I will .....

- **Hidden stories**

In this game the children work in groups of 6-8 people. The teacher gives each group a piece of paper with a sentence written at the top. The first child in the group reads the sentence silently and writes another sentence to follow it. Then they fold over the paper so the first sentence written by the teacher cannot be read. Other children must not see the sentence the child writes. The child passes the paper to the next child in the group. They read the last sentence written but not the first sentence written by the teacher. They write their own sentence and fold the paper over the previous sentence as before. This goes on until every child has written a sentence. The first child in the group unfolds the paper and reads all the sentences that make up the story.

The stories are often very funny because the children have only been able to read the sentence written by the person before them and not all the sentences. The teacher can ask different groups to read their stories to the class.

**Task 5**

**Consolidation**



**10 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees to read the handout, '**Teaching writing**'.
2. Answer any questions.



## Teaching writing

Talking, reading and writing are closely linked. A child learns to talk first. Most children learn to talk by listening to family and people around them. They do not need to be taught talking formally. However most people only start to learn reading and writing when they go to school. Reading and writing need to be taught. Usually reading and writing are taught together.

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- ability to distinguish different sounds (auditory perception and categorisation)
- ability to associate the sound with the letter (spelling)
- appreciation of the relationship between shapes
- ability to follow instructions and organise thoughts

Writing is a complex activity. Many children have difficulties learning to write.

## Spelling

Spelling = the matching of sounds to the letters they represent

Children who have difficulty spelling may not be able to:

- distinguish between different sounds
- distinguish between different letters
- recognise the link between a sound and the letter that represents it.

Children who have difficulties speaking or hearing will often have difficulties spelling. In Khmer words are not always spelt how they are pronounced. The spelling of some words has to be specially memorised.

### Guidelines for helping children with spelling

- ***Always teach a letter with the sound it represents***

Make sure the children have plenty of practice saying the sound before they learn to write the letter.

- ***Encourage children to sound out new words when reading***

Don't tell a child how to say a new word when reading, encourage the child to sound it out letter by letter. Likewise encourage children to guess at the spelling of new words by sounding out the words.

- ***If children are having difficulty spelling try to find out the cause***

Check that the child can hear the difference between sounds. Check they can tell the difference between letters. Check that they know which sound is represented by which letter.

- ***Teach children spelling rules***

For example in Khmer: ្រ្រ is always silent at the end of a word or that some

vowels always go before the consonant, above the consonant, below the consonant etc.

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In English the child might write b instead of d

Show the child the correct way and the wrong way. Ask the child to compare the two. This will help the child to recognise the difference

- ***Make spelling fun***

Use games and songs and give lots of encouragement.

## Helping children with handwriting

- ***Posture***

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- ***Pencil grip***

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- Make special worksheets to help children who are having particular difficulties. On these worksheets children can write letters by joining up

dots. If you cover the worksheet in plastic and give the child a white-board marker to use, then it is easy to wipe away what the child has written and the worksheet can be used again and again.

### Common handwriting problems and what the teacher can do

- **Letters are slanted**

Correct the position of the paper.

- **Very large letters**

Give the child practice tracing over smaller letters. Check the position of the wrist and arm. The child may be moving the whole arm to write, or the wrist may not be resting on the paper.

- **Very small letters**

Correct the hand movement, the child may be gripping the pencil too tightly or the wrist may be too rigid.

- **Not writing on the line**

Draw thick lines for the child to write between.

- **Taking up too much space**

Check the child's arm movement.

- **Letters not uniform (some bigger than others)**

Draw guiding lines for the child to use.

- **Improper pressure, the child presses too hard or too softly**

Check the child's pencil grip.

### Helping children with expressive writing

It is not easy to write something if:

- you don't know what you should write about
- you don't know why you should do the writing
- there is not enough time.

Good preparation is essential if you want children to write sentences or short stories on their own.

Before children start to write:

- explain why you want them to do the writing
- talk about the subject you want the children to write about. For example, if you want children to write about their family, ask them questions first. Get children to work in pairs to tell each other about their families.
- ask the children to list useful words they will need and write them on the board

- tell the children clearly how much they should write and give them enough time.

### Expressive writing activities

- **Parallel writing**

In this activity the teacher gives the children a model to follow. Children change individual words or sentences.

Eg,

*Model*

My name is Chanthorn. I am 7 years old  
I live in Beoung Thom village.  
I have two older brothers.

My father is a teacher.  
I like drawing.

*Child writes*

My name is Sok. I am 6 years old.  
I live in Samroang village.  
I have one older sister and three brothers.  
My father is a farmer.  
I like to look after the cows.

This activity is very good for mixed ability classes. Clever children will make more changes and write more. Weaker children can follow the model closely only changing individual words.

- **Unfinished sentences**

The teacher writes an incomplete sentence. The children must finish the sentence.

Eg,

Yesterday I went to the market and I bought .....

At the weekend I will .....

- **Hidden stories**

In this game the children work in groups of 6-8 people. The teacher gives each group a piece of paper with a sentence written at the top. The first child in the group reads the sentence silently and writes another sentence to follow it. Then they fold over the paper so the first sentence written by the teacher cannot be read. Other children must not see the sentence the child writes. The child passes the paper to the next child in the group. They read the last sentence written but not the first sentence written by the teacher. They write their own sentence and fold the paper over the previous sentence as before. This goes on until every child has written a sentence. The first child in the group unfolds the paper and reads all the sentences that make up the story.

The stories are often very funny because the children have only been able to read the sentence written by the person before them and not all the sentences. The teacher can ask different groups to read their stories to the class.





## Teaching maths



**1 hour 30 minutes**

### Aims:

- to analyse some of the problems children have in maths
- to demonstrate ways to help children with maths.

### Task 1

#### Difficulties in maths



**10 minutes**

1. Ask the trainees: “What are some of the difficulties children have in maths?”
2. Trainees brainstorm their ideas. Make a list on the board, eg:
  - don't remember the rules for different mathematical operations taught in class (like carrying and borrowing)
  - can't remember number facts (such as tables)
  - can't remember the sequence of things to do in solving problems
  - have difficulty relating different concepts together (eg, multiplication is an extension of division)
  - can't understand the terms (eg, multiplication, division, remainder, divisor etc).

### Task 2

#### Why children have difficulties in maths



**30 minutes**

1. Write the following questions on the board:
  - Do you frequently ask children to recite number facts in class (eg, times tables)?
  - Do you think most children have seen addition and subtraction signs before starting school?
  - Do your students spend most of their time solving number problems (eg,  $12 + 5 =$ ) instead of word problems (eg, Sok has 12 pens. He buys 5 more. How many pens has he got)?
  - If your students do not understand something do you reteach it in the same way?
  - Do you always use formal mathematical terms (eg, multiply, denominator, addition etc)?

2. Tell the trainees: "Think back to how you teach maths. Answer these questions about how you teach. Answer "yes" or "no" to each question."
3. Trainees answer the questions individually.
4. Trainees discuss their answers in pairs.
5. Listen to some trainees' answers.
6. Give the following presentation:

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### Presentation

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Maths is often taught in school in an abstract way, which does not seem to be connected with everyday life. Children often fail to understand maths because:

- they don't understand the technical language
- they can't see what maths means in terms of real life.

If you answered, "yes" to all, or nearly all, of the questions then you may be teaching maths in an abstract way which children find difficult.

How do you know if a child really understands a mathematical concept or fact? If a child can recite perfectly his 3 times table, does he understand it?

It is very important to make sure the children understand maths and have not just learnt a set of facts. One way to check if a child has really understood is to see if they can transform one kind of problem into another kind.

For example:

The teacher writes the following question on the board:  
Chanthorn has 5 chickens but one died. How many chickens does Chanthorn have left?

The teacher asks the children to represent this problem using numbers:  
 $5 - 1 = 4$

**Transformation:** *Language to symbols*

If the children can make this transformation it shows that they understand the concept of subtraction.

Here's another example:

Teacher writes on the board:  
 $3 \times 3 = 9$

Teacher asks if the children can write the sum in another way:  
 $3 + 3 + 3 = 9$

**Transformation:** *multiplication to addition*

If the children can do this then they understand that multiplication is an extension of addition.

And another example:

Teacher writes on the board:

$$6 - 2 =$$

Children answer. Teacher asks one child to come to the front and show the sum using pencils.

The child holds pencils and says: "I have six pencils, if I take two away, I have 4 pencils left."

**Transformation:** *symbols to concrete objects*

### Task 3

## Helping children with special needs in maths



**40 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees to get into groups of four or five people.
2. While the trainees are getting into groups write the following maths problems on the board:
 
$$6 \div 3 = 2$$

$$10 - 5 = 5$$

$$3000 + 500 + 100 = 3600$$
3. Tell the trainees:
 

"Children with special needs often have difficulties in maths. It is very important to make sure maths problems are presented in a concrete way that reflects their experience. Look at these maths questions. How could you make them less abstract?"
4. Trainees discuss in groups.
5. Listen to their answers

### Possible answers

**$6 \div 3 = 2$**

Teacher has six sweets. Teacher calls two students up to the front. Teacher asks the class: "I want to share these equally between us. How many sweets do we each get?"

**$10 - 5 = 5$**

Teacher writes the question as a word problem. "Sok has 10 chickens. He sells 5 at the market. How many chickens does Sok have left?"

$$3000 + 500 + 100 = 3600$$

Teacher makes some fake money on pieces of paper. The money is in 100, 500, 1000 Riel notes. Teacher has some pictures of things to buy in the market with the prices written on them. Teacher goes shopping and buys a shirt for 3000R, a notebook for 500R and a cake for 100R. Teacher asks the children how much he has spent. Children practice shopping in groups.

**Task 4****Consolidation****10 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees to read the handout, '**Teaching maths**'.
2. Answer any questions.



## Teaching maths

Some children who are very clever in other subjects find maths difficult. A lot of children struggle to understand maths. Common maths difficulties are that children:

- don't remember the rules for different mathematical operations taught in class like carrying and borrowing
- can't remember number facts such as tables
- can't remember the sequence of things to do in solving problems
- have difficulty relating different concepts together (eg, multiplication is an extension of division)
- can't understand the terms (eg, multiplication, division, remainder, divisor etc.)

### Reasons why children have difficulties understanding maths

Maths is often taught in school in an abstract way, which does not seem to be connected with everyday life. Children often fail to understand maths because:

- they don't understand the technical language
- they can't see what maths means in terms of real life.

If you answered, "yes" to all, or nearly all, of the questions that the trainer put on the board, then you may be teaching maths in an abstract way which children find difficult.

How do you know if a child really understands a mathematical concept or fact? If a child can recite perfectly his 3 times table, does he understand it?

It is very important to make sure the children understand maths and have not just learnt a set of facts. One way to check if a child has really understood is to see if they can transform one kind of problem into another kind.

For example:

The teacher writes the following question on the board:

"Chanthorn has 5 chickens but one died. How many chickens does Chanthorn have left?"

The teacher asks the children to represent this problem using numbers:

$$5 - 1 = 4$$

**Transformation:** *Language to symbols*

If the children can make this transformation it shows that they understand the concept of subtraction.

Here's another example:

Teacher writes on the board:

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

Teacher asks if the children can write the sum in another way:

$$3 + 3 + 3 = 9$$

**Transformation:** *multiplication to addition*

If the children can do this then they understand that multiplication is an extension of addition.

And another example:

Teacher writes on the board:

$$6 - 2 =$$

Children answer. Teacher asks one child to come to the front and show the sum using pencils. The child holds pencils and says: "I have six pencils, if I take two away, I have 4 pencils left."

**Transformation:** *symbols to concrete objects*

### Guidelines for helping children to understand maths

The most important thing when teaching maths is to make it real and to check that the children really understand.

- **Use real objects**

Help children to understand about numbers by using real objects. Pebbles, bottle tops sticks, etc, can be used to help children learn. This is especially important for children with intellectual or seeing difficulties. A simple abacus can be made from bottle tops.

- **Use real situations**

Practising shopping is a great way to let children practice number work.

- **Use word problems as well as number problems**

- **Use simple terms instead of technical words**

For example:

multiplication = times

subtraction = less than

addition = altogether

division = shared between/each

