



Guidebook

Books for all:

How to develop, use and share universally designed literature



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Table of contents

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------|
| Introduction | 4 | |
| 1 | The universal design approach & the importance of reading | 9 |
| 1.1. | Universally designed literature | 9 |
| 1.2. | Why read? | 10 |
| 1.3. | Motivation to read | 11 |
| 1.4. | Primary and secondary target groups | 12 |
| 1.5. | Reasons to struggle with reading | 13 |
| 1.6. | Books for all categories and their readers | 16 |
| 2 | Books for all: how to make them? | 25 |
| 2.1. | The Books for Everyone Framework | 26 |
| 2.2. | Phase 1: Initial phase | 28 |
| 2.3. | Phase 2: Narratology | 30 |
| 2.4. | Phase 3: Language and linguistic text editing | 52 |
| 2.5. | Phase 4: Layout and design | 56 |
| 2.6. | Phase 5: Publication | 60 |
| 3 | Books search: how to find them? | 62 |
| 3.1. | Where to find them | 62 |
| 3.2. | How to find them | 63 |
| 3.3. | Finding books suitable for different categories and readers | 69 |
| 3.4. | How to share and promote the books | 70 |
| 4 | Books for all: how to use them? | 72 |
| 4.1. | Reading agents | 72 |
| 4.2. | Learning Circles | 82 |
| 4.3. | Shared Reading | 82 |
| 4.4. | Language cafés | 85 |
| 4.5. | Bilingual readings | 89 |
| References | | 97 |
| Universally designed books | | 102 |

Introduction

Reading is an important factor in maintaining lifelong learning. It not only enhances our ability to communicate and understand, but it is also shown to be an important source of empathy, inclusion and dialogue. In addition, reading helps us better understand ourselves and find the right words to describe our own lives. In contrast, reading difficulties can lead to a lack of language and can cause people to fall behind. People do not learn what they need in order to live a good life, and they lose out on opportunities to participate in democratic society.

Many countries are facing the challenge of a growing number of adults who do not read literature. The reasons can be diverse and complex. One common reason is that adults face various reading challenges, such as dyslexia. Another reason is a lack of successful reading experiences, often due to lack of access to books when growing up. Concentration problems, due to the increased use of digital devices such as smartphones, contribute to the problem as well. Age is another factor, and is becoming an increasing concern as Europe's population is ageing. Reading is good for our mental and cognitive health at all ages, and can help us maintain a stable and active life. We should therefore encourage our older adults to keep reading, by offering books that invite them in. Another factor that prohibits reading are the difficulties in learning a new language faced by migrants. It is not easy for those newly arrived in a country to learn a new language, but for these second language readers, literature can be a positive way to become familiar with a new language, culture and society.

In this guidebook, we will try to address the needs of a wide range of possible adult readers by using a universal design approach to literature. Universally designed literature means that more people can share the joys of the same book, leading to inclusion and increased learning for a larger percent of the population.

To create more adult readers, we must understand what motivates people to read. Finding the right book is also important. Adults must be given age appropriate literature of high quality. Possible adult readers must have access to books they both want to read and can manage to read. This creates a positive cycle of mastering and motivation, so that choosing to read and educate oneself through reading becomes more likely.

Finding the right book demands that the “right book” exists. Book markets all over Europe lack suitable books that address the needs of all adult readers. Not every adult reader can pick any book found in a bookstore or in a library. Different adult readers might need books that are easier to read, or adapted in different ways, in order for them to read and enjoy the book.

In addition, books must be easy to find. Ideally, libraries should provide a large number of books with different genres, themes and reading levels and make it easy for adults with different reading needs to find appropriate books. Librarians should also be knowledgeable about the different reasons people struggle with reading, what kind of books are suitable for different kinds of readers, and what creates a motivation to read. We have also seen that it is easier to engage in literature when given the opportunity to take part in reading related activities. An important part of an inclusive library is, therefore, to provide inspiring literature based activities for adults. If we want our society to consist of responsible adults taking part in building a healthy environment for everyone, we need to include as many people as possible. The ability to self-learn and communicate well is key to facilitating life-long engagement. Making, using and sharing books accessible to all adults is an important step in creating strong, reliable future communities.

About the project

Books without Borders aims to reach adults with reading challenges, including second language readers, to help them not only find appropriate books, but also provide a venue where they can have a positive reading experience. These experiences will assist adults in becoming lifelong learners and active members of their communities.

We are developing and adapting books based on the concept of universal design. The idea behind universal design is to make products that include a broader part of the population, instead of making specialised products for those who would normally fall behind. The universally designed books are adapted in both form and content to appeal to the broadest possible audience. The process includes, for example, engaging experienced authors to write inspiring stories with simpler words, finding clever illustrators with the ability to create drawings that appeal to adults, and engaging graphic novel artists to make accessible drawings and stories for adults. An additional element is using special layouts, colours and fonts to accommodate various reading barriers.

Training for educators and library staff on how to use these books in library activities will be conducted in Poland, Germany, Norway, and Ukraine. The training will also include methods for engaging a large number of different adults with diverse reading ability and reading experience. We believe that books and libraries are pivotal in forging communities founded on inclusion, diversity, and respecting equal rights.

The partner organisations in the Books without Borders project are: Fundacja Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego (Poland, leader), Fundacja Powszechnego Czytania (Poland), Stadtbibliothek Köln (Germany), Leser søker bok (Norway), Trøndelag fylkesbibliotek (Norway), and Українська бібліотечна асоціація (Ukraine) as an associate partner.

About this publication

This guidebook serves as a comprehensive manual on developing and publishing universally designed books, as well as identifying already published books, i.e., those available on the regular book market, suitable for adult readers with reading barriers. It also includes real-world examples of using “books for all” in library programs and activities geared to adults with reading barriers, and in various education and integration initiatives. The guidebook outlines the criteria for developing and publishing books for people with reading difficulties stemming from age, condition, or background (e.g., second language readers, migrants).

Leser søker bok (Books for Everyone), our Norwegian partner with over a decade of experience in developing books and promoting integration activities in Norway, shares its method of book production and the criteria necessary for assessing the accessibility of already published books. Other partners contribute best practice activities from their respective countries that can be used in libraries for individuals with various reading difficulties and barriers.

This guidebook is divided into four chapters:

- 1.** The universal design approach & the importance of reading;
- 2.** Guidelines for developing universally designed books;
- 3.** Guidelines for book search; and
- 4.** Best practice activities to include more people into the joy of reading.

The universal design approach & the importance of reading

1

1.1. Universally designed literature

1.2. Why read?

1.3. Motivation to read

1.4. Primary and secondary target groups

1.5. Reasons to struggle with reading

1.6. Books for all categories and their readers

The universal design approach & the importance of reading



1.1. Universally designed literature

Universal design refers to the approach where products and environments are “*usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design*” (Center for Universal Design, 1997). The idea is deeply inclusive, as it allows a larger number of people to take part in the same product, thereby reducing stigmatisation.

Universally designed literature refers to making high quality books that more people can read. This approach includes all stages of book development, as will be shown in Chapter 2 of this guidebook. The concept of universally designed literature also includes making it easy for every adult to find the right book in libraries and other places, regardless of reading ability or experience. This is the background of Chapter 3, where we aim to guide librarians in finding the right books for different adult readers. Finally, the universal design approach to literature entails providing inclusive activities for all kinds of adults in libraries and similar venues, so that more adults can be welcomed into the world of literature. To create more adult readers, we must understand what motivates people to read. Finding the right book is also important. Adults must be given age appropriate literature of high quality. Possible adult readers must have access to books they both want to read and can manage to read. This creates a positive cycle of mastering and motivation, so that choosing to read and educate oneself through reading becomes more likely.

1.2. Why read?

Why is it important to inspire non-reading adults to start reading literature and become readers?

Research has shown that reading is an important factor in our modern society. Adults who know how to read and write can access information, better understand others, develop self-knowledge and gain a wider perspective. Conversely, adults, who have lost or never properly mastered the ability to read and write, are limited in their ability to take part in important aspects of life, society and democracy. Being able to read informative texts is an important skill in modern society. Readers will be able to understand instructions and important information about their work, economics, health, children's education and activities. Reading is necessary to follow the news, as well as understand and take part in politics and the local community.

But why literature? Is it not sufficient to learn how to read informative texts? First of all, reading literature is an efficient way to become a better reader in general. Research has shown that people who read literature strongly increase their vocabulary, and thus their ability to read even more and so better express themselves. This is often referred to as the Matthew effect: readers simply become better readers because they increase their vocabulary and also increase their reading speed (Stanovich, 2009). This, again, makes reading more pleasant, and so creates a self-perpetuating cycle. Jerrim & Moss emphasise the importance of reading for pleasure. Their research shows that reading fiction and non-fiction for pleasure increases the joy of reading, which again increases the ability to read. The same effect is not seen in reading pedagogical literature (Jerrim & Moss, 2019).

Several researchers have also emphasised the impact reading can have on equalising social differences. When studying students growing up in homes characterised by low education and low income, it was found that pupils with a commitment to reading got far better results in school than pupils with the same home background, but with lower motivation to read (Guthrie, Schafer, Huang, 2001). Frønes and Jensen got the same result in a similar research project in Norway. A positive attitude towards reading can equalise the otherwise unequal starting point of students growing up with a lack of access to books at home (Frønes & Jensen, 2020).

The benefits of reading literature are not limited to increased language skills and learning ability. Reading also has important mental health benefits. Several researchers underline the importance literature has on practising empathy:

Fiction has the ability to develop empathy among readers by creating a better understanding of other people's identities and values (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Howard, 2011; Kidd & Castano, 2013). Literature has this effect by showing other people's experiences that are otherwise not easy to access. Not only does reading books help us understand others, reading literature also helps us to understand ourselves. Fiction has the ability to help humans develop language for our own experiences and express our thoughts and feelings (Stanovich, 2009).

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum underlines the importance reading literature has on building and keeping a democratic society: Through reading we learn to feel and relate to feelings in a constructive way. Through our narrative imagination, taught to us by literature and stories, we learn to practise different emotional reactions through various experiences conveyed in the fictional text (Nussbaum, 2008). Without this skill, we miss an important aspect of both ourselves and others. Even worse, we lose the ability to build democratic societies and live together in peace.

1.3. Motivation to read

How do we create readers, when a growing number of people in Europe are facing reading challenges? There are often relevant reasons that adults do not read. We need to understand the connection between reading and motivation in order to inspire adults to start reading.

A number of international studies show that students' internal motivation is often of prime importance for their reading skills, the amount they read, and their achievements (Guthrie & Wingfield, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2006; Tracey & Morrow, 2006; Malloy, Marinak & Gambrell, 2010; Gambrell, 2011).

Researcher Linda Gambrell has published numerous books and articles on reading instruction, comprehension strategy instruction, and literacy motivation. When comparing numerous studies on literacy motivation, she found that motivation often came from mastering challenging texts. Even those with reading difficulties wanted the experience of mastering demanding texts, so they relatively often choose texts that are too difficult. She concluded, however, that if the text is too difficult, the reader is more likely to give up, and if it is too easy, the reader loses motivation (Gambrell, 2011).

A Norwegian study on adults with dyslexia concluded that they were sceptical towards reading adapted books that came across as “too adapted”, partly because they felt they were being devalued as readers. Many of the participants in the study felt provoked by the layout of adapted books, because it gave them the experience of being “stupid” or “different” (Berget & Fagernes, 2018).

Consequently, it seems to be of crucial importance to provide a wide range of books with a high literary quality that come across as both artistically challenging and interesting for any potential adult reader, and combine these qualities with an easier-to-read approach without losing the artistic and literary value.

It is important to keep in mind that adults with reading challenges are as diverse as anyone else. Their preferences concerning genre, theme, style of expression and literary voice will be as different as people without reading challenges.

Consequently, it is important to develop and find a wide selection of books that will awaken the curiosity and interest of readers whose previous reading experiences were lacking or had too many obstacles for them to overcome.

Research on non-readers in high-school and their relationship to libraries, shows that they become more motivated to read if reading is seen as a social activity; that is, if they are given the possibility to discuss their reading experience with others (Merga, 2019). It is likely that this applies to adults, too. We have probably all experienced the joy of sharing a literary text with others, listening to different people’s reactions and interpretations. Easy-to-access group reading activities offered in libraries can make reading a more meaningful – and fun – experience. Consequently, to motivate more adults to read, we need to provide accessible books that challenge the reader in the right way as well as suitable and inspiring activities.

1.4. Primary and secondary target groups

Applying a universal design approach to literature means developing and finding books of the highest possible quality that are accessible to the largest possible audience. In order to be accessible to more readers, it is necessary to do more than just adapt a book’s design. Larger letters are important, but by no means sufficient. All aspects of the book must be taken into consideration, in order to find the best possible combination of inclusion and quality. According to researchers Schoonover and Norton-Darr, “books for all” can make reading more enjoyable and effective for all types of readers. For this approach to be successful, though, the books must provide high literary quality (Schoonover and Norton-Darr, 2016).

Therefore, we differentiate between primary and secondary target groups. The primary target group includes users with various reading challenges, such as dyslexia, cognitive challenges, second language readers or older adult readers. These user groups are regarded as the primary target group. However, to avoid the stigmatisation that would scare off readers, it is important that universally designed books come across as interesting and relevant for any adult reader. This means that the secondary target group is readers without reading challenges, often referred to as the general market. Some books will have several primary target groups, such as people with dyslexia, second language learners and people with general concentration problems, or perhaps just one primary target group, such as people with developmental disabilities. The primary target group is always the reader with reading challenges, while the secondary target group is always the general market.

1.5. Reasons to struggle with reading

To ensure that the needs of the primary target group are addressed, we need to know about different reasons people struggle with reading, and the main characteristics of each group.

Special and general reading challenges

We often separate between special reading challenges, such as dyslexia, and general reading challenges. Dyslexia is a congenital specific learning disability, presumably due to a failure of the phonological system (Høien & Lundberg, 2012). You cannot “grow out of” dyslexia, as it is something you are born with. The most common characteristic of dyslexia is difficulties with reading and writing. Some people read slowly, but with few errors. Others read quickly, but with decoding errors. In addition, most people with dyslexia have reduced working memory (Martinez Perez et al., 2015), concentration difficulties (Hatcher et al., 2002) and difficulties in finding the right words (Norton & Wolf, 2012). Several studies have shown that dyslexia can negatively affect your education. Many people with dyslexia have low self-esteem, partly as a result of negative experiences at school (Lithari, 2019).

According to the European Dyslexia Association (2020), between 9 to 12% of the population will have dyslexia and specific learning disorders. In addition, every country has a number of people with general reading difficulties. Although adults with general reading difficulties do not have a specific diagnosis, they can often struggle just as much as adults with dyslexia, and have similar reading challenges. One out of every five students leaves school with a reading skill that is too low to manage well in a text-based society (Frønes & Jensen, 2020).

It is important to remember that adults with specific and general reading challenges have a cognitive issue with decoding the text, not with understanding the content of the text. A key factor in encouraging and motivating adults with dyslexia or general reading challenges to read is providing texts that will challenge the readers' intellect and emotions in a positive way. Consequently, books suitable for readers with special and general reading challenges should adapt the text only, and not have content that underestimates the potential reader's intellectual capacity.

Special and general concentration problems

Reading a literary text often requires concentration and focus. ADHD is a specific diagnosis that is often characterised by concentration problems, but adults can also have more general concentration problems without a specific diagnosis. Adults with ADHD and other concentration problems usually do not struggle with the actual decoding of text, but concentration problems can make it difficult to stay focused on the text long enough to get something out of the reading. For many this can create problems with reading fluency (Kožárová, 2017).

Second language learners

The language skills of adults who have moved to a new country and are in the process of learning a new language are diverse and complex. Some are fluent readers in their native language, perhaps even in several different languages, while others may be illiterate. In any case, it is important to remember that these adults already have a language, but the language they know is no longer the language of their new society. Having to learn a completely new language as an adult can be challenging. Second language learners have to learn to speak, read, write and understand new words at the same time. Research has shown that when the first language is encouraged and strengthened, students transfer knowledge of different reading and writing strategies from one language to another (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003). Consequently, it will be of great value to offer second language learners books in their native language, along with universally designed books that match their skill level in their new second language. Bilingual books present the same text in two languages equally throughout the entire book (Jeffers, 2009). Bilingual books are especially beneficial for second language learners, as they connect the readers' current reading skills with the new reading skills they acquire when learning a new language.

Cognitive challenges

The most common reasons for cognitive challenges among adults are developmental disabilities, dementia or aphasia. These three specific challenges, however, are quite different from each other.

The World Health Organization defines a developmental disability as being a “condition of delayed or deficient development of abilities and functional level, which is particularly characterised by the inhibition of skills that manifest themselves during the developmental period, skills that contribute to the general level of intelligence, e.g. cognitive, linguistic, motor and social.” Developmental disabilities are complex and affect many areas of a person’s life.

It is unfortunate that adult readers with developmental disabilities are often given children’s books to read, even though they are not children. In order to accommodate this group’s complex combination of cognitive and linguistic challenges, books must have easier language and simpler content. However, children’s books do not meet these needs and do not create recognition, promote learning or create motivation to read. Age-appropriate content is crucial, also for readers with these needs.

Dementia is a term for several related conditions that gradually lead to a loss of nerve cells and functions in the brain. Typical symptoms are reduced cognitive function, weakened control over emotions and declining functional capacity. A reader with dementia often has a short attention span, problems with short-term memory, orientation in time and space, and problems remembering words and phrases. For readers with dementia, repetition, songs and rhythm, illustrations, images and stories that awaken long term memories can be helpful.

Aphasia is a language disorder caused by damage in a specific area of the brain that controls language. Aphasia usually happens suddenly after a stroke or a head injury, but can also come on gradually from a slow-growing brain tumour or degenerative brain damage. The damage can affect both language expression and comprehension, sometimes making it difficult to understand spoken and written words, in addition to difficulties in expressing language. Some people with aphasia can relearn language skills or find other ways to communicate.

Older adults

Ageing often brings about physical and mental changes that can make reading challenging, such as bad eyesight, tired eyes, mild concentration problems, as well as less physical strength and stamina. Older adults who do not have cognitive challenges, such as dementia, will not have problems understanding the text. Books that challenge the intellect or awaken curiosity are important to keep this group motivated.

Physical challenges

Severe eyesight problems or blindness make it difficult or impossible to read printed text. These readers will need audio books, books with black print and silhouette images (for visually impaired) or braille (blind readers).

Hard of hearing or deaf adults might also have reading challenges. For some deaf people, sign language is their first language, making the spoken, audio-based language of their home country their second language.

It is important to be aware of the fundamental difference between deaf adults who use sign language and hearing impaired adults who use spoken language with sign support. Sign language is a full-fledged language that is articulated using hand gestures, facial expressions and body postures, perceived through sight (Perniss et al., 2015). Consequently, sign language literature is visually based. Adults with spoken language as their first language might sometimes use simple signs to visualise and support the most important words in a sentence.

Language problems

Language problems means that a person has problems in understanding language in general. Some adults with various forms of language difficulties use symbols as a communication aid in everyday life (AAC - Augmentative and Alternative Communication). Typical symbol systems can be WIDGIT, PCS or bliss.

1.6. Books for all categories and their readers

A universal design approach to inclusive literature therefore means that books intended for challenged readers also should fit any reader. Readers with little reading experience or reading challenges should be able to enjoy the same book as any other reader.

Consequently, there is no strict division between different kinds of readers. Instead of labelling different books by spelling out a diagnosis or the name of a reading challenge, we therefore recommend labelling different books based on the sets of criterias used when making the book (book development) or searching for the book (book search). This way, every adult is given empowerment, responsibility and a free choice, as each individual learns what kind of adaptation or criterias he or she would benefit from. It will be up to each reader to learn which category fits better. Preferred categories might change depending on different situations. For example, a second language learner might prefer books from the Easy-to-understand category to begin with, move on to picture books and further on to more complex Easy-to-read books as their second language reading skills evolve. Or there may be situations, such as illness, when an easier book is preferred.

Easy-to-read

Main characteristics:

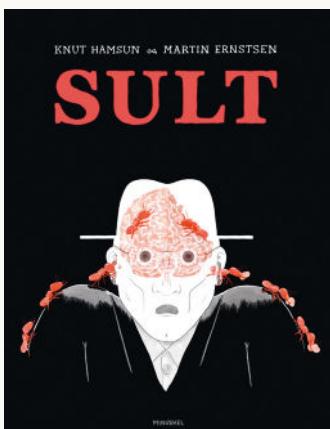
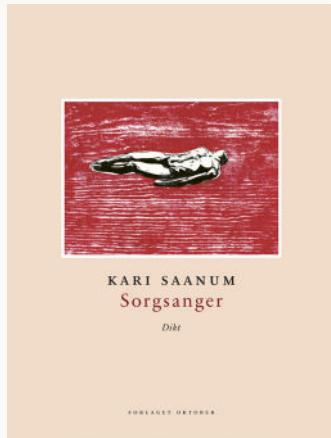
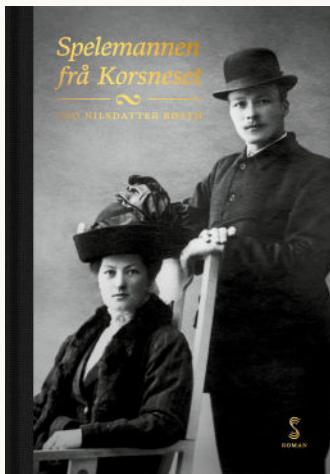
Various criteria are used to make the text easier to decode and read.

Primary target groups can be:

- people with specific or general reading challenges
- people with specific or general concentration problems
- second language learners
- older adults.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Bilingual books

Main characteristics:

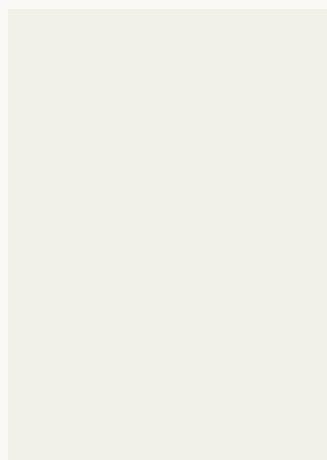
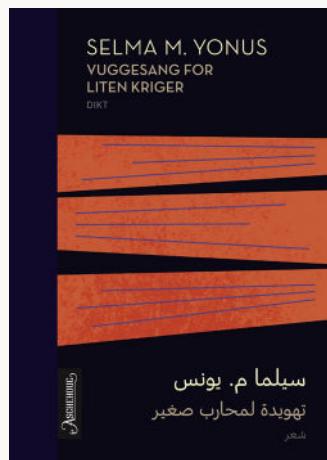
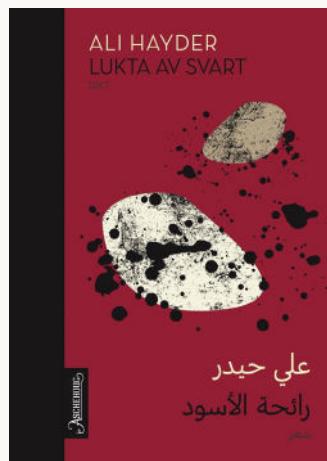
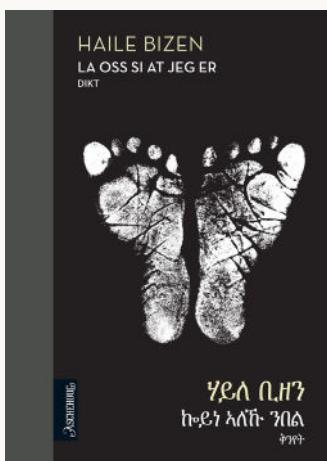
The same text in two different languages are placed side by side.

Primary target groups can be:

- second language learners.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Easy-to-understand

Main characteristics:

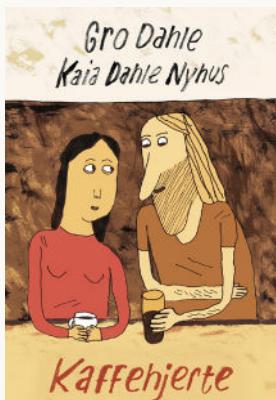
Various criteria are used to make the text both easier to read and easier to understand.

Primary target groups can be:

- people with developmental disabilities
- people with dementia
- people with aphasia.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Primary target group:

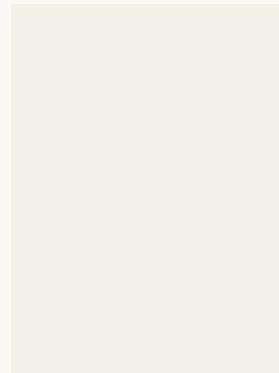
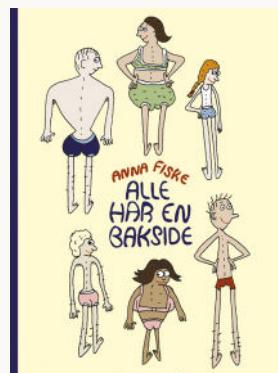
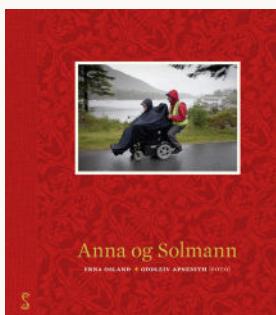
Young adults with developmental disabilities

Primary target group:

Elderly people with dementia

Primary target group:

People with dementia



Primary target group:

People with aphasia and dementia

Primary target group:

People with developmental disabilities

Large print books

Main characteristics:

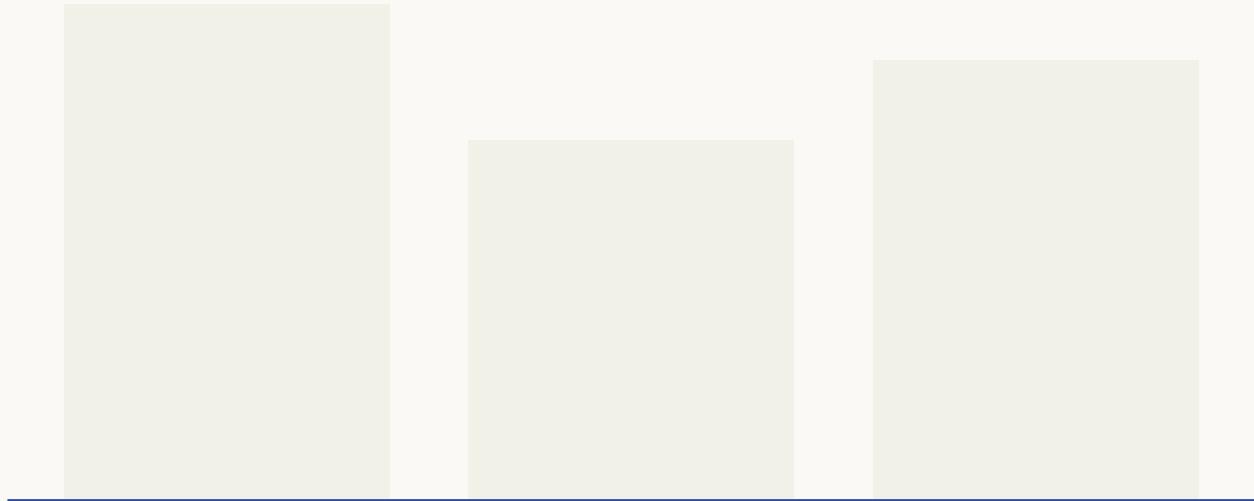
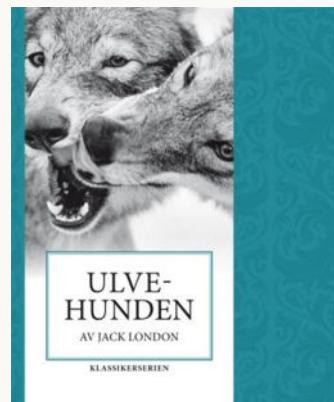
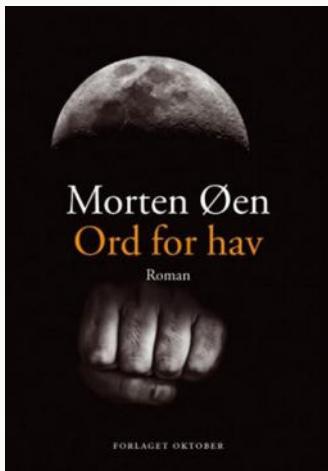
The text is printed with larger and more readable letters.

Primary target groups can be:

- visually impaired people
- older adults.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Braille and tactile images / black print and silhouette images

Main characteristics:

Text and images are made easier to see (using black print and silhouette images) or possible to read by using tactile distinction (Braille and tactile images).

Primary target groups can be:

- Braille and tactile images: blind people
- black print and silhouette images: visually impaired people.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Sign language and language with sign support

Main characteristics:

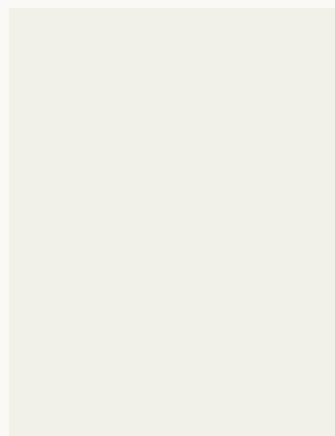
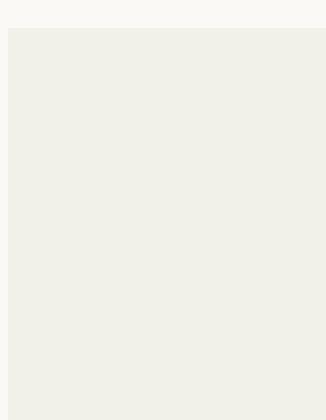
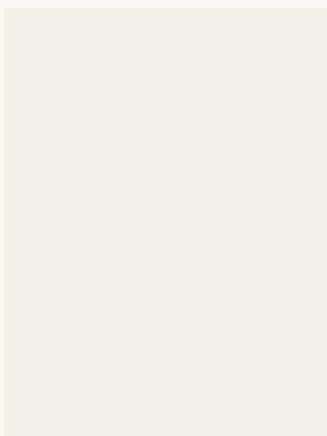
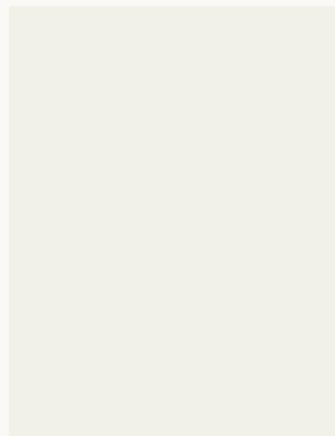
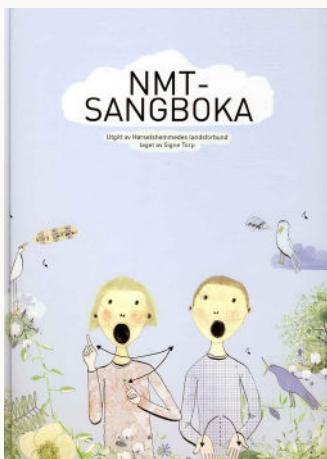
The story is told by the use of sign language (visual books) or hand drawn signs to support the reading (sign-supported printed books).

Primary target groups can be:

- sign language: deaf people with sign language as their first language
- sign support: hearing impaired people

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)

Main characteristics:

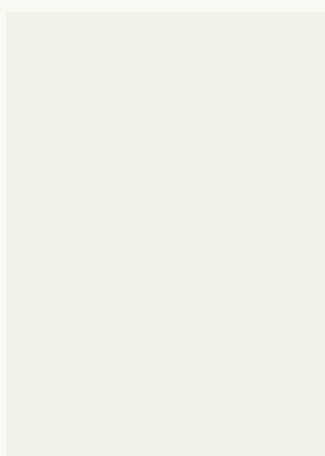
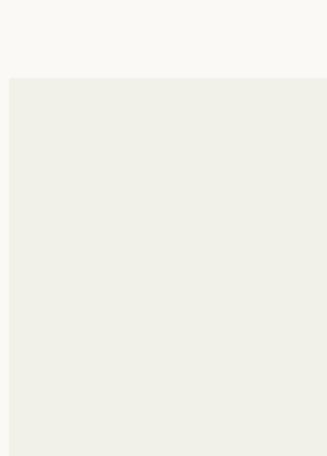
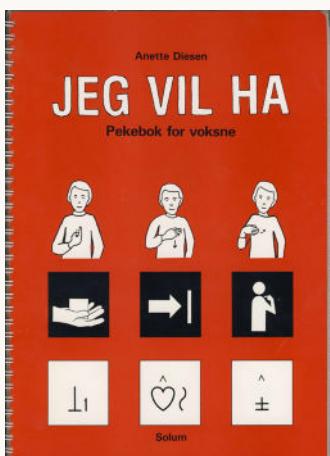
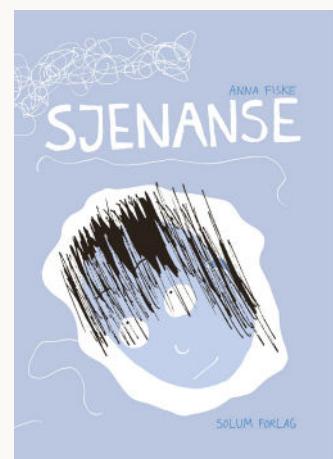
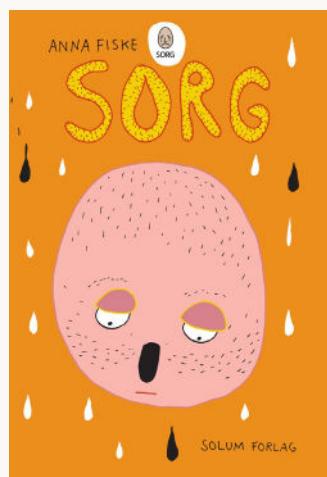
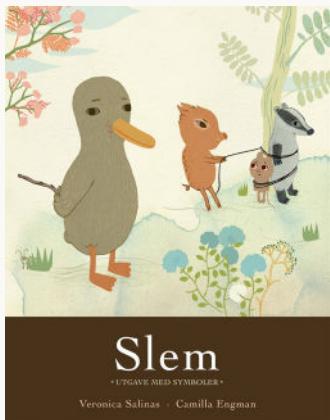
Symbol systems such as WIDGIT, PCS or Bliss are used to convey the text, alone or in combination with written letters.

Primary target groups can be:

- people who cannot read letters / people with language challenges
- people who need special signs as a supplement to understand letters
- multi-handicapped people.

Examples

Click a cover for more information:



Books for all: how to make them?

2

- 2.1. The Books for Everyone Framework**
- 2.2. Phase 1: Initial phase**
- 2.3. Phase 2: Narratology**
- 2.4. Phase 3: Language and linguistic text editing**
- 2.5. Phase 4: Layout and design**
- 2.6. Phase 5: Publication**

Books for all: how to make them?

2

In order to ensure that every adult reader has a book to enjoy, it is often not enough to only use books from the general book market. Universally designed literature is still a new field, and there is a great need for new books to be developed and published.

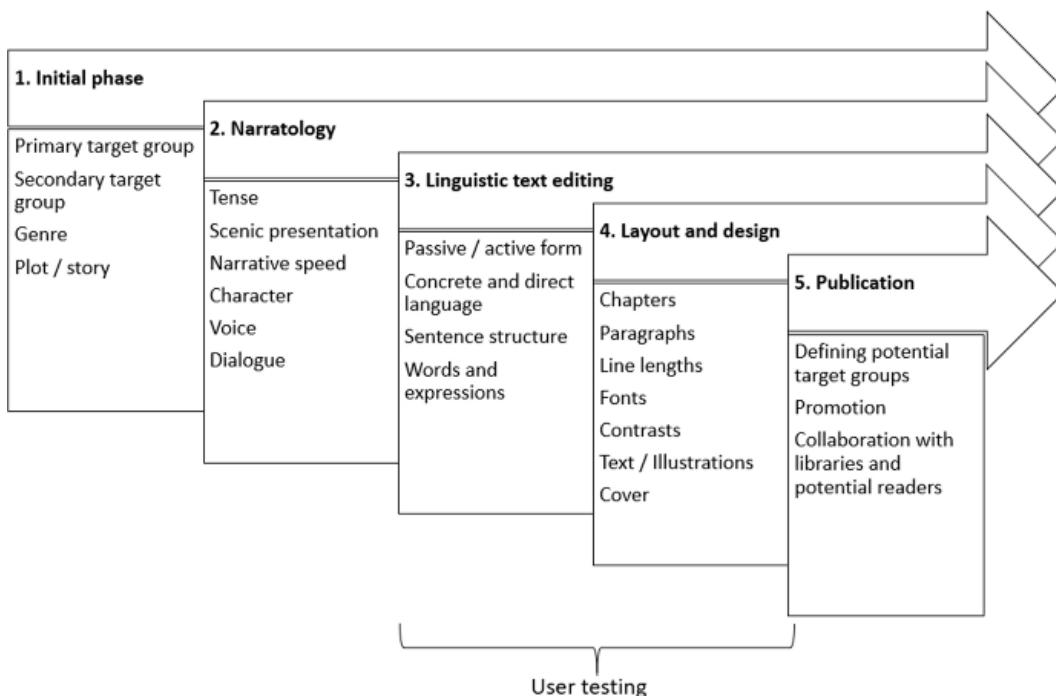
The book development guidelines seek to help book developers make inclusive choices when developing new books. All guidelines presented in this guidebook are based on a universal design approach to inclusive literature. The guidelines have been developed over time and are still evolving.

Categories explained in this guidebook are limited to easy-to-read and easy-to-understand. Books with braille and tactile images, black print and silhouette images, sign language and language with sign support and AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), are also very important book categories, but developing and printing these books demands specialised knowledge and special guidelines. Since the production of books in the Books without Borders project is limited to Easy-to-read and Easy-to-understand, we will focus the guidelines on these two categories.

1.1. The Books for Everyone Framework

To develop a universally designed book successfully, all stages of book development and book publication must be taken into consideration. The Books for Everyone Framework is developed by the Leser søker bok (Books for Everyone) foundation.

Leser søker bok's goal is to ensure that every reader has a book to read. This goal is reached through producing new books in cooperation with authors, illustrators, graphic designers and publishing houses. The foundation also deals with distribution, dissemination and promotion of the books in cooperation with libraries and schools. Close cooperation with different target groups is also important. The Books for Everyone Framework displayed below was first presented in the article "The Development and Production of Literature Within an Easy Language and a Universal Design Perspective" (Berget, Bugge, 2022). The framework is developed based on the foundation's 20 years of experience in the field. It describes the different phases when developing universally designed literature from start to finish. User testing is an important part of the framework.



Phases of the Book for Everyone Framework

Working within the Book for Everyone Framework offers a wide variety of opportunities: from wordless books to illustrated books, comics, poetry, short stories, novels, and non-fiction. The aim is to create books of a high literary value that reach the primary target group as well as the general public.

As with any type of book development and production, every book project is unique. Projects will differ in the process and the way the different guidelines are applied. Working within the field of artistic expression means that we should never force a project into a strict set of criteria. The framework does not prescribe the order a process should follow. Different phases can be relevant at different stages of the process, but all phases are important and should be taken into consideration. The different guidelines used must correspond to both the artist's vision for the project and the needs of the readers in the primary target group. The narrative and linguistic choices, the interplay between word and illustration, are all bigger and smaller aspects of the book that should aim at fueling the reading process and create a desire for the reader to keep reading the book.

Plain Language and Easy Language

Be aware of the difference between plain language and easy language. The international [definition of plain language](#) emphasises the use of a clear and direct language that conveys the content as clearly as possible. Plain language is commonly used in informative texts, essentially those used by the government to inform citizens of their rights, duties and the social systems. The goal is to make sure that as many citizens as possible understand important information necessary to maintain an independent and successful life. This principle applies to the use of words, sentences, and how information is structured.

Easy language is typically concerned with the development of accessible continuous texts, such as newspaper reports, fiction and non-fiction literature (Bugge, Berget, Vindenes, 2021). Easy language has a different goal and is used in a slightly different manner. It corresponds well to the idea behind universally designed literature, namely to provide texts that are easier to read, but without removing the artistic approach or complex possibilities of interpretation that characterises well-crafted literature. “(...) informative texts typically use plain language with an aim to give a clear content without room for misunderstanding. In contrast, a high quality, easy to read fiction book uses easy language to create a text of artistic value that is open for co-creation with its reader.” (Bugge, Berget, Vindenes, 2021).

User testing

The framework is developed in close cooperation with readers. The reader is the most important part of the process and should be included in all phases of development. Feedback from potential readers and organisations that work with the primary target group is invaluable. User testing is a good tool to use as the book is in development. Artists can share their books with primary readers before they are finished and make adjustments according to their feedback. Any writers or

visual artists among the primary target group can be regarded as contributors and partners when developing the book.

2.2. Phase 1: Initial phase

Choosing the right project

Finding the right projects suited for the Books for Everyone Framework is crucial. Does the artist's idea suit the needs of the selected primary group? Does the project also appeal to a secondary reading group? Find projects that have the features required to meet the needs of the intended target groups.

Be aware that the universal design approach does not suit all book projects. An important part of the initial phase is to evaluate if the idea has a high probability of becoming a successful "book for all" or not. It is not a goal in itself to make every publication universally designed. It is, however, a goal to produce more books that are more accessible to more readers without losing the literary quality.

Choosing the right people to work with

Working within the Books for Everyone Framework requires an experienced adviser who can lead the project through all the necessary stages. Use a skilled literary adviser with experience with and knowledge of universally designed books. These literary advisers work in close cooperation with experienced authors, illustrators, comic book artists and publishers.

The importance of working with experienced book developers is crucial. "Books for all" should be "real" literature of literary quality and a high artistic component. Be aware of the possible danger of making "too adapted" pedagogical literature in a misunderstood attempt to meet the challenged readers' needs. The artistic and literary desire to create a well-written and well-crafted book should always be highly valued and nourished by everyone involved. Cooperating with highly qualified authors, graphic novel designers, illustrators, and publishing houses makes it more likely that the project will maintain an artistic approach and aspire to create high quality easy-to-read literature.

It is beneficial to work with artists who already have a literary voice suited for the narrative and the linguistic requirements needed for the project's primary target group. A key to success is to find a project where the literary idea naturally includes the adaptations needed to engage the challenged reader. If adaptation and quality are interlinked, there is a higher chance of creating a unique book for more readers.



A cooperation between experienced artists, literary advisors and editors is a key to success!

In many cases, it can be beneficial to seek cooperation with professionals who are familiar with the primary target group and its challenges. A professional can be used as a consultant when making different choices throughout the process.

Finding high quality publishing houses and experienced editors to cooperate with is also crucial to success. Publishing houses have the knowledge and the resources needed to develop, publish and promote the book in a proper way. It is an advantage if the publishing house is involved as early in the project as possible.

Choosing the intended readers

Choosing the primary target group for the specific project also means deciding what kind of book will be developed and produced. Although not announced as part of the promotion when the book is published, it is important that every person involved in making the book has a clear idea about who the primary target group for the book is and what the specific reading challenges of this group are. Possible problems with reading and decoding the text should be kept in mind during each stage of the project.

Choosing the genre, plot, story and concept

In an early phase, discuss which genre, plot and story will be most suitable for this specific project. Make sure that the idea is suitable for both the primary and secondary reading group. The book concept should also be discussed. Consider whether the book should be published as a series. Advantages of publishing a series are stability and predictability, both for the publishing house and the reader. Some non-readers prefer book series, as the books have the advantage of familiarity. If a series is chosen, make sure not to mix different book categories into the same series, as this will mislead the reader.

Key factors for developing high quality “books for everyone”

- Artist driven projects: initiate cooperation with experienced writers, illustrators and comic book artists with insight in literary craftsmanship and artistic processes.
- Choose projects suitable for the universal design idea.
- Take advice from skilled literary advisors with extensive experience within the field of universally designed literature.
- Use professional advisors who know your primary target group well.
- Cooperate with highly qualified editors and professional publishing houses.

Tools to find cooperating partners in the publishing field

- Recruiting experienced artists through grants.
- Offering financial support to publishing houses through guaranteed purchase of a number of books or production support.
- Free distribution of books to libraries, in addition to having the books accessible in the general book market.

2.3. Phase 2: Narratology

Being unsuccessful in reading a book may have serious consequences for a person. A feeling of failure and inferiority can easily lead to increased reluctance to read and even to anxiety when confronted with a written text. Therefore, the construction and narratology of the story – how the reader is invited in – should be given high priority early in the process.

Phase 2. “Narratology” and phase 3. “Linguistic text editing” are closely related. Each project will differ, due to the working process of the artist: Some artists plan the story in detail in advance, others develop the story as it comes along. Others will choose a middle way and outline a narratology that might be changed and

adjusted as the story evolves. This requires a flexible approach by the literary advisor who is leading the project, as well as close cooperation with the artist and the publishing house.

Advice for authors, illustrators and comic artists for narratological guidelines

Choose and follow the narratological guidelines that will lift your artistic aspirations and at the same time fulfil the needs of the primary target group. The guidelines are not a check-list where everything must be included, but have evolved over time, based on different kinds of feedback from readers. Choose and work with the tools that contribute to your creative process. When you know that the project you want to develop is suitable, it can be good to start developing the story without thinking too much about all aspects of the guidelines. Do not let the guidelines stop the creative flow of the process. On the other hand, when the project is starting to find its shape, the guidelines can provide inspiration and fuel the creative process. The aim is to create a reading experience that is as well-crafted and fluid as possible.

When the project is approaching its final shape, it can be helpful to look closely at the story again. What guidelines might be applied to further develop the material? Are the transitions between the scenes clear? Are there too many elements for the reader to keep track of? What elements can be eliminated to give more room to deepen and evolve the main aspects of the story?

Working consistently with the guidelines will help the potential readers grasp the storyline and immerse themselves in the series of events that drive the story forward. Use your creativity and talent to create a story that you yourself would enjoy. Remember that readers in all target groups are people searching for good literature, regardless of the adaptations needed.

Narratology guidelines for the “Easy-to-read” category

- Framework – clear, but not predictable**

Regardless of the genre, the artist should develop a story within a clear framework and with a clear narrative. If there are confusing changes in time and space, too many places and events for the reader to keep track of, or too many characters, a reader with reading difficulties will quickly lose track of the story. The story should be set in a time, place and genre that is easy to follow. A clear framework also creates a safe space for the reader to walk into, and the reader can rely on the reading expectations made within genre specific predictions.

However, as already emphasised, an easy-to-read book should be easy to read, not easy to understand or predict. The framework should be clear, but not predictable. The framework invites the reader to enter and explore. What the main character is about to experience, or what will happen and play out next in the story should not be revealed. The reader must read the story to find out.

• Point of view

Who is telling the story, and from what narrative perspective is the story conveyed? The reader should quickly get to know a main character and understand from whose perspective the story is told. Everything will be seen through the narrator, unless the artist chooses several main characters with several perspectives, or a narrator who is omniscient.

Choosing one narrator with a clear point of view is recommended, as it will help the reader follow the story. Should, by any chance, several points of view be used, it is important to clearly mark who is telling the story, when the character is telling the story, and from which viewpoint. This applies both to written texts, illustrations and graphic novels.

Example

In “[Hevner](#)” by Ingelin Røssland, the story follows the perspectives of two main characters: Damian and Ella. When the perspective changes, there is always a new chapter, marked by the name of the character, the day of the week and the time.

| Damian | Ella |
|---|--|
| Onsdag 01:30 | Torsdag 08:31 |
| <p>– Så sor du er når du sover, hvikses det i mørket. Damian vinket og ser seg rundt. Har han drømt? Det er mørkt i rommet. Han vender blikket opp mot kameraet. En liten rød lampe lyser ved siden av kameraøyet. – Vekker jeg deg? kommer det fra høytaleren. – Det var ikke meningen å vekke deg, sier kidnapperen og ler. Latteren høres helt syk ut. Damian sier ingenting. Han bare legger seg ned igjen. Kaldsvettet renner, men han prøver å se rolig ut.</p> | <p>Ella kaster seg ned på pulten like før læreren kommer. Hun sveiper med blikket over klasserommet. Det hugger til i magen da hun ser Guri. Ella hadde ikke trodd at Guri ville komme på skolen i dag. Kanskje hun ikke vet om videoen ennå? Ella kaster et blikk baks på Guri igjen. Guri sitter og stirrer stivt ned i matteboka. Håret benger fram foran ansiktet hennes som en tynn gardin. Ella ser at Guri har hoyhalst genser. Der er ikke noe Guri pleier å gå med. Guri vet det, tenker Ella. Hun må ha det helt grusomt der hun sitter.</p> <p>Læreren roper opp alle navnene. Elevene mumler slappe og trette «ja». – Damian er syk i dag også. Omar er heller ikke her, sier læreren. Dora går opp, og Omar kommer inn.</p> |

• Narration

In addition, the story needs a very clear narration. There needs to be a clear division between when the story is told and when the story takes place. The narrator will tell the story from a different point of view if the story is told from a future point. It creates one type of narrative style if the main character talks about something that happened to him or her a year ago, or in childhood, and another if the character is telling the story more or less as he or she is experiencing it. Artists can easily make the narration clear by showing, or telling, if there is a time gap between the narration and the actual story told.

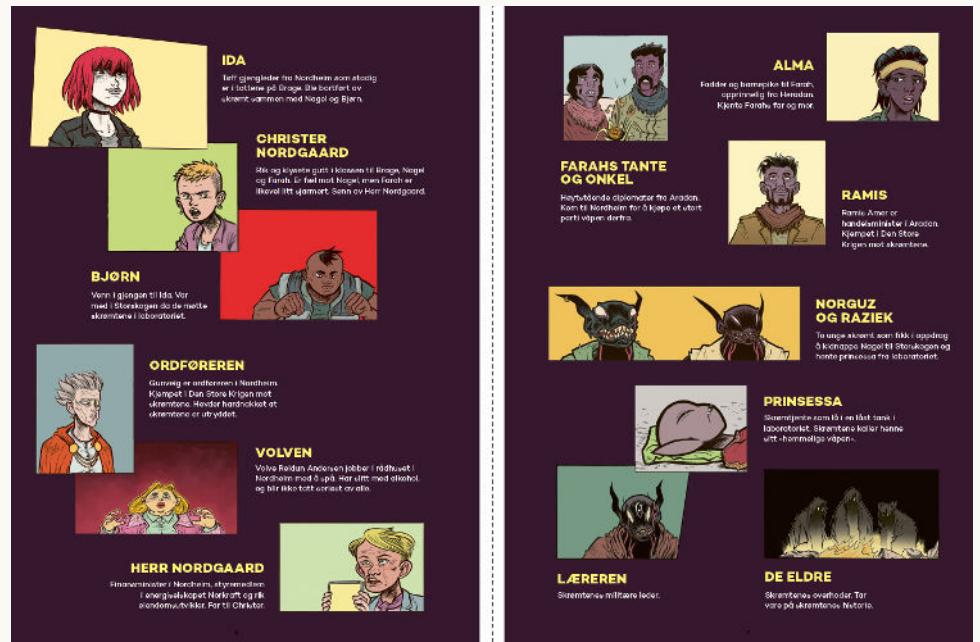
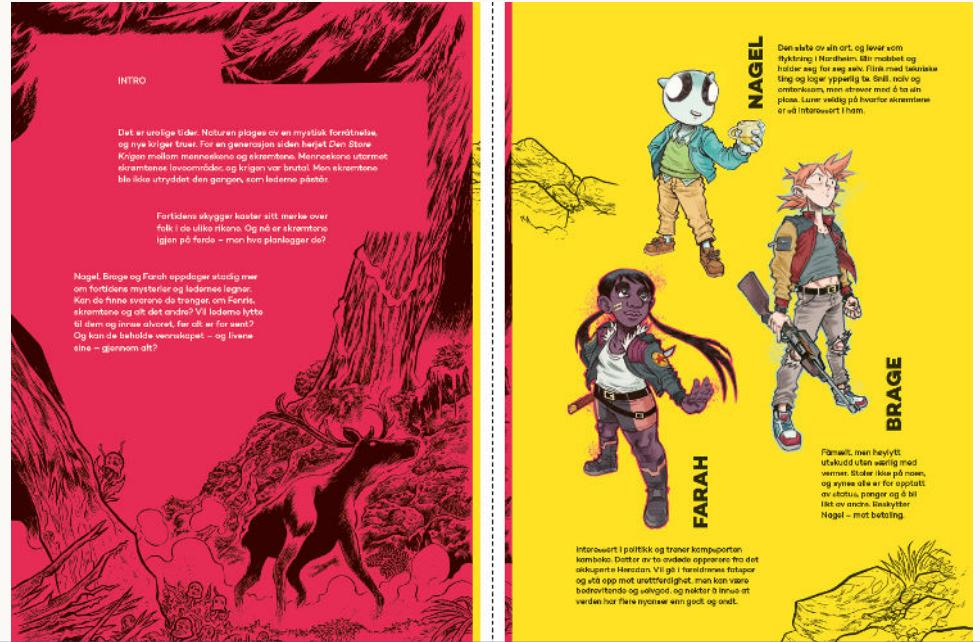
• Characters

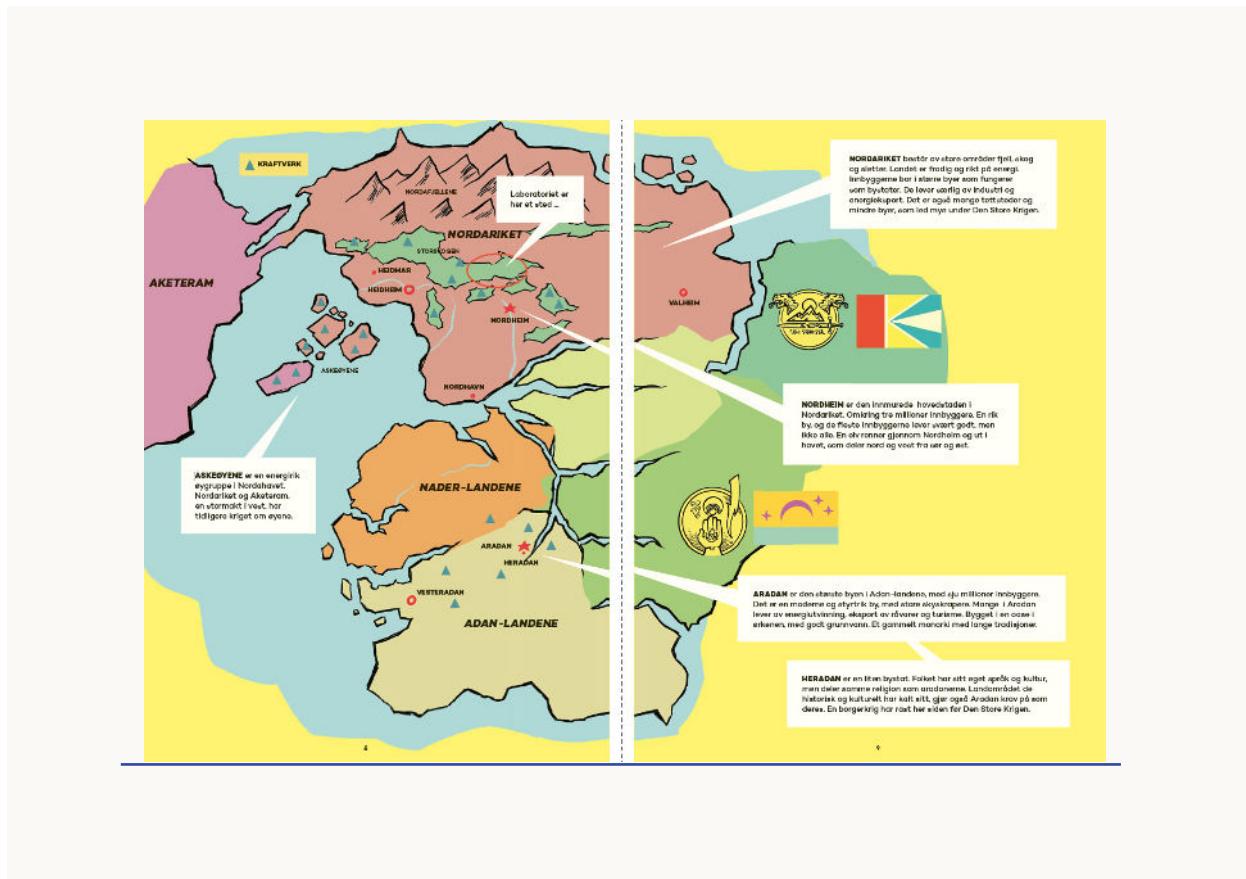
A well-written, interesting and inspiring main character is important to pull the reader into the story and create a desire to find out what happens to the person and read more. In easy-to-read books, the reader should quickly get to know the main character and become familiar with him or her. This applies whether the main character is text based or a visual image.

How many characters are needed to tell the story efficiently? It is important not to introduce too many characters, as this might make the text unnecessarily difficult to follow. However, this does not mean that the characters in the easy-to-read story should be simplified. Characters should be both reliable and interesting, with existential struggles that engage the readers. Well-developed characters with an emotional depth are important to drive the story forward. Their existential and emotional changes and development through the story can be rich and complex, even though the text is simpler to read.

Example

Sigbjørn Lilleeng's "[Nagel](#)" is an action, adventure, sci-fi and comedy comic book series for youth. The books describe a story of a group of young people who try to combat serious threats to the world. The story unfolds over time. When a new book is released it is crucial to clearly recap the past events and the setting of the story. To ensure this, at the beginning of the second book three spreads are used presenting: a short summary of the story, three main characters and a map of the universe. In addition, the story begins with a visual sum-up of what has happened from the perspective of one of the characters. In the introductory pages larger fonts and colourful backgrounds are used to enhance readability.





• Underlying theme

Most stories in any genre will have underlying themes that draw the reader's attention and inspire the reader to keep reading. Even when stories are played out in environments unfamiliar to the reader, there might be an underlying theme that connects to the reader's own life situation. This underlying theme can be used in a constructive and clever way to create readability. What struggles in the story might apply to the potential reader's everyday life? What existential themes at play might draw the reader's attention to the story being told?

• Timeline

A clear timeline helps the readers orient themselves in the text, and draws the story forward. Clear and distinct passages and transitions are essential for the readability of the text. In a picture book, comic book, or graphic novel it is important to have a clean and clear storyline so that it is easy for the reader to understand where to look next. If the story happened over a longer time span, it might be helpful to write the day, time and place on separate book sides as the story progresses. This can be done in a literary and artistic way, without losing the excitement of the story or the fluency. Avoid jumping back and forth in time. If the main character looks back in time, this should be made clear in the written text or in the drawings.

Example

In Veronica Salinas' "OG", the story follows the perspective of a young au pair from Argentina who has left her country due to the economic crisis and moved to Norway. She is gradually learning Norwegian as a second language and trying to understand the society. The language in the book develops as the character learns Norwegian. When memories from her country are described, the language is rich and not limited. Changes between the life in Norway and the memories from Argentina are marked by the text: "Norway" or "Argentine" at the top of the page to underline the shifts of perspectives. Together with the change of perspective, a new chapter begins.



• Scenery

A clear scenery showing where the story takes place will also help the readers orient themselves in the story and continue to read. Avoid too many changes of scenery or place. Transitions and changes of scenery should be made without causing confusion.

Example

In Ronja Svenning Berge's "Hvis det ikke brenner", we follow a woman in her late twenties who carries a traumatic experience from the past. One day, she comes across an old box with items related to this event, and the memories

of it come flooding back. The comic book depicts Linda's everyday life, but also provides flashbacks to the event in the past. The box and the flashbacks are always in red, while the rest of the comic is in sepia. The illustrations are painful, beautiful, and poetic, which corresponds with Linda's experiences and feelings. The slow narrative pace encourages the reader's own reflections. The story is easy to follow, and the font is easy to read.

There are not too many locations in the comic book: the flat, the work, nights out in town, and Linda's meetings with friends. But the transitions are very clear – the scenes change when the spread changes, and when the page is turned. The examples below show the transitions: from Linda's room, where she is sitting deep in thought, to the next page where she takes the bus to meet a friend. If the scene had changed directly from the room to the meeting, the transition could have been too abrupt. The reader might have understood the meeting as being part of her thoughts. Instead, we take part in the bus drive and arrive at the meeting with her. Not all transitions must be so accurate, but in this case, the book provides the reader with the space to take in the atmosphere of the story and explore the character's state of mind.





• Dramaturgical turning points

Although the framework, timeline and scenery should be clear, it is important to create dramaturgical turning points that awaken the reader's curiosity. Turning points can capture the reader's attention and create eagerness to find out what will happen next.

• Show, don't tell

Artists working to create an easy-to-read book for the first time often think that it is necessary to start telling what the main character is experiencing instead of showing it. Keep in mind that adult readers of easy-to-read books have reading challenges, not cognitive challenges. Adults with reading challenges of various kinds will have the same literary desire to experience the main character by being drawn into the story through scenes, description, taste, smell and dialogue. There is no need to start telling or explaining to the reader what is going on. Use artistic literary and visual skills to show readers what the main character and other characters are going through, the inner conflicts, dilemmas, sorrows and joys. Leave enough space for readers to co-create with the text or drawing by creating their own inner images and interpretations.

Example

This is an example of a feedback provided to an author of the first draft of a story, when something in it needed to be reshaped:

“

In the first chapters of the book, too many references to past events are provided in the main character's inner monologues. This information is important as a background for future events in the story. Yet, the descriptive parts contain too many details, making it difficult for the reader to fully understand and relate to what is happening in action scenes and dialogues.

For someone with reading challenges, there are too many narrative threads to grasp when the story gets going. The first chapters should contain much more of the important information in dialogues and action scenes to break the monotony and bring to life the information that is important to include before the rest of the story unfolds.

”

• Dialogue and inner monologue

Inner monologue can be very efficient to convey how the characters experience a specific situation. However, if inner monologue becomes the main mode of the story, it often ends up being monotonous and explanatory and loses its expressiveness. In addition, extended use of inner monologue has a tendency to over-explain rather than make room for the reader's interpretation. Dialogue, on the other hand, helps us get to know the characters better and adds colour and variation to the reading experience.

To make the story dynamic, a balance between what is conveyed through inner dialogue and what is conveyed through dialogue or in scenes creates a dynamic reading experience. Which parts of the story can be presented in a scene filled with action and dialogue? Which parts are better solved with inner dialogue? A good mix lets the reader discover the layers of the story and gives the reader the possibility to interact and interpret.

Example

Below are two versions of an excerpt from Mariangela Di Fiore's "["Søstre"](#)". The second version is the result of feedback provided in the process of developing the book. The story is based on Cathrine Trønnes Lie's experiences of the terrorist attack on Utøya Island in 2011. Cathrine barely survived after being shot several times, and she lost her younger sister. The scene below describes events moments before the first encounter with the terrorist. The first excerpt is an early draft. The second is a later version, written after the author had received feedback in line with the Books for Everyone Framework. In the second version, the reader has an opportunity to almost see, hear, and experience what was happening from Cathrine's point of view, almost side by side with Cathrine just a moment before the attack. The way the lines are broken and the use of pauses also enhance the reading experience.

An early draft:

“

At first I thought it was firecrackers. The noise slammed several times in succession. What an incredibly bad joke! What idiot had come up with that idea? At the same time, I got a bad feeling in my body. A feeling that something was very wrong. Julie and I tried to leave the tent, but a guard with a walkie talkie ordered us back. “Stay in your tents, everyone,” he shouted. But we couldn't just sit there in the tent without knowing what was happening, so after a while we went out again. We discovered that some people had gathered on the grass in the hill below the tents, and decided to go down to them.

”

The second version:

“

A sudden sharp noise broke the silence.
What is it? Firecrackers?
- What was that noise? I looked at Julie.
- I do not know. Maybe they are trying to start the ferry?
Then there was another sharp bang.
We looked at each other again.
More powerful bangs followed each other in a row now.
So it had to be firecrackers?

- In that case, it's an incredibly bad joke! Julie said
- Yes, what idiot came up with that idea? I responded.

At the same time, I got a bad feeling in my body.

A feeling that something was very wrong.

Both Julie and I wanted to get out of the tent.

A guard with a walkie-talkie ordered us back.

- Everyone, stay in the tents! he shouted.

But we couldn't sit there without knowing what happened, so we still left the tent. Some had gathered down on the grass between the tent camp and the café building.

We decided to join the others.

”

• Inner and outer knowledge

Another aspect is building a clear, but not predictable, contrast between what the main character thinks, feels and remembers, and what he or she tells or conveys to the outside world. This contrast, when well-crafted, can give depth to the literary text or drawing and at the same time support the reading process. The reader gets to know the inner struggles of a main character who may not share all his feelings or experiences with the outer world. This gives the reader an insight that the other characters in the story will not have, and is an aspect that can create both recognition and empathy.

• General vs specific

Using specific descriptions instead of general descriptions makes the text easier to read. If the story is characterised by general descriptions, the reader is left on the outside of what is depicted, regardless of the genre. The reader loses the opportunity to take full part in the layers contained in the scene if the main character's experiences are described in a general and unspecific way. Take, for example, the sentence: "She was often saddened by everything that was unfair." First, the sentence describes something in a general way. Second, it is a statement about how the character feels. The text does not show us how the feelings play out in the character.

Specific descriptions allow the artist to show what is happening. The reader is able to better experience all of the different story elements: the scene, the cause of events, the reactions inside of the main character and his or her actions.

If something happens many times, it is better to first describe the scene once, using a specific description. Then let the reader know that this event reoccurred. Summaries such as “the day after,” “after dinner,” “the week after,” “often,” and “every time” can be effective, but too much use of these time-summary phrases creates a static text.

• Descriptive language

Use descriptive language that shows the reader what the characters see, hear, smell, taste and touch. In all genres, including illustrated books and comic books, it will ease the reading process to create scenes that bring forward the emotions of the character in question. Accurate descriptions of sounds, tastes, visuals, and how the senses affect the character will encourage the readers to apply their own emotions and engage with the story.

Example

This feedback addresses an early version of A. Audhild Solberg's [“Den svartkledde jenta”](#).

The early version:

“

When Leo and I had slept together,
he just sat in front of the computer in the living room.
I realized that he wanted me to leave.
He barely looked at me as I left.

”

The feedback:

It's often a good strategy to start a chapter with a scene to capture the reader's attention. However, the first sentence alludes to the past, and the scene could be more fully developed. Consider elaborating on the scene to give us a closer look at how the main character feels through what she senses and notices. Maybe she's lying in bed, observing Leo's back as he stares into the PC,

responding only with muffled noises when she speaks to him. Can we delve into the feeling of rejection as she collects her clothes and leaves? Is she cold? What sounds does she notice? When she realizes “he wanted me to go,” how does this affect her? Bring the reader more into her experience: they've just been intimate, and now she feels she must leave.

• **Illustrations**

Many readers have experience in decoding visual storytelling from gaming and watching animation. This background can make visual literature a preferred gateway into the world of books for readers who otherwise seldom find publications they enjoy.

The general book market currently offers high-quality visual literature for all ages. However, that a book is illustrated does not mean it is easily accessible for all readers in the various primary target groups. The guidelines show how narratological choices are important for the accessibility of written fiction and non-fiction. These aspects are equally important in visual literature, both in the text itself and in the interplay between words and illustrations.

For challenged readers, images and illustrations are an especially important source for decoding information. Many challenged readers have rich experience in seeking support in pictures and illustrations while acquiring information. They may even have developed skills in decoding interplay between visuals and words more effectively than fluent readers. Be aware that some adults with reading challenges might therefore be more visually capable and advanced when it comes to “reading” visual literature. When creating high quality picture books for adults within the easy-to-read category, the text and visuals should aim to be equally dependent on each other to make an integrated, narrative whole. The one simply does not work without the other. This approach gives room for artistic choices and rich visual storytelling.

Example

Visual literature's tools include symbols, colours, repetitions, and variations. In Anna Fiske's picture book "[Alt som er nytt](#)" repetition and contrast are employed to describe the feeling of moving away and leaving everything behind. The book features two illustrations of a bus scene. The first depicts a situation where everything is new, and everyone is a stranger. The second illustration shows the main character a bit later, when she starts to recognize faces on the bus on her way to work, making the people around her clearly visible.



- **Age appropriate illustrations and visual expression**

Make sure that the visual style and illustrations are age appropriate for the adult reader. If the style and theme of a picture book have the quality of adult or all age-literature, but the illustrations are too childish, the book will lose potential readers. This might seem self-evident, but far too often picture books reach a limited audience, because this aspect is not carefully considered.

Example

The picture book “[Gullkatt](#)” by Kaia Dale Nyhus is an all-age picture book that contemplates the theme of loneliness, the longing to have someone in your life, and unfulfilled expectations. When we’re lonely, it feels like everyone else has someone, a sentiment echoed by the main character in this book, who wonders if a cat might make everything better. This poetic and playful picture book draws the reader close to the main character’s feelings with short, concrete, and poetic sentences that are easy to read. The illustrations offer subtle, hurtful, and playful spaces for the reader to enter, leaving the main character’s identity — whether a girl, a boy, or an adult — open to interpretation. The style of the illustrations and the tone of the text create a lovely picture book for children, young people, and adults alike, addressing expectations and disappointments, hope, and love.



“

Everyone has someone.
Someone to cuddle with.
Someone to eat dinner with.
Someone to tell a secret to.
Someone to walk through the cemetery
in the middle of the night.
Someone to knit a beanie for
Someone to steal apples with
Someone to come home to.
I also want someone.
I want a cat.

”

• Cooperation between writer and illustrator

When the creation of a picture book, comic book, or graphic novel is a cooperation between a writer and an illustrator, we recommend that the illustrator starts working closely with the author early in the process. It is important that the illustrator's style speaks to the adult reader. The writer and the illustrator must establish a common goal and decide who takes responsibility for telling what as the story is developed. The illustrator will contribute by exploring which parts of the story can be told visually instead of in words. The interplay between visuals and words must also be taken into consideration as the story evolves.

Even if the author is the initiator of the project, he or she must expect changes to the text. This is especially important to address if the writer is new to writing for visual literature. The text must often be shortened and restructured in cooperation with the illustrator. An openness towards the development of both artistic expressions is important. Shortening the text where the visuals are better suited gives space for using the text in a different way. This approach not only gives room for exploration of the interplay between the text and the visuals, but also gives the reader a larger space for interpretation of the visual story alongside the text.

• Storyboard and interplay between text and visuals

A big part of creating a picture book, comic book, or graphic novel is finding the balance between what is told in the text, what is told in the visuals, and how the interplay between the two is developed. In this process, using a storyboard with

quick sketches in the first draft can be an efficient way of testing different solutions and getting a feel of the rhythm and feel of the story.

A storyboard is a helpful tool to use when exploring which parts of the story should be expressed visually and which should be told with text. A storyboard can be useful in deciding the placement of text in inner monologues, dialogue, or text boxes containing additional information. How are the spreads built? Do they have multiple images or large scenes? Do they have many details, or few elements and an airy and open expression? Using the possibilities of visual storytelling makes it possible to both speed up the time or slow it down, hold and expand the moment. Are the dramaturgical elements used to move from one page to the next being used effectively? Does information used in the visuals contradict what is expressed in the text? Is the use of colour adding to the experience of the reading?

A storyboard is the most important tool to use when investigating the possibilities and the effects of different approaches in the visual narration, from the expression of the visual artist to the tone of the story and the artistic aspirations. However, as the guidelines for narratology emphasises, it is important not to include too much unnecessary or competing information in the story. Too much information in both visuals and text makes the story difficult to decode.

Within this large framework of artistic possibilities, some visual choices are especially important. It is vital that the characters are easily differentiated and have clearly recognizable appearances.

The same applies to scene shifts in a universally designed book: The reader must understand when there is a transition between scenes and get a feeling of time passing or movement from one place to another. Using a new spread when setting a new scene is a natural way to underline these changes and make them clear. Where and how the text is placed on the spreads will also affect the interpretation of the reader, and must be carefully chosen.

• **Comic books and graphic novels**

With comic books and graphic novels it is even more vital to limit the use of text and as much as possible in order to tell the story visually. The storyboard is crucial in finding the right visual pacing for the story.

It is especially important to give the visuals space. Do not cram too many competing elements onto a page and a spread. A new scene should be set on a new spread. Use text boxes with additional information for time and place when extra information

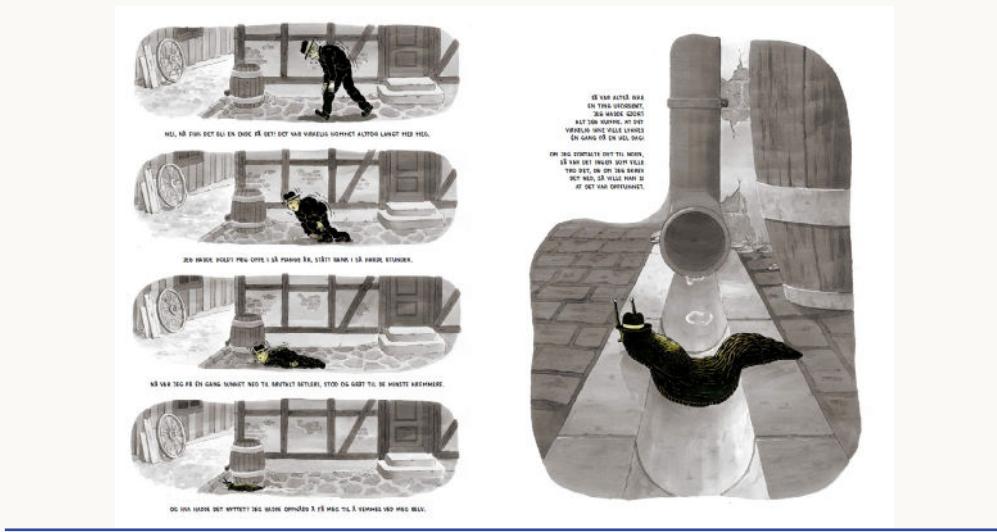
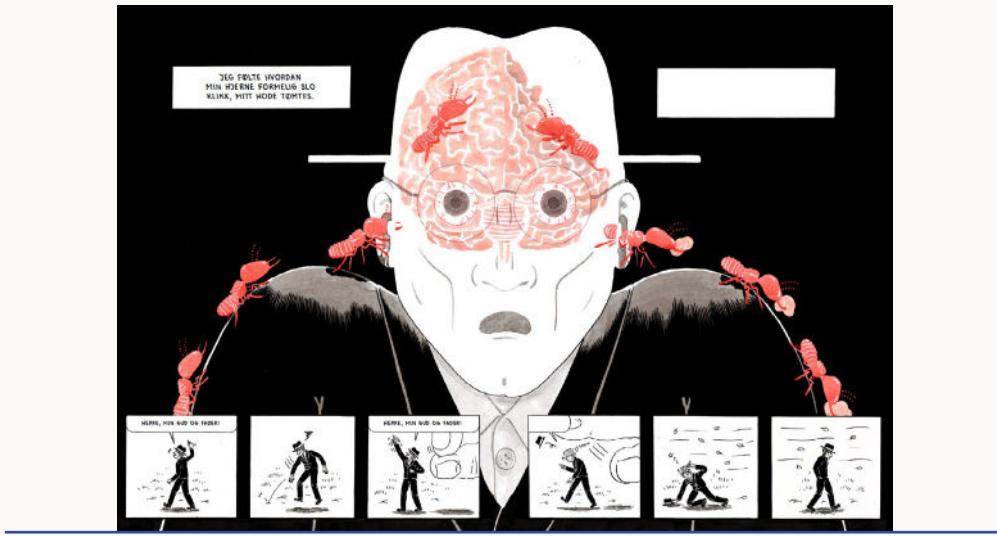
is needed to help with orientation in the story. What part of the story can be solved with action scenes? What is best solved with dialogue or inner monologues?

The reading order of the panels and visuals should always be clear, as well as the placement of the text. If using reading bubbles, which bubbles should be read first? To which character does the dialogue in the reading bubble belong? If this is not clear, it will hinder the fluent reading experience both for the general reader and the reader who needs to put in extra effort to decode the story.

Example

In Martin Ernstsen's adaptation of Knut Hamsun's classic novel "[Sult](#)", text is kept to a minimum, and the plot is driven by visuals. Scenes kept in sepia tones transport readers to the late 19th century, while visual metaphors convey the despair of the main character. The layout varies from spreads with large, immersive images to others that use repetitive imagery to capture the main character's slow, inevitable decline.





- **Room for interpretation and co-creation**

Telling the story in an accessible way does not preclude telling a story with room for interpretation. Make sure to highlight existential themes by giving space for the reader's own reflections and responses. Again, the text should be easier to read, not dumbed down to make it easier to understand. Adults of all ages engage more with a story if there is nuance and room for interpretation, when the story leaves space for the readers to take part and thus participate in co-creating their reading experiences.

This balance is important. To create a “book for all,” the artistic aspect needs to be taken seriously and give the readers the possibility to use their own life experiences, emotions, existential reflections and intellect to relate to the text.

- **Narratology guidelines for the easy-to-understand category**

Literature in the easy-to-understand category should follow many of the same guidelines that apply to easy-to-read, but with some exceptions:

- **Theme**

Most of the potential readers of the easy-to-understand category have very few books to read. Many will not find books that represent their life situation. Although all themes are welcome, it will be important to include characters and themes that are recognizable to the target group. For example, adults with a developmental disability will often struggle to find a book that talks about work, love and relationships in a way that resembles their lives. An adult with dementia will often struggle to find a book about getting older and the emotions it can bring with it. Most importantly, do not choose a theme that comes across as childish. Remember that your readers are adults, despite the cognitive challenges they may have.

Be aware that artists creating easy-to-understand literature often fall into the trap of writing about sad life situations or depressing issues. It is very important that readers of easy-to-read literature are given the opportunity to read about other things such as happiness, dreams, humorous situations, and love. Writing easy-to-understand literature that reflects the life situation of potential readers does not mean that the artist should limit his or her creativity. It is possible to make fantastic and inspiring literature and at the same time include elements that create recognition in the reader.

- **Transparency**

In easy-to-understand texts it should be easy for the reader to understand what the scene describes. There should not be too many layers and there should be

a transparent connection between what is in the book and what the reader is supposed to get out of it. This does not mean that the literary or artistic approach should be removed. It is important not to succumb to taking a pedagogic approach. The important artistic mantra “show, don’t tell”, also applies to easy-to-understand literature.

- **Consequence**

Make it easy for the reader to understand who does what. What are the causes of events, and why? The reader should not be left wondering what is going on and who is involved.

- **Characters**

Make sure that there are not too many characters for the reader to keep track of. The cognitive challenges of the reader might make it difficult to keep track of too many characters or storylines. Repetition can be useful when used in an artistic way. Repeat the name of the character or the situation so that the reader does not get lost.

- **Emotions**

It should be easy to understand what the character feels. Too many complex emotions can be confusing. This, however, does not mean that the texts or drawings cannot convey complex feelings. It can be a positive aspect to let the reader explore situations that are emotionally complex, but it should not be unnecessarily complicated to understand what the character feels. The goal is to make the reader feel and understand.

- **Illustrations**

An age-appropriate visual expression is important no matter the category of the book. Far too often, people with cognitive challenges are offered picture books with childish illustrations that do not speak to adults in engaging, thought-provoking and meaningful ways. Since this category includes books made for very different primary groups, the illustrations should not only be age-appropriate, but also connect with the primary target group. When creating a high quality picture book in the easy-to-understand category, the visuals can expand the content and the atmosphere of the text, but they should not contradict the text or add new layers that might interfere with the reader decoding the text.

For some readers with autism, it can be confusing or annoying when images only show parts of a person or a thing. Get to know the target group well when deciding what to take into consideration.

- **Interpretation and co-creation**

In contrast to easy-to-read literature, easy-to-understand literature should not leave too much room for interpretation. It is important to give the reader some room for interpretation, but there should not be too many options and they should not be too complex, as then the reader may not understand the text at all. It is still important, however, to allow the readers to engage and interpret on their own terms.

2.4. Phase 3: Language and linguistic text editing

Due to language differences, countries may need to consider country or language specific guidelines. Cooperate closely with organisations representing the primary target group of each project to understand the specific challenges in the written language that need special attention, as these will vary with each language.

For most authors, there will be a difference between writing the first draft and editing the text. When working with a universally designed book, it can be useful to keep some language specific guidelines in mind during the actual writing process, so that the story ends up including the primary target group in a natural way. It can then be beneficial to check, adjust and correct the language again during the editing phase. Each artist will find his or her preferred way to make sure the language fits its intended reader, but when it comes to linguistic guidelines, we highly recommend that they be implemented early in the writing process.

A piece of general advice for artists is to try and find a balance where the natural literary language is used to include more readers. It is important that the literary style and voice is not lost in an attempt to follow the guidelines. Remember that the goal is to ease the decoding process of reading for challenged readers and to give readers a text that is pleasant, meaningful and inspiring to read.

Example

This feedback addresses an early version of the text in Veronica Salinas' ["OG"](#). The book's primary target group of readers are young adults and adults learning Norwegian as a second language. The text should be accessible, yet rich in themes and content.

An early version:

“

The teacher says that we must think about how we learned our mother tongue
We didn't start with grammar and language rules,
but imitating the sounds around us.
“Focus on the pronunciation first,” she says.

I repeat all the sounds I hear.
I repeat it inside myself.
Again and again.

”

The feedback:

Simplify the language, enter the scene directly and describe what is going on. Try to engage readers and make them identify with the narrator.

For example, “Think about how you learned your mother tongue, the teacher says.”

There is a consonant accumulation in the first three lines and they are too difficult to read, try to make the text a little smoother. Write in the present tense to bring readers closer to the “here and now.” Perhaps give up the sentence “We didn't start with grammar and language rules” and focus on what is going on in this scene. Do not use the referring word “it”, be more specific to make the meaning clearer.

The final version:

- Think about how you learned your mother language, the teacher says.

- We imitate the sounds we are surrounded by.

Focus on the pronunciation first, she says.

I repeat all the sounds I hear around me.

I repeat the words inside me.

Again and again.

Language guidelines for the easy-to-read category

- **Tense**

Writing the story in present tense is often beneficial for the challenged reader. The benefit of using present tense is that the scenes are set and described naturally as the story is played out. In addition, present tense is often a better linguistic choice, as past tense often has a more complex sentence structure. Writing the story in present tense should be considered early in the development process.

- **Active versus passive**

Writing with an active voice instead of a passive voice also adds qualities that benefit a reader struggling to decode the text. In the example “the boy kicked the ball,” versus “the ball was being kicked by the boy,” we see that the active form gives the reader fewer words and letters to decode. In addition, the active sentence creates a dynamic scene.

- **Complex words**

Avoid long, complex words, as they are difficult to read. Be aware that many adults with reading challenges will learn to recognize common words. Therefore, if you need to choose between a shorter word that is not much used and a longer word that is more common, choose the common word over the shorter one.

- **Unfamiliar words**

Avoid unfamiliar expressions and words. Avoid foreign words, when possible. If you need to use an unfamiliar or unknown word, make sure to explain the word the first time you introduce it in the text. The more often a word is used in the text, the easier it will eventually be for the reader to read it. Repetition can therefore be good, but find a balance so that the text does not become static.

- **Consonant accumulation**

“Consonant accumulation” is a phrase describing long or short words where consonants “pile up” in the middle. Many consonants in a row makes it more difficult to decode the word correctly. Words with a mix of vowels and consonants are easier to read.

- **Referring words**

Challenged readers often read more slowly than fluent readers. In addition, decoding difficult words or having to go back to a previous part of the text to re-read something makes the reader lose track of the text more easily. Referring words can therefore make the text more difficult to read. Use referring words like “it,” “this,” “that,” “her,” and “his” with care. Repeating what the word refers to (the event, thing or person) is often a better solution.

Example

“Martha lived in a big, yellow house. It was almost too big for her. She felt like it might swallow her any time soon,” versus “Martha lived in a big, yellow house. The house was almost too big for her. Martha felt like the house might swallow her any time soon.”

• Metaphors, expressions and sayings

Be aware that some metaphors, expressions and sayings might be unknown or unfamiliar to some readers. Get to know the primary target group well when considering which metaphors to use and in which way. Expressions and sayings are often language specific and do not make much sense when read in a literal way. Metaphors are often connected to culture and might be difficult for second language readers to understand.

• References

The same applies to linguistic or cultural references. Get to know the primary target group, in order to determine which references to use and in which way. This applies to illustrations and graphic novels, as well as to written text. Should a reference be used, consider whether or not it should be explained.

• Sentences

Avoid long, heavy sentences with subordinate clauses. A person with reading challenges will often concentrate closely on the actual decoding of the text. When using a secondary sentence structure, the reading flow is interrupted, and important information might be lost. Long sentences are demanding, even if they mainly consist of shorter words. A lot of short words in a row are difficult to read. It is better to find a natural mix of longer and shorter words in the sentence. A lot of short sentences in a row are also difficult to read, as they create a text with an unpleasant staccato rhythm.

• Reading fluency

A sentence should have a mix of longer and shorter words. The preferred sentence structure is a mix of longer and shorter sentences. This way of writing will create a pleasant rhythm that corresponds to our inner thoughts and natural speech. This balance is often referred to as reading fluency. A text with well-crafted reading fluency creates a flow of language that pulls the reader into the text and moves the action forward.

- **Language guidelines for the easy-to-understand category**

Most linguistic guidelines for easy-to-read also apply to the easy-to-understand category. But in the easy-to-understand category, it is even more important to follow the guidelines closely. Use concrete and specific language that makes it easy to decode the text and understand what is going on. Repetition and familiar words can be helpful, but make sure these elements are used in a literary way.

For a reader with dementia, songs and rhythm can be useful. Songs and rhythm can awaken deep patterns in the brain and give the reader a literary experience even after words have lost most of their meaning. Literature using recognizable elements that the reader may remember can activate response and engagement.

- **Picture books, comic books, and graphic novels**

As addressed in the guidelines for visual narration, the illustrations carry much of the story in picture books, comic books and graphic novels. The advice given in the guidelines for language and text editing in the various categories applies to these books as well, even though there is far less text.

When it comes to comic books and graphic novels, it is important to carefully consider the established tradition of using only uppercase letters (capital letters) in the font as opposed to upper and lowercase (small letters). Using only uppercase lettering hinders readability, since it is far more difficult to differentiate the letters. To make the books accessible to all readers, it is important to break with this tradition and use upper and lowercase letters. The fonts can also be developed from the artist's handwritten font to fit the visual style of the comic. The readability of the font, with a clear distinction between the letters, is important. It is recommended that font not italicised or bold letters used in order to emphasise certain words, as this can make decoding the text more difficult. One solution can be to make the font a bit larger.

2.5. Phase 4: Layout and design

It is a very important aspect of the Books for Everyone Framework that the advisor guides the book from beginning to end. It will not help a challenged reader if the book is developed with the primary reader in mind, but designed in a way that makes the text inaccessible. The adviser should closely cooperate with the designer, and preferably the artist, until the book is ready for printing.

Layout and design guidelines are very similar for the easy-to-read and easy-to-understand categories.

• Fonts

There are several special fonts designed for readers with dyslexia. The challenge with these fonts is that they are not necessarily well-known. Recognition is an important part of reading, especially when the book is universally designed. Serifs may increase the readability of printed text, but scientific studies have not been able to measure the effect. Most important is the overall design.

Choose a well-known, recognizable font that is easy to read, with a clear distinction between the different letters. Be especially aware of the letters b, d, and p, as people with dyslexia tend to mix up these letters. Avoid fonts that are too “artistic.” Handwritten fonts are often difficult to read. Choose a large enough font size, but without exaggerating. It is not easy to read letters that are too big.

Choose a font that adequately separates the letters and the words. A lot of people with reading challenges learn to read the word as a whole. It is important that the word stands out as recognizable. Uppercase letters have poorer readability than lowercase letters.

The space between the letters should be large enough to separate the letters from each other, but not so much that the letters lose coherence and reading fluency. Word spacing should be the same throughout the text, and the word spacing should be narrower than the line spacing.

• Line spacing

Make sure that there is enough space between the lines. Lines that are close to each other make it more difficult to separate the lines and the words. It should be as easy as possible for the readers to orient themselves in the text and find the spot they were just reading.

Line spacing that is approximately 20% larger than the font size is usually a good starting point, but it can vary depending on what kind of font is used and what kind of style is wanted.

• Line-length

There is no set rule for line-length. The writing style of the artist will differ, as will the genre and the size of the book. As a helpful rule of thumb, the lines should be no longer than 60–65 characters.

Do not divide a word between two lines or two pages. A sentence should not continue on the next page.

• **Ragged right**

To help the reader find the next line, it is important to use an unaligned right margin (ragged right). Do not make the text look like a block. The text should be left-aligned, not centred or right-aligned. Let the lines shift to the next line naturally. Avoid hyphenating words.

• **Columns**

Columns should be avoided, they are not easy to read. But if used, make sure that the gap between the columns is larger than the line spacing. The columns should be clearly separated from each other.

• **Paragraphs**

A conscious use of paragraphs can also help the readers orient themselves in the text, create a pleasant reading flow and natural pauses. Texts with an airy layout and short paragraphs creating pauses will give the challenged reader a sense of mastery. The reader finishes one paragraph at a time and gets a short break before moving on to the next part of the story.

Using line breaks to highlight paragraphs is better than indentation. The spacing between paragraphs must be greater than the line spacing.

• **Chapters**

Frequent use of short chapters is recommended. Chapter titles can also be used to build up the dramaturgy of the text. Make sure to use artistic chapter titles, but avoid titles that reveal the story or give unnecessary interpretations.

• **Keep it calm**

It is important to maintain a good, clear and appealing layout without too many elements fighting for the reader's attention. If a book consists of chapters, pictures, images, quotes, and other elements, make sure that they are evenly distributed and separated.

Spacing between the text and other elements, such as images or figures, is important. Choose a composition that clearly leads the eye to read the elements in the correct order. To create order and clearly show which elements belong together, use the conventions of typography spacing. The hierarchy should be built up from least to greatest amount of space.

• **Contrasts**

In order to read letters well, the eye needs a good contrast between the background and the letters. Choose a letter colour that creates a pleasant contrast to the

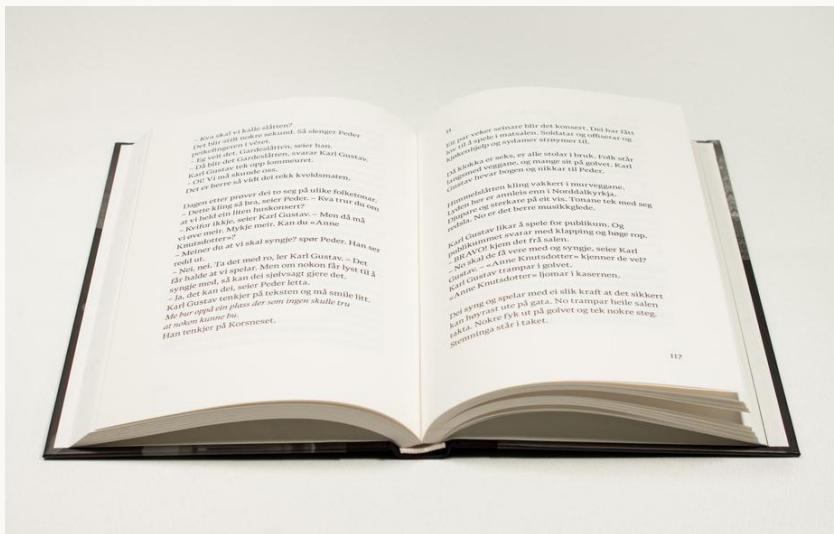
background. Be aware that the colours can look different when printed, so make sure to have test prints. Text on coloured or textured backgrounds should only be used rarely. If used, make sure the text is readable.

It is also important to think about the reading contrast when working on the storyboard for illustrated books, comic books, or graphic novels. Plan for spaces where text can be placed to ensure good reading contrast. Do not place the text on illustrated backgrounds or dark coloured backgrounds.

Paper with a yellow tone and black writing is preferred. Stark white paper creates a hard and unpleasant contrast.

Example

Gro Nilsdatter Røsth's "["Spelemannen frå Korsneset"](#)" is designed with high-quality paper that prevents letters from showing through from one side to the other. The text is left-aligned, with spacing between paragraphs instead of indentation, allowing for a more accessible layout. Unlike being justified to form a "box" or "brick," the text flows freely on the right side. Words are not split between lines, and sentences end on the same page they begin. The chapters are short.



2.6. Phase 5: Publication

• Distribution and dissemination

Many potential readers in our primary target groups will not be used to reading books. Others might have searched for appropriate books in vain and given up. Many readers in the primary target groups cannot simply walk into a bookstore or a library and pick a book they want to read.

It is therefore an important part of producing universally designed literature to help the publishing houses distribute the books to places where the potential readers will discover them. There are many ways of doing this. One is to buy books from the publishing house and distribute them to places where the primary target groups meet. Another is to buy extra copies for libraries and promote the books there.

• Promotion

We often use the term “easy-to-read” when referring to universally designed books.

The term “easy-to-read”, however, has been used for different kinds of books throughout the years. In many countries, “easy-to-read” is a label used on books aimed at children learning to read.

Keeping in mind the importance of offering age appropriate, high-level, inclusive literature for adults with reading challenges, the term “easy-to-read” should be avoided. Less stigmatising terms such as “books for all” or “something to read” can be considered.

• Reading projects

To motivate potential adult readers to start reading, it can help to introduce the books as part of a reading project. Lower the threshold to encountering and engaging with the books by including the books as part of a meaningful activity, making the books part of a social reading experience, or making digital resources available. These reading projects can be done in collaboration with schools and libraries. See Chapter 4 for suggested activities in the library.

Books search: how to find them?

3

- 3.1. Where to find them**
- 3.2. How to find them**
- 3.3. Finding books suitable for different categories and readers**
- 3.4. How to share and promote the books**

Books search: how to find them?

3

The goal of book search is to make it easier for challenged readers to find suitable books. The book search guidelines describe how librarians and others can find and promote suitable books that will appeal to different readers, and how they are presented and promoted in different categories.

3.1. Where to find them

Finding books suitable for target groups is a time consuming and complex task. The literary field is in constant flux. Publishing companies are started, bought, sold, merged or folded. Established contacts are lost, as people move from one employer to another or change their area of responsibility. A good knowledge of the literary field is helpful. The following list describes other useful tools or methods.

Sourcing

- Subscribe to newsletters from publishers and literary podcasts.
- Attend book launches and read book catalogues.
- Subscribe to relevant literary publications.
- Use personal contacts within the field of literature.
- Follow publishers on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.
- Ask publishing companies to provide free copies of books as they are published.
- Check the newspaper literary supplements, e.g. <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/>.
- Check online sources such as blogs, reviews and sites.

3.2. How to find them

Pre-selection (the books that can be quickly excluded)

- Very thick books (200 pages +). This does not apply to cartoons or mixed media books.
- Textbooks (all educational levels).
- Visually chaotic books.
- Long, dense blocks of text without breaks and with an aligned right margin.

As a general rule books that are more than 200 pages long are excluded, but if a book has illustrations, a font that is easy to read and an open, airy layout, the book can be taken into consideration for further examination.

Example

This visually chaotic design makes it difficult to read the book, due to many competing elements and poor contrast, with text placed on colourful backgrounds. When such design choices are used throughout a book, they make the reading experience strenuous, as the eye has to navigate through multiple elements.



Selection

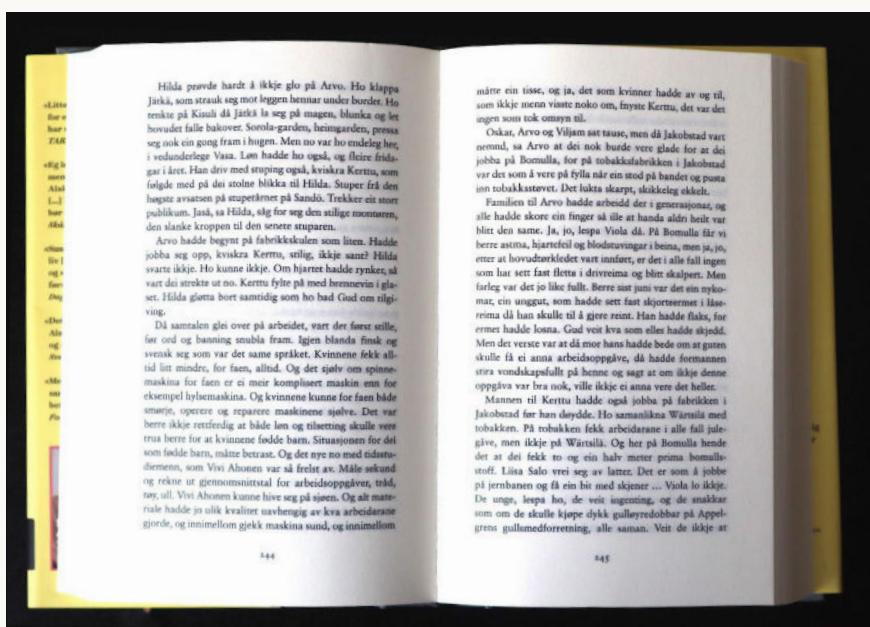
Factors contributing to a high level of readability are:

1. Layout

- An unaligned right margin (ragged right) makes it easier to keep track of where you are on the page and makes it easier to find the next line. For many readers, the shift from one line to the next is a challenge if there are no visual clues guiding the eye to the next line. A ragged right will provide such clues.
- An open and airy layout with wide margins gives the reader time to pause and breathe.
- The relationship between text and background is important. A black font on a soft white background is preferable. Text on a patterned or colourful background reduces the contrast, thus confusing the eye and making the text less visible.
- The use of columns makes a text difficult to read as the eye must constantly make rapid line changes. Very long lines can also be a problem, but are not very common.

Example

Long, dense blocks of text without breaks, combined with a justified right margin, make it difficult for readers to understand the text.



2. Fonts

- A font that is easy to read, separates the letters properly, and forms clear, coherent words. Words must be well spaced. Fonts must clearly distinguish between the letters g, p and b.
- A text using all capital letters can be difficult to read. Capital letters are frequently used in comics, graphic novels and children's books. Small blocks of text in capital letters, as are often used in comics and graphic novels, is acceptable.
- Fonts that mimic handwriting or have embellishments are not easy to read.
- Different fonts have different qualities. The important thing is to make sure that they aid readability.
- Font sizes must aid, not hinder readability.
- *Cursive* is difficult to read.

Example

Comics set with only large-lettered fonts can be difficult to read. When pages lack whitespace, it creates a demanding reading situation. In such cases, it's crucial to consider all aspects of the books. If the story is linear and clear, this might be a factor in favour of the book.



Example

Comics with handwritten fonts can be too challenging to read, even for people without reading difficulties. Although chosen for artistic reasons, this book can prevent readers from experiencing its values if they are not able to understand the text.



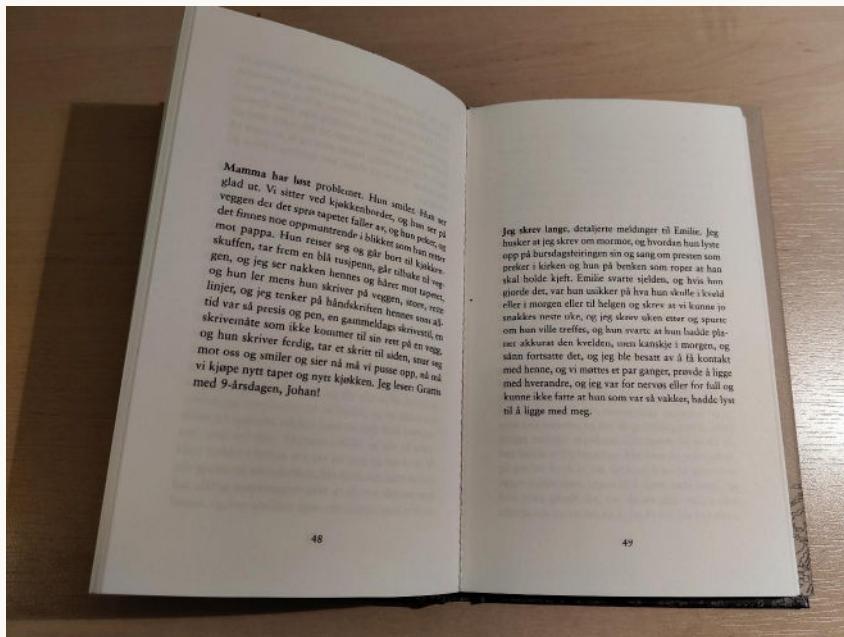
3. Language

- Long words can be difficult to read.
- Foreign words (English, Latin etc.) should not be used.
- Technical terms can make a text difficult to read. Technical terms that are necessary to understand the subject should be explained the first time they are introduced in the text.
- Avoid words with many consonants.
- Compound words can be difficult to read. Examples in English: “firefighter”, “up-to-date”. Compound words are very common in Norwegian and German and are often made up of more than two words: “bussholdeplass”, “kjøleskapsskuff”. They represent real challenges for people with reading difficulties.

- Long sentences can be difficult to read. If a reader focuses mainly on decoding the words, the meaning of the whole sentence may be lost on the way. A mix of sentences with different lengths creates a good dynamic for reading, as long as the sentences are not too long.
- Interrupted or incomplete sentences can be confusing.
- Avoid lack of punctuation. Some authors do not use full stop or commas, but allow their text to flow freely. That makes it hard to know when to pause. Pauses are important, as they give the reader a small break from the text. An ellipsis (...), to mark an omission or pause can be confusing.
- Dialogue and the use of everyday language contributes to making a text easy to read.

Example

At first glance, this book might seem promising with not too much text on each spread. However, the sentences stretch nearly across the entire page, making the text very difficult to understand. Questions arise such as what was stated at the beginning of the long sentence and how to connect it with all the other information included in that single sentence.



4. Structure

The structure of a text has an impact on its readability. A complex or messy structure will make the book less accessible. The following structural elements will contribute towards making a book easy to read:

- Short chapters.
- Clearly defined paragraphs.
- Tell the story in a chronological order. Storylines that jump back and forth in time should be avoided, or at least be very clearly marked.
- Well-defined narrator (or narrators) with a clear perspective.
- Few characters, allowing readers to familiarise themselves with every character and understand their place in the story.
- A dramatic structure that makes the narrative captivating.

5. Illustrations

Illustrations should be age appropriate. In this context, “age appropriate” means “adjusted to the reader's physical and/or mental age and maturity.” This rule also applies to fonts, the design of the book and other embellishments. This is rarely a problem when it comes to books for adults, as “adult” is a clearly defined group whereas “children” and “young people” are many groups and not so clearly defined. A lack of connection between the text and the visual expression is a frequent problem with books for young readers. Getting this right is particularly important, because of the stigma attached to reading books that look too childish for the reader's age. This can result in readers rejecting books that they actually would enjoy.

Is it a good book?

The literary quality can determine how much a book is enjoyed, but not necessarily for every reader. Readers have different preferences and experience levels. Book selection should not be done from a professional point of view, or from the point of view of an experienced reader. The task is to evaluate whether the book fulfils its purpose for the target group:

- Is it age appropriate, both textually and visually?
- Does it engage the reader from page one?
- Is it enticing?

The result

In the end, whether a book is deemed easy to read or not is the result of weighing the pros and cons. Very few books fulfil all criteria, but a number fulfil many. Experience and close knowledge of the reader come into play at this stage. If the task is difficult, testing books with relevant readers and asking for their feedback can be helpful.

3.3. Finding books suitable for different categories and readers

Easy-to-read

Evaluating books for readers with specific reading challenges like dyslexia and general reading challenges:

- All criteria listed above must be considered.

Evaluating books for second language learners:

- All criteria listed in chapter 3 must be considered.
- Fiction is preferred. This is because second language learners are exposed to many non-fiction texts about practical things. Thrilling, beautiful and interesting literature increases the joy of learning a new language. It can also offer the reader emotional experiences of importance – support, understanding, compassion, and recognition.

Easy-to-understand

Evaluating books for readers with dementia/aphasia:

Dementia and aphasia make reading difficult or impossible. Volunteers often read to individuals or groups of people with these impairments in institutions or homes.

The deteriorating ability to remember and/or express views make certain books suitable for this group:

- nostalgic or historic books that can trigger memories.
- books themed around traditional and other well-known subjects.
- songs, rhymes, fairy tales.

Evaluating books for readers with developmental disabilities:

Adults in this group are very diverse and vary widely in their reading abilities. Some can read, some will need a co-reader and others need someone to read to them.

Books must be carefully selected to suit the individual. The criteria mentioned in chapter 3 apply, but are even more important here:

- avoiding compromises
- few and clearly defined characters
- a story and a visual profile that is appropriate for the reader
- a subject and narrative that resonates with the reader.

Other categories / other target groups

People with impaired eyesight, blind people of all ages, people who need books with big letters, braille and tactile pictures and sign language books are not included in this chapter, because the open market never or very rarely provides

books for these groups. They generally depend on organisations like Leser søker bok and other similar institutions to produce books they can enjoy.

3.4. How to share and promote the books

A book search website

Creating an easily-navigable website for adults with reading challenges is highly recommended. Organising the books under different categories will make it easier for potential readers to find a suitable book. The website should contain images of the book covers. Pictures from inside the book should be included, if possible. Seeing the inside often makes it easier for a potential reader to determine if the book will suit him or not.

Write short and informative texts about the book: What is it about, who has made or written it, and what makes this specific book easier to read. Factors that might make the book more difficult to read can also be added in the description. The readability aspects of a book should be described in a way that makes it easier for adults with reading challenges to decide for themselves if a specific book is suitable or not.

Short book reviews can also be added, as they may encourage potential readers to choose the book, particularly if the reviewers are those with similar reading challenges.

Books for all: how to use them?

4

- 4.1. Reading agents**
- 4.2. Learning Circles**
- 4.3. Shared Reading**
- 4.4. Language cafés**
- 4.5. Bilingual readings**

Books for all: how to use them?

4

In this chapter we present a set of activities that libraries can do to reach out to non-readers and help them integrate and become readers and learners. The activities presented are best practice activities gathered from all partners of the Books without Borders project.

4.1. Reading agents

A reading agent is a volunteer who reads aloud for a person or a group of people. The aim of this activity is to share literary experiences and make it possible for non-readers to experience literature. Sometimes the reading agent mainly reads a book, other times the reading is combined with or followed by conversations about the text. It is up to the reading agent and the person/group to find the best way to share literature.

Meetings with reading agents can be beneficial for:

- people in institutions
- older adults
- people with dementia
- second language learners
- people with mental health issues
- people with developmental disability
- prison inmates.



How to find a reading agent:

- Work with volunteer centres and organisations in the community to find volunteers who wish to become reading agents.
- Advertise in the library or in the community's service agencies.
- Advertise through social media.
- Contact retired librarians or teachers.

Finding people who need or want a reading agent

Public libraries can contact institutions or the individuals in need of the reading agents' service. These can be the community's senior citizens' centre, institutions, meeting places for older adults, homes for people with developmental disabilities, health care centres, family care centres, hospitals, prisons and more.

Centres for adult education and language training are also suitable arenas for reading agents to find people who would like to be read to. This might result in a language café-like event.

Teaching/educating reading agents

The library can organise small courses or learning circles on how to become a reading agent. These courses should be free of charge. The most important aspects will be:

- teaching how to lead a group without “leading” it, i.e. how to facilitate
- reading-aloud courses, e.g. how to use your voice
- teaching the reading agent how and where to find suitable books for different groups.

Once a year the county library should organise a gathering to inspire and increase the competence of the reading agents and librarians. For example, the county, or other regional, library offers a variety of lectures, book recommendations, reading aloud-training or learning more about how to communicate with people with cognitive challenges. In addition, these gatherings are important meeting places where reading agents can exchange experiences, ask questions, share joys and frustrations and learn from each other.

How to do it

1. Get to know the individual or the group of people you will be reading with. What kind of needs do they have? What are their reading challenges? What kind of literature do they like (or not)? What kind of topics are they interested in?
2. Emphasise that reading together should be fun. Reading is something we do to relax, share stories and experiences. Reading together is not about right or wrong or about learning something. Reading together is a shared experience.
3. Choose a suitable text. It can often be a good idea to choose something you like yourself or would be interested in reading, but listen to your group and their needs as well. You can use this guidebook to find a book that suits the target group you are working with. Reading aloud should be a joyful shared experience. After every reading session you should always ask the group or the individual if they liked the book and why/why not? This will help you increase your ability to find books that suit your group or your individual.
4. Find a suitable location for your reading. Make sure that everyone sits down so that they can see you and hear you. Sitting in a circle is often a good solution if you are reading for a group. Make sure that the lighting is good and that there will not be a lot of disturbance or noise.
5. Read as clearly and calmly as possible, and look up from the book from time to time to observe if the participants are following you.
6. You can also take breaks and ask questions about the text. Give your participants the possibility to react or comment on the text. You can also

share your own reactions or make a comment, but make sure that your comments are open. This means that you should make comments that imply that you are thinking out loud, not giving “the answer”. You can say things like; “This text reminds me of...” instead of: “When the man in the text says this, it means that ...”

7. Make room for reactions such as laughter, etc. It can be good to laugh or feel sad together.
8. If the conversation or reaction moves away from the text, you can calmly redirect everyone's attention to the text and continue the reading.
9. End the reading session by asking the participants how they experienced the reading. Ask if they managed to follow you or if you should read more slowly, more quickly, or take more or fewer breaks. Ask if they liked the book and what they would prefer to read next time.

Example from Poland:

Project The Reader – librarians and volunteers deliver read-aloud sessions for older adults and people with disabilities

In the pilot project, “The Reader”, the Information Society Development Foundation and local libraries introduced a new service: Reading books to people who cannot read themselves or visit the library due to age, health or disability. The Readers, i.e. volunteers or librarians, brought books to the homes of older people or people with disabilities and read aloud to them. Read-aloud sessions were also held in hospitals, care centres and nursing homes. Librarians also encouraged the youngest readers to read to their senior family members.

Five libraries selected in an open call took part in the project in the summer of 2013. During those two months, 185 reading sessions were held. 39 people became individual “Listeners” and a total of 122 people participated in group meetings. 33 volunteers were involved in the activities. More than 280 hours were spent reading and talking together.

Reading took place in three ways:

- reading at the Listener's home
- reading in institutions
- family reading.

Readings at Listener's homes were individual sessions conducted by a Reader (or two Readers if one of the volunteers was a minor) for an older or disabled person in their home. The librarian's role was to introduce the Reader(s) to the first meeting and coordinate the series of read-aloud sessions. Individual sessions usually lasted between half an hour and three hours, with part of the time spent reading and part talking. Read-aloud sessions were usually held once a week or once every two weeks. It was important that the same Reader and Listener were paired throughout the project. Reading at the Listener's home worked better in smaller towns, where the local community knew and trusted each other and people were happy to meet at home.

Reading in institutions took place in nursing homes, care homes or hospitals. Readers were children (accompanied by a librarian or teacher) or adults: volunteers or librarians. The group session usually lasted around an hour. Reading in an institution worked better in larger towns, where the local community did not know each other well and there was a lower level of trust, but where people were more willing to meet outside the home.

Librarians encouraged and prepared children ("friends of the library") for family reading, i.e. reading aloud to grandmothers and grandfathers or other senior members of the family. Preparation consisted, for example, of carrying out simple voice and diction exercises with the children in the form of a game. The libraries also helped with the selection of books.

As part of the project, a training session for Readers was held to help them prepare for the reading sessions, accompanied by a vocal training workshop led by a speech therapist.

The following materials were used:

- a guide for volunteers on how to prepare for and conduct a read-aloud session
- a “safety code” (a set of guidelines and rules for the safety of the Readers and the Listeners)
- a guide for libraries on working with volunteers
- a testimonials template for volunteers
- a reading catalogue (a list of selected books used in the project).

Readers often used books suggested by the Listeners. If such books did not come up in the conversations, the volunteers talked to older adults and asked about their needs, interests and important life experiences; on this basis, they and the librarians chose a book together.

Below are selected statements from the Readers about their experiences participating in the project:

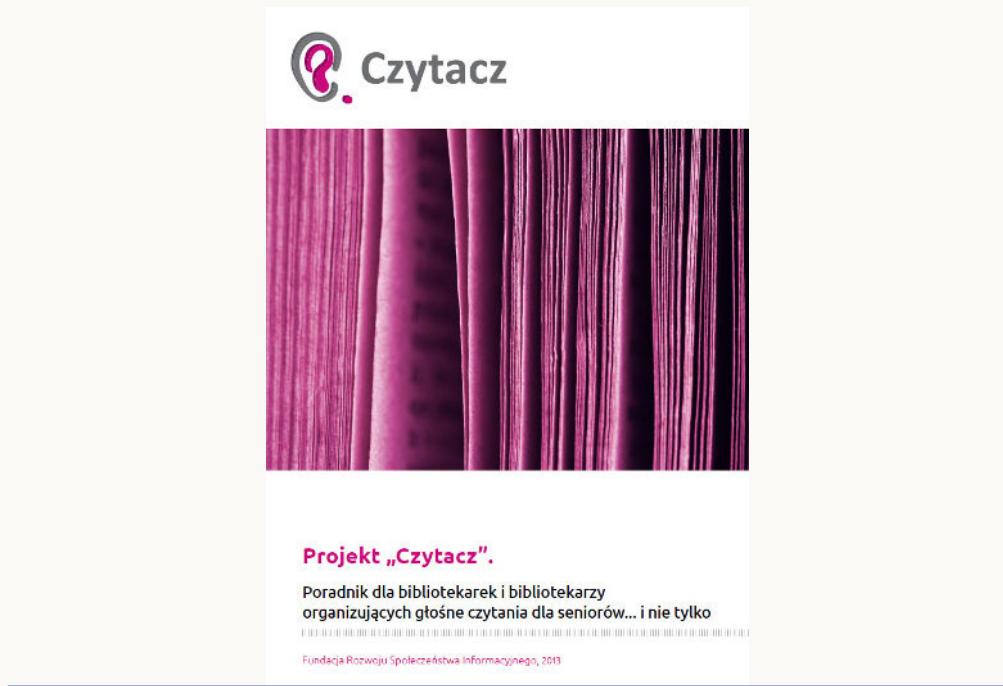
“I read twice a week. I have noticed that these people prefer short stories with fast-paced action, lots of dialogue and not too many descriptions. They most like stories where the protagonists are children or people in love.”

“It is thanks to this project that I have convinced myself that it is not only medical help that is important, but also contact with another person, psychological support and fulfilling the need to share one's pain and suffering, as well as the need for compassion. Through this action, I became friends with one of these people [nursing home residents].”

“It may be different being the Reader. Quite often it worked just to be a person to talk to over coffee. [...] My best memory is reading at the Psychiatric Hospital. A full hour of reading, 100 percent interest and the question, Will you come again? ”

“If I had to say in a few sentences what this project has given me personally, I think the first place would be the joy that I could feel needed, that I could use my passion to give others a moment of joy.”

Information about the project and resources for libraries interested in implementing a read-aloud service for older people or people with disabilities have been compiled in the publication: “Project Reader. A guide for librarians organising read-aloud sessions for seniors... and beyond”, available at biblioteki.org.



Example from Poland:

“Mind Fitness in the Library” – an idea for activities for older people in the municipal library in Barcin

Polish libraries provide older adults with educational and cultural activities. They facilitate their access to literature by providing, for example, books with large print or by delivering ordered books to their

homes (a “book-by-phone” service). Some libraries run activities to improve mental fitness for people who are experiencing the onset of dementia or want to protect themselves against it.

The Polish NGO Stocznia Foundation is implementing the long-term project “Memory Gym” (<https://www.silowniapamieci.pl/>), which provides free materials with mind training exercises for older people. Mind training is an exercise that engages various areas and functions of the brain, including logical thinking, memory, creativity, concentration and eye-hand coordination. Research has shown that systematic exercise has measurable effects: improving mental performance or delaying the onset of dementia symptoms. The “Memory Gym” guide developed by Stocznia Foundation contains information on types of memory disorders, as well as information and practical tips on how to train the mind.

Also available are materials for group and individual training: lesson scenarios, exercise sets and worksheets for those working with groups of older adults, e.g. in various types of care centres, clubs, Universities of the Third Age or libraries. The scenarios describe a proposed course of activities with exercises to stimulate different types of memory (short-term, long-term, visual, auditory, motoric) and cognitive processes (attention, logical thinking, concentration, speed of reaction). The Stocznia Foundation’s project also includes webinars with a psychologist specialising in working with older adults.

The Jakub Wojciechowski Public Library of the Barcin Town and Municipality runs activities for older adults and people with intellectual disabilities on a regular basis. The library has an extensive collection of large print books from the “Big Letters” series. This is a series of books (from various publishers) that uses special fonts and syntax that enable visually impaired people to read. The large print books are very popular in Barcin, as are the lending of audio books and the “book-on-the-phone” service.

The library offers regular developmental activities under the motto “Mind Fitness in the Library”, to which it invites individuals and groups

of older adults from the day care centre with which it cooperates. In preparing the classes, the librarians use the Stocznia Foundation's resources, as well as their own ideas for exercises and the use of literature. Older adults in the library exercise their minds, but also meet with each other to maintain social contact, which is also of great importance in keeping the mind working well in old age. Each meeting has a theme and a fixed structure to ensure that older people feel comfortable. Activities used include a "warm-up" – simple physical exercises, such as gymnastics, hand massage, making associations, comparing pictures, completing well-known songs, expressions or proverbs, counting, sensory exercises, e.g. with scented bags or jigsaw puzzles.

An example of the use of literature in activities with older adults was the reading of poems by a local poet combined with an event in the revitalised space in front of the library. The poems were read by older adults wearing hats in the style the poets used to wear. The participants sat on benches draped in different colours, which symbolised the themes of the poems (e.g. green - the colour of hope).





Photos: Jakub Wojciechowski Public Library of the Barcin Town and Municipality

4.2. Learning Circles

Learning circles are free, facilitated study groups for people who want to learn with others. Learning circles bring people with similar interests together. Small groups meet online or in-person for four to six weeks in a library or other open space to do a free (online) course together. This low-threshold access to education allows people to learn with and from each other.

The facilitator organises the meetings and guides the discussions, but does not function as a teacher or subject expert. Discussing the topics, answering questions together and learning from each other allow the participants to benefit from peer learning, while at the same time mastering the course material together. The regular meetings and email reminders for the meetings motivate participants to continue with the course, which they might not do if they were learning alone.

The Cologne Public Library has offered learning circles since 2017 for adults of all ages on topics ranging from time management, to overcoming stress, from art history to creative writing. Learning circles can be created and adapted for use with various target groups, from the general public to those with reading challenges and disabilities. Learning circles provide a structure for working with groups, providing an educational and social experience and harnessing the benefits of peer learning.

How to do it

Guidelines on how to set up, organise and facilitate learning circles can be found on the website of [Peer 2 Peer University](#), the originators of learning circles. There are step by step instructions on how to start your learning circle as well as online support.

Learning circles can be offered on any topic using free online courses, adapting courses used in other learning circles or by creating original course content. Learning circles also provide an ideal format for train-the-trainer activities.

4.3. Shared Reading

Shared Reading is a method developed by [The Reader](#) – an NGO based in the UK.

It involves a group of people, including a trained Reader Leader, reading stories and poems together. Participants do not need to prepare in advance, they do not have to read aloud or speak unless they choose to; silent listening is encouraged. Meetings are often held in a relaxed atmosphere, with coffee, tea and biscuits.

They are open and free of charge to all interested parties. Jane Davis and The Reader Organisation in Liverpool pioneered this methodology. Becoming a certified Reader Leader requires completing an 18-hour course that covers the basics of the Shared Reading method. Since its inception in the UK in 2008, the movement has expanded internationally, offering training in most Norwegian counties and many countries around the world.

How to do it

1. Advertise the event through appropriate channels, e.g. the public library website, Facebook, other social media and posters in the library or other prominent places in the community. Local newspapers are also great, although they can be expensive. Remember to include details of the event, such as time, date and location.
2. Choose a place where the Reader Leader and participants can feel comfortable and at ease, such as a group room or a quiet section of a library. Libraries, community centres, shops, cafés, and other informal spaces also work well, as do prisons and health and social care centres.
3. Before the event, the Leader selects a few specific texts – a short story and a poem – to read aloud.
4. Provide participants with selected excerpts as printouts after the start of the meeting.
5. Welcome participants to the event by having the Leader ready in the room at the planned start time.
6. To ensure a warm, friendly atmosphere, serving tea, biscuits, or fruits is recommended.
7. The Reader Leaders should introduce themselves, but meeting participants do not have to introduce themselves by name or otherwise. Sharing and commenting is voluntary, but it is recommended that participants talk to each other. However, one can simply be present and listen to the stories.
8. The Leader reads aloud, slowly and with occasional pauses where there is space for comments or questions. Does the text evoke any memories or associations? While reading, the Leader should occasionally try to make eye contact with the listeners.

9. It is important for the group dynamic that the Leader has a calm and expectant attitude. Shorter or longer silences during an event should not be seen as negative. Sometimes participants need to reflect in silence before they want to comment on something, but it is also the Leader's job to start a conversation by drawing attention back to the text, perhaps looking at it from different points of view to stimulate new thoughts.

Advantages of using the Shared Reading method

Reading literature aloud in real time means that everyone is involved in a shared, live experience. Group members are encouraged by the Reader Leader to respond personally, sharing feelings, thoughts and memories triggered by the reading.

Everyone experiences the text in their own way, but literature provides a common language that can help us better understand ourselves and others. Shared Reading helps us to understand our individual and collective inner lives, at the same table, at the same time. The method improves wellbeing, reduces loneliness and helps people find new meaning in their lives.

Research has been done on the importance of literature in people's lives, and more specifically on Shared Reading as a method. Benefits of Shared Reading include:

- promoting mental wellbeing
- improving the ability to concentrate
- challenging established beliefs about oneself and others
- expressing one's thoughts and feelings in words
- helping to express difficult thoughts and feelings
- helping to create a new story about oneself and one's own identity.

Example from Norway: Using Shared Reading for improved wellbeing in Trøndelag

As part of the Trøndelag County Library's "Litterære pusterom – Shared Reading for økt livskvalitet (Literary Breathing Rooms – Shared Reading for improved Wellbeing)" project the Shared Reading method was used across the county to invite non-readers into the joy of literature and the library. Librarians across the county were trained to be Reader

Leaders, using the method to reach new groups such as older adults, second language learners and adult learners with a low educational level. The method was an inspiration not only for the target groups. It also had a positive effect on the librarians and teachers who took part in the reading sessions. They experienced the joy of literature and became interested in using books and literature in their activities to create a positive shared experience.

4.4. Language cafés

A language café is an activity held in libraries, where second-language learners meet in a friendly environment to practise the new language they are learning. A language café is not a school or a course. It is important that the activity is simple enough to help the participants talk freely. Language cafés are often led by voluntary native speakers from the community or librarians. These leaders are called “language hosts”, and their job is to help the participants have fruitful conversations and speak the new language together.

A lot of different activities are used to encourage dialogues. It can be games, thematic discussions and dialogues etc.

Using literature in language cafés is proven to be a wonderful and effective way to start the conversation and practise the language. Use books to learn new words, practice reading and pronunciation, and start conversations where no answer is wrong or right.

How to do it

1. Start by finding a suitable book. Many language-hosts fear that using books will be too complicated for the participants. They often fear that the books will be too difficult for the participants to read. On the contrary, there are a lot of advantages to using books. The clue is to find a book that is inspiring, but not too difficult. All-age books can be a good place to start. See chapter 3 of this guidebook (Book search) for more suggestions.

2. As the participants arrive, greet everyone, and make sure that everyone sits in a way that you can all see each other. Sitting in a circle on chairs and with no tables between you is often a good solution. Serving tea, coffee and biscuits can contribute to an ice-breaking and welcoming atmosphere.
3. If the participants do not know each other: Start by asking everyone to say their name and which languages they speak (ask about languages they speak, do not ask which country they are from. If they want to talk about their home country, they can, but asking about languages makes it optional for the participant to share private information).
4. Start by showing the cover of the book to everyone. Talk about the cover. What is the book about? What does the cover suggest? What associations does the cover give?
5. Say that you will now read the book together and talk about the book. Emphasise that this reading session will be about reflecting together. Literature creates a free and open space where there is no set answer. All answers, reflections and reactions to the text will contribute positively to your mutual exploration of the text and the conversation. Also emphasise that you are there to read with them, not to give answers – because there are no set answers. You are in this together.
6. Read the first passage of the book out loud. Make sure that the passage is not too long. Ask if there are words or expressions that need explanation. If nobody comments, you can choose some words and phrases that might be difficult for some. Ask the participants if they know what they mean, and if nobody answers, explain them.
7. If you find it suitable, ask if some of the participants can repeat the words or phrases in their own native tongue. Combining the new language to their first language is positive and helps the participants connect to the new words and remember them.
8. Then ask the participant next to you to read the same passage that you just read. You can ask as many participants to read the same passage as feels natural. Repetition and hearing different people read the same passage is positive for the participants' language learning.

- 9.** After having read the same text several times, ask the participants to reflect on what you have been reading together. What do they think the text is about? What does the text make them think or feel?
- 10.** If there are images in the book, you can talk about the pictures too. What do you see? How does the picture resonate with the text?
- 11.** From this discussion there might arise a more general discussion or conversation. This is positive; you can let the conversation go in many directions. The point is not to analyse the text. The point is to talk and engage in a meaningful conversation. Let the participants talk and practise the language.
- 12.** Whenever you feel it is suitable, draw the attention back to the text.
- 13.** When ready, continue to the next passage of the text and repeat the points from 6 to 10.
- 14.** End the language café by asking the participants if they enjoyed the book. What did they like and what did they not like in the book? Did they enjoy the reading session and the dialogue?

Digital language cafés

Reading a book together can also be done digitally. Prepare the digital reading by scanning the pages you will read together into your computer so that you can share your screen and show the pages to the participants. Follow the same pattern as above.

Advantages of using literature in a language café / language room

- 1.** Books help the participants to see and hear new words so that it becomes easier to take part in the new language in an inspiring way.
- 2.** Listening to others read a book while looking at the words in the book helps the participant see the connection between word and pronunciation as well as learning new words.
- 3.** Trying to read the same passage helps the participant to practise, learn and remember the pronunciation of words.
- 4.** Using literature as the starting point for conversations helps the participants find something interesting to talk about when practising the new language.

Literature texts often engage us, create thoughts and feelings, and help us talk about something we find interesting.

5. Using literature as the starting point for conversations in a second language helps the participants talk about difficult subjects without becoming too private. The text becomes a buffer to a participant's private experience and makes it possible to talk about difficult subjects without becoming too vulnerable. It is always possible to lead the conversation or the reactions back to the text.
6. Using literature as the starting point for conversations in a second language helps the participants connect to the new language and make it their own. When talking about something that matters to them, the language internalises and becomes more natural for them. They learn to use their new language to express their own thoughts, feelings and points of view. The new language eventually becomes something they can use as both intellectual and emotional human beings.

Example from Germany: sprachraum (Language Room)

The Cologne Public Library's sprachraum (Language Room) is an open learning space and venue for intercultural exchange for people of diverse backgrounds. Volunteers help people learn German, provide homework help and assist with job applications and writing resumes. It is a meeting place for people who want to learn German and offers regular, free events for learning the language.

Discussion groups both in-person and online, meet weekly. Volunteer native speakers facilitate the discussions. Participants spend one hour together exchanging ideas about a topic and practising speaking German together. The in-person discussion group is for everyone who is learning German, regardless of skill level. The online discussion group is for all who have a German language proficiency level of B1 or higher. The sprachraum and its offerings are shown to all immigrants who tour the library with their German as a Second Language classes, thus advertising the services to the target group.

As part of the Books without Borders project, a book group will be added to the sprachraum's offer as well. Like the discussion groups, the book group will meet weekly and will be similar in format to the language cafés in Norway.

4.5. Bilingual readings

Bilingual readings for families

Arranging reading-sessions for families can be a good way to introduce literature, create interest and curiosity for books and different languages and help families get to know the library. Non-reading adults can often find it difficult to go to the library for themselves. By inviting them with their children a bilingual reading can be an ice-breaker and low-threshold activity that helps adults take the first step to engaging with books and self education. It is beneficial for their children, as well.

How to do it

1. Invite families through the nearby kindergarten, school, health care centre, or family centre.
2. What is the age of the children? How many languages do they speak?
3. Choose a suitable bilingual book – theme of the book, age-level and suitable languages.
4. Find someone who can read the bilingual text. It can be a good idea to ask the parents if they can read with you, but be aware that many of the parents might actually be illiterate or have low reading skills. Maybe there are employees in your library or the nearby school that speak different languages?
5. Are there many pictures in the book? If possible, it is helpful for the families if you can show the pictures on a large screen behind you as you read. If not, you can take breaks and show the pictures inside of the book as you read, or, if there are many listeners, divide your listeners into smaller groups and give

a copy of the book to each group. Take breaks and make sure everyone in the group can see the book pages and follow them through the reading.

6. Read the second language text first, then the first language text. Make sure you only read one or two sentences at the time so that the two languages follow each other closely.
7. You can ask the children questions from the book while reading it. Allow the children to interrupt, comment, ask questions and take part in the reading. Use the book as a starting point for dialogue. Lead the dialogue and draw the attention back to the text when you feel it is time to continue the reading.
8. Prepare some questions connected to the text that you can ask your listeners after the reading. Make sure that the questions are open enough to allow the children to respond, and clear enough for the children to understand and want to answer.
9. You can use the book as a starting point to talk positively about language and bilingualism. Maybe different children in the group can repeat the main theme of the book in their own first- or second language?
10. If possible or suitable: Find family friendly activities that are related to the theme of the book. For example, let every family paint or draw a big family picture together about what they just heard. Make figures with LEGO bricks or other materials or create a quiz with questions related to the book.

Bilingual readings for young adults

A lot of young adults today grow up with more than one language and more than one culture at home, but their multicultural competence is seldom met as a resource by teachers or librarians. Research shows that when their multicultural background is met in a positive way by influential adults, this background becomes a positive force, not only for the young people concerned, but for the whole class and society. When met in a negative or indifferent way, it can become a negative force, creating confusion and frustration. Bilingual readings can help multilingual young adults overcome confusion and bring forward the positive aspects of bilingualism. Bilingual readings will also have a positive impact on their classmates, as bilingual books open their world and make it easier to understand the complexity of language and of the world.

How to do it

1. Invite a class or a group of young adults to the library. Contact the nearby school or centre for migrants. Some schools will have special classes for migrants or bilingual young adults. Others will have individuals mixed into “normal” classes.
2. Ask the teacher or leader of the group which languages are represented in the class or group of young adults. You might not find bilingual books that cover all the different languages represented, but try to find as many as possible. In addition, find books in the languages represented and display them in a visible, good place in the library. Many young adults are not used to visiting a library and they are not used to books. Seeing a book in their first language in the library can make the young person feel more welcome.
3. You can start by having a small introduction about books and about the library. Tell your young visitors about all the good things the library can offer. A lot of young people today simply know very little about the library and how it works.
4. Optional: Introduce the book you will read by showing your audience the cover. You can use a big screen that shows the cover behind you if your listeners are a big group. Again, a lot of young people are not used to books, and you can draw their attention towards the book by asking open questions about the cover. Tell your listeners that there are no set answers. Experiencing a book together is like experiencing art; all our different interpretations and reactions are part of the whole. There is no right or wrong.
5. Optional: Ask the listeners about the title. What does the title make the listeners believe that the book is about?
6. Bilingual reading: Someone who speaks the second language reads the text in the second language first. If it is a poem, you can read the whole poem. If it is a prose text, you can read it in approximately one minute. Then read the same text in the country's first language.
7. The reading session should last for approximately 15-20 minutes all together.
8. You can divide the group into smaller groups. Ask the participants open questions about the texts they have just heard.

- 9.** You can end the reading by asking your listeners to read to themselves in their first language.
- 10.** Optional: You can arrange bilingual writing sessions where the young adults are inspired to write their own text in whatever language they want to use.
- 11.** Talk positively about bilingualism and the advantages of speaking many different languages.

Example from Norway: Crosspoints – reading bilingual poems with young adults

Leser søker bok has developed a free to use internet page with films, podcasts, pictures, themes and questions that will inspire young adults to reflect upon and discuss bilingual poems. The internet page is based on testing and interviews with upper second grade 18-years old students with a huge variety of backgrounds and languages. Three schools, ten different classes (approximately 250 students) and ten teachers gave feedback and helped decide what kind of digital resources to make.

Feedback on the website is that it promotes reading, makes young adults experience poetry as interesting and relevant to themselves and their lives, promotes dialogue and discussion on issues such as identity, belonging, religion, war, borders, languages, freedom of speech and democracy.

Bilingual readings for adults

Moving to a new country as an adult can be a stressful experience. To no longer master the culture and the language surrounding you often creates a feeling of being overwhelmed or less valuable as a participant of the community.

Bilingual readings for adults can be done in many different ways. The above method for bilingual readings for young adults can be used. Another method is to divide the

group into smaller groups almost like a Shared Reading circle, and let the readers take turns in reading themselves. The step-by-step method from the language cafés can also be used.

Bilingual readings can be done for second language learners only, or you can mix a group of second language learners with other adult readers from the same community. Reading literature together can be a fantastic way to bridge communication and dialogue across cultures and languages, and it can benefit the whole community. The first language users that might have lived in the country all their lives, get to know their newcomers through a shared literature session.

Advantages of bilingual readings in the library

- Bilingual reading activities for adults in the library can connect newcomers to the local community and create understanding among adults from different countries living together in the same place.
- Literature serves as a tool for communication and understanding across different languages, cultures, and experiences.
- Bilingual literature can help the new language learner to bridge his or her earlier experiences and languages with the new language and new experiences.
- Literature helps the new language learner to get to know both the instrumental, the intellectual and the emotional part of the new language.
- Bilingual readings can help the newcomers to become a whole person in their new society.

Example from Poland: Polish experience with bilingual groups (Polish and Ukrainian)

Family activities

All kinds of activities for children will bring their adult caregivers to a library, but activities for a whole family engages adults more. All kinds of quests, riddles, coded messages that are solved through books may be helpful in bringing back adult readers.

Language courses and other language activities

Most of the refugees don't require a professional, certified language

course. Ukrainian and Polish are very similar, so the focus is more on differences in the languages and the rules of pronunciation.

Librarians in Poland attend online courses on teaching Polish as a foreign language and organise Polish language courses in libraries. Bilingual books are scarce, but librarians use books that are known in both countries and translated.

Fairy tales are also popular for this kind of reading. Since everybody knows the story, Ukrainians are more confident reading them and discussing them in Polish. It works really well as a family workshop (children, young people and adults) with the addition of arts and crafts and even theatre.

Parallel adult / children activities

Some libraries organise activities for young children (preschool age) and invite parents, caregivers and grandparents to enjoy refreshments and converse while their children are taken care of. The activities are promoted in Polish and Ukrainian, so the groups are bilingual.

The “cafés” don't have a set structure, it depends on the groups. In time, the conversation groups develop into thematic workshops, language courses, shared reading or any other activity the group decides to undertake.

Non readers

Useful tips to attract non readers and introduce them to the library before encouraging them to borrow a book include the following (for those in Poland who work with the Ukrainian community):

1. Mapping local immigrant community needs. Interviews with immigrants and representatives of community services, school teachers and NGOs are helpful in creating a local network of organisations that support refugees. Gathering information on the immigrants' needs on a feedback board helps

to show what the situation in the local community is and what needs there are to be met. It is then easier to offer something that is really needed in the community. The same applies to any other community members.

- 2.** Activities for children, especially those that last a few hours and take place when schools are closed, e.g. during school breaks. Once the parents visit the library and become acquainted with it, they will be more open to attending activities for adult library users.
- 3.** A family activity around books or other subjects (robotics, cooking, festivities, local history, escape room, art, animals, drama therapy, etc). Weekends work best.
- 4.** Workshops on subjects that are relevant and popular to the local community such as:
 - using smartphones and e-services for older adults (women sometimes bring their male partners, who tend to read less than they do)
 - “brain and body exercise” - fun games to slow dementia (rhymes, puzzles, word games) and easy exercises, even yoga, to help older adults keep active
 - historic walks
 - preparing a modern resume, career planning, dream mapping
 - choosing a high school (admission criteria)
 - board games, computer games
 - language course, language practice.
- 5.** Outdoor activities or excursions (planting herbs, dance, outdoor art, visits to beaches, lakes or parks, refugee centre activities, library information booths, visiting other libraries).
- 6.** Orientation activities for recently arrived refugees and migrants in general:
 - walks to historic places, museums, countryside bicycle rides
 - mapping, walking to offices and administrative buildings, (social services, banks, schools, local authorities, etc.)
 - Using local popular online services (travel, shopping, financial).
- 7.** In communities with immigrants, integration activities around culture (films, books, popular authors), cooking, customs, both from the hosting and arriving communities.

- 8.** Relaxing activities for refugees (yoga, dance, art, café, arts & crafts, make-up, stress reduction) for adults and children.
- 9.** Quiet, individual spaces to read, work or relax.
- 10.** Involving immigrants in activities with local communities (inviting them to participate, as some immigrants are eager to get involved and help instead of only receiving help).

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Universally designed books

Below examples of books we are referring to in this guidebook are listed. These books have been designed and published in Norway in line with the Books for Everyone Framework. Their detailed descriptions are available in the Leser søker bok's [book search service](#).

A. Audhild Solberg, Den svartkledde jenta. Oslo: Samlaget, 2019. More information: <https://boksok.no/bok/den-svartkledde-jenta/>

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Sigrun Nygaard Moriggi, La hendene snakke! – ordbok i tegnspråk. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2006. More information: <https://boksok.no/bok/la-hendene-snakke/>

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Books for all!

