

Sensitive Language for a Sensitive Topic

There is no denying the power of words. Words have different meanings based on people's experience with them. Use the suggestions in this chart when working with someone who may have literacy issues.

What not to say

What to say

Literacy

- skills upgrading/training

Illiterate

- difficulty with reading, writing, communications, digital/computer technology and/or math

Go back to school

- upgrade your skills
- improve your skills as a first step before a job search
- refresh your skills for retraining

School

- skills upgrading/training/preparation program

Slow Learner

- have learning challenges
- have barriers to learning including a rough personal life
- had trouble in early education

Test/IQ Test

- skills based assessment to measure strengths and identify areas that can be improved
- find your current level, identify strengths and areas you can improve in
- screening tool to make sure it's a good fit for you

Send to program X

- offer an opportunity to attend an upgrading program
- program should be tied to goal

Fail/failed

- did not complete
- the program was not the right fit

Youth

- between the ages of 15-29 if program has an age limit