

KA2- Distance learning for vulnerable adults

1. General - distance learning for seniors

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, we have committed ourselves to direct distance learning - particularly challenging for the target group of vulnerable adults. Although by now we have mostly returned to in-classroom learning format we have collected valuable observations and experience on how to support seniors in distance learning.

2. Characteristics and limitations of the target group

As people age, they still have the need to learn, connect, and grow. People who are retired have more time to engage in learning opportunities and the number of available online learning opportunities continues to grow rapidly. Yet this alone does not guarantee access or use by seniors. Older adults mostly decide to take part in online training because they want to socialise, take part in recreational activities or need to learn something practical regarding e-governance services.

Because they are accustomed to different approaches to learning, they find it harder to adapt to change, so they need more time. Some have reservations and fears about using new technology and approaches. There are also differences in digital literacy, as some know, can and understand more than others. This is also due to poor previous experience or lack of knowledge and experience with technology and lack of computer equipment at home.

Ageing-related changes in perceptual, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities also have significant impact on the ability to use technology in learning. It includes normal changes with age in vision, hearing, perception, memory, comprehension, information processing, working memory, and/or motor dexterity. If normal ageing can be characterised by a slowing down, the Internet can be characterised by a speeding up. It is a small wonder that many older adults shy away from computer and Internet use. An awareness of slowing down due to age--related changes, frustration with complexity and terminology are barriers that are hard to overcome for many older adults. This lack of long--term, stable interaction patterns and technical environment for online learning is perhaps the biggest barrier to realising the potential of senior online learning.

3. Motivating the target group to approach distance learning activities

Educational opportunities in later life meet the following needs:

- Learn new things
- Keep social networks and reduce isolation
- Maintain cognitive and mental health
- Develop new job skills who want or need to stay in the job market
- Recreate

Older learners are not likely to participate in online environments that are boring or lack motivating content and activities. There is a need to design more engaging online learning in order to create a more successful learning environment for online learners, particularly older learners who are often not motivated to participate by job requirements. Senior learners are curious, they want to make good use of their free time and at the same time acquire new knowledge, competencies and strengthen cognitive abilities.

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Learners feel better if they are in a safe environment and in a familiar process, which should be ensured by educators. The educators' approach should be relaxed, they should be willing to assist with computer literacy problems. The content of teaching must be adapted to distance teaching. Much more emphasis should be placed on oral expression, audio and video, less on individual work and more on group work. Distance learning needs to be planned a little more carefully in advance. The activity must be clearly structured and the instructions given very precise and clear.

Above all, the individual approach proved to be successful, so individual meetings, when the educators called the participants by phone and led them step by step to the goal in their acquaintance with technology.

4. Distance learning methods for seniors

Name of the workshop	SET UP A BOOKSHELF IN PADLET
Method	Individual or group work in Padlet
Purpose/goals	Enable collaborative participation in a shared space.
Short description	<p>Padlet could be used for a variety of reasons. Not only can learners collaborate on walls in real time; students can also work on their own walls individually. This, coupled with the ability to upload just about any type of media onto a wall, means that Padlet can be used for almost any lesson.</p> <p>Students can document their learning by uploading how-to videos, creating newspapers, solving math problems, and taking pictures for ice-breaker activities. They can reflect on their learning, during the process or at its completion, adding notes to the walls they have created. Padlets may then be turned into picture files and blogged for sharing.</p> <p>Here you will find an example of using the Padlet shared space for setting up a bookshelf for collaborative reading and learning.</p>
Online tools	Padlet
Didactic accessories	/
Recommended number of participants	1-16
Duration	Flexible

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Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	The educator creates the Padlet board to make books or study material recommendations or keep track of what learners are reading. Recommendations by educators or other learners will help learners to find new reads to love and to expand their knowledge on a topic learned. Ask learners to rate and comment on the books they're reading for class and include their own personal choices too.
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check if all the learner can access the link to Padlet - Make a tutorial on how to use Padlet if your learners have never used it before and experience difficulties with it

Name of the workshop	PERFECT RECIPE
Method	Group work, collaborative learning
Purpose/Objectives	Objectives: Socialisation, communication, increasing the value of the seniors' experience, creativity, memory, teamwork
A brief description	This method allows us to use collective and individual experience and knowledge to solve problems, synthesise learning, think critically and creatively, and reflect.
Tools	Any platform where there is a shared board or screen display option + a moderator
Didactic Accessories	/
Recommended number of participants	3 - 15
Duration	45 min
Workshop course (step by step)	Divide participants in groups of 3-5 and ask them to create a "perfect recipe" of smth they have learned recently or are learning at the moment. In group work, the participants create a "collective recipe" in such a way as to draw on the experience of all participants. Then invite the groups to share their "perfect recipe" in a plenary.
Distance learning adaptations; what we need to pay attention to, possible challenges	Choose the platform that enables you to divide participants in groups and assign them to different "rooms". Visit the "rooms" while the groups are working and check if the participants work collaboratively and remind them about the time-keeping.

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Name of the workshop	I REMEMBER
Method	Creative writing
Purpose/Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote creative writing - Enable sharing precious and important moments - Reflect
A brief description	This activity asks students to write about an aspect of a recent reading that stuck in their memory. Such solo exercise is ideal if you aim to help your students to stimulate their mind before working on a larger project or to overcome writer's block, or can be used with a larger group, where you simply ask everyone to share what they've written in groups of 3 or 4 people afterwards.
Tools	Any platform where there is a shared board or screen display option + a moderator. Paper and writing tools. Alternatively a collaborative platform such as Miro or Padlet for simultaneously writing text online.
Didactic Accessories	/
Recommended number of participants	Any
Duration	45 min
Workshop course (step by step)	<p>Ask participants to write "I don't know why I remember..." and then continue writing for fifteen minutes, or however long feels necessary. Writing about one's own memories can sometimes spark creativity in ways that learners may not realise, as memory is a key impetus for creative work, regardless of genre.</p> <p>This exercise is useful for the learners to free their mind and get themselves comfortable with the page. It is also useful to get in the habit of writing without censoring themselves. The memories they uncover may find their way into a story or a poem; the juxtapositions between memories may also have some unexpected resonance. If they are sharing this exercise with a group, it may be illuminating to discuss which memories were particularly moving or interesting to the other writers in the group, as the most "resonant" memories may not be the ones they would anticipate.</p>
Distance learning adaptations; what we need to pay attention to, possible challenges	

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Name of the workshop	LEARNING THROUGH READING
Method	Method of reading and working with text, pictures, maps and photographs
Purpose/goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice reading - Practice listening - Practice spelling and pronunciation
Short description	With this method, the lecturer presents different types of texts to the participants. Participants gain personal experience and encouragement to read the texts carefully, try to understand it, and seek help with words or parts of the text that they do not understand. With this method, participants strengthened reading aloud, pronunciation and comprehension of different texts, as well as orthography (eg spelling differs from pronunciation) and accentuation.
Online tools	Any platform where there is a shared board or screen display option + a moderator.
Didactic accessories	Text from everyday life (notice, invitation, request, complaint, apology...) etc. and various texts from magazines, newspapers or online sources.
Recommended number of participants	Any
Duration	Flexible
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	The lecturer collects texts from everyday life (notice, invitation, request, complaint, apology...) and various texts from magazines, newspapers or online sources. First, she reads the text aloud herself. Then she encourages the participants to read the texts aloud and reminds them of the accent points if necessary. She checks the comprehension of the texts with questions and explains the unknown words to them. She reminds the participants of the spelling and orthographic rules.
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	This method is good for language learning and practice and can be adjusted or complemented by additional elements for the purpose of the educational activity.

Name of the workshop	LEARN TO TELL A STORY
Method	Storytelling

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Purpose/goals	Develop such skills as problem-solving, communication, creativity, problem solving, group work.
Short description	One of the most democratic methods, as participants are given the task of freely writing a story that could serve: motivational, therapeutic, creative, relaxing, etc. (depending on the purpose and theme of the training). The trainer only asks questions, which guide the participants into the structure of the writing.
Online tools	Any platform where there is a shared board or screen display option + a moderator.
Didactic accessories	/
Recommended number of participants	3 - 9
Duration	1,5 hours
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>Participants on examples gain basic knowledge of the types of storytelling, narrator, plot construction, description and the use of nonverbal communication in storytelling. They are then given the task of telling the story in a certain way (using a certain narrative technique, narrative tone, type of story). After each story is told, participants comment on each other's stories.</p> <p>Examples of storytelling tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborative fairytale. Group work. Divide participants to groups of 4-5 people. Show five pictures, metaphor cards or words on the screen. The task for a group is the same: using the given material, create a story: the problem-description-solution. Participants in the chat (e.g. Telegram) write one sentence at a time in a specific order. The moderator has access to all groups and then announces all the final stories. She asks what everyone agrees to and what they would like to add. Finally there is a general discussion in Zoom or elsewhere. Participants share their thoughts and possible solutions or outcomes. 2. Personal story. Individually. A picture (subject) or word/topic is given and the task is to write a short story that everyone shares with the group. 3. A fun way to enable some storytelling in a group is to ask the participants to grab something that has a story to it. They could either take turns telling their story or get the rest of the group to guess the story behind their thing. The latter usually creates some funny imaginary side stories. This activity could be used as a warm-up.

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Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	It is important to make sure that participants feel comfortable in the group because every storytelling activity implies sharing and sometimes sharing of sensitive information.
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Name of the workshop	WHEN CONCENTRATION FALLS
Method	METHOD FOR RAISING CONCENTRATION
Purpose/goals	Maintaining concentration
Short description	A method that helps us get into a state of such attention in which we manage to combine intentions, ideas, emotions, and actions, and so we are able to achieve the results we want, whether the task is difficult or simple.
Online tools	Video conferencing (e.g. Zoom, MS Teams)
Didactic accessories	Breathing and stretching exercises Picture of acupressure points
Recommended number of participants	Unlimited
Duration	10 minutes
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>When the mentor notices that the participants are losing concentration, he takes a short break and performs the following exercises:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stretching exercises: the mentor asks the participants to straighten (they can sit) and push their shoulders back slightly. Then at the same time raise your arms as high as possible. Tilt your head towards your shoulders left and right, up and down, look left and right over your shoulder. Exercises can be repeated several times. 2. The mentor asks the participants to get up and walk to the window, door, lean against them and take a few breaths of fresh air, close them, then return to the computer. 3. Breathing exercises follow: the mentor leads the participants into a deep inhale and exhale, reminding them of diaphragmatic breathing; he directs them with his voice to try to breathe calmly, without forcing them to exhale, to make room for fresh air. When inhaled, they try to fill all the hidden corners of the lungs; inhaled air can be imagined in a fresh, sunny colour, and exhaled air in a darker colour. Breathing is effortless, focused. During breathing they can count. 4. Massage: the mentor shows the participants some acupressure points and reflex zones on the hands (palms) that affect the brain and thus general

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	<p>well-being; guided massage and encourages participants to imitate him/her.</p> <p>5. When they have completed the attention exercises, the mentor directs them back to the topic, makes a short summary, and continues.</p> <p>6. In case of a long workshop or lectures, take several short breaks.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>Participants may be embarrassed when performing concentration exercises, so allow them to turn off the cameras and do the exercises in a relaxed manner. After completing the exercises, we ask them to turn on the cameras again.</p>