

# A

## READING A: The Case for Increased Rigor in Adult English Language Instruction

(Adapted from Betsy Parrish’s LINCS ESL Pro Issue Brief: *Meeting the Language Needs of Today’s Adult English Learner*, AIR 20015, available at [https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/ELL\\_Increasing\\_Rigor\\_508.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/ELL_Increasing_Rigor_508.pdf).)

Careers and educational opportunities in the United States today require an understanding of more complex language, higher reading levels, stronger communication skills, and more critical thinking skills than ever before. For example, employees are expected to solve problems, understand and produce complex written communications, and apply concepts to new contexts. At work, adults may need to read charts, forms and work instructions, which all require the use of different reading strategies. In order to succeed in any postsecondary setting or work-related training, adult English language learners (ELLs) need to read and comprehend complex nonfiction texts and write reports or research papers.

These increased language demands can be particularly challenging for adult ELLs, many of whom may have low literacy levels, limited formal schooling, and limited English language skills. Furthermore, many adult ESOL programs have traditionally focused largely on life skills such as banking, shopping, or enrolling a child in school. Those programs designed to help ELLs transition to college and careers have typically targeted learners who are already at an intermediate to advanced level of English proficiency. Rigorous instruction in academic and career readiness skills can start from the very beginning levels of adult English language instruction.

Increased rigor in ELA programs is not necessary only for work or school readiness; it is also needed for performing everyday literacy tasks. For example, adult ELLs need to read mail selectively, listen and take notes if they receive important phone messages, or assist their children with homework. They may want to attend neighborhood meetings or interact with teachers at school conferences, which may require using higher order listening and communication skills in English. They need to make decisions about services in their communities, such as health care, which will require print and digital literacy as well as critical thinking skills.

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**Work with your partner. Check your understanding of the reading.**

**Prepare to report what you learned to your “home team.”**

1. Look back at the first paragraph to complete the chart below. Fill in each row in the right column with one example from the article that correlates to the skill requirement in the left column.

21 <sup>st</sup> Century requirements	Examples in the Workplace
Comprehension of complex language	
High reading level	
Strong communication skills	
Critical thinking skills	

2. What are the two key ideas in paragraph 2? Underline the sentences that support your answer.
3. According to the article, how is an increase in rigor in ESOL instruction relevant to learners whose focus is not on the workplace?