

10-minute literacy starters

Some schools are opting to use school-wide lesson starters to help improve the overall literacy and numeracy skill development of students. Consistent lesson starters provide regular opportunities for students to practise and build literacy and numeracy skills in manageable ways. The activities below are designed as quick “Do Now” tasks that can be used across subjects to establish routine, activate thinking, and support ongoing skill development.

- The following are examples of the types of starters that schools may choose to use. Each one is designed to be delivered at the start of any class and last no longer than 10 minutes.
- The ideas below are extracted from the targeted support materials provided by Evaluation Associates. The full lesson resources can be found here: [Support Materials for Additional NCEA Literacy and Numeracy-rich Standards | NCEA](#).

Vocabulary Jumble

- Display key words/ terms. You could use topic words or words from [The first 1000 words of the General Service List](#) or [The Academic Word List - Victoria University of Wellington](#)
 - Students then predict meanings and categorise them
 - Students can then check with a partner/ group – share and compare
 - Lastly, have a whole class discussion of words that were unknown or not fully known
 - Further details and strategies can be found on: [Vocabulary – ESOL teaching strategies](#).
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Error correction

- Learners collaboratively correct errors in spelling, sentence structure and punctuation in the sample text below:

Schools shouldn't force students wear uniform because it takes away there identity and rights to choose what they wear. Uniforms is boring and dont let young people exprss themselves properly. Some students feel more confident when there aloud to dress how they like, it shows there personality and make them more happier. If everyones looking the same its hard to tell who is who and that make school feels like a prison. Also uniforms cost alot and not every family can afford them, especialy if they have more then one kid. Teachers say uniforms help with behaviour and focus but theres no proof that it really do. It be better if schools let student wear clothes thats comfortable, appropriate and suit them. People learn better when they feel good and comfortible. So making kids wear uniform dont help learning it just make them feel controlled and not respected at all.

- Teachers provide feedback and go through the correct answers with learners.
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Sentence combining

In pairs, learners use the bank of conjunctions in the bottom box to combine the following sentences:

1. It began to rain. We continued the game.
2. You won't improve your writing. You revise and reflect on your mistakes.
3. He didn't study. He passed the exam.
4. They arrived late. There was traffic congestion on the motorway.
5. She was tired. She kept working.
6. I like classical music. My brother prefers rap.
7. The students were warned. They continued to break the school rules.

unless / until / although / even though / because / as / since / whereas / while

Paragraph sequencing

Paragraph sequencing task Learners organise jumbled sentences into a coherent paragraph. For example:

1. Moreover, many find support in online communities that share their interests or struggles, reducing feelings of loneliness.
2. As teenagers grow, staying connected with peers and exploring their identities becomes increasingly important.
3. Therefore, by promoting communication and belonging, social media can have a positive impact on teenagers' development.
4. In addition, social media offers a space where they can interact with others and express themselves in creative ways.
5. Social media provides several important benefits for teenagers, especially in terms of social connection and self-expression.
6. For example, teens use apps like Instagram and TikTok to share thoughts, photos, and videos, which helps them feel seen and heard.

Learners share what helped them sequence the sentences e.g. connectives and transition signals.

Think Pair Share

- Students are provided with two – three current events headlines on the same topic and asked to identify how they are similar and how they are different.
 - Think: Students reflect individually (2–3 minutes)
 - Pair: Discuss their responses with a partner (3-4 minutes)
 - Share: A few pairs share ideas with the class (4-5 minutes)
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Who am I?

N.B. Leader/teachers should choose celebrities that their students can identify. E.g. Film, sport or a mix

- Students will be given five sentences, about five different celebrities, each with a missing word and clues around it. Students need to guess the missing word, guess the celebrity, and justify why.
 - This activity can be altered to fit any context. Thus, a teacher could choose other topics such as insects, animals, countries.
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Text Sequencing

- In pairs, learners put the four paragraphs of a discussion text, such as the example below, in the correct order – introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion.
- Discussion Text Model: Does Social Media Help or Harm Teen Mental Health?

In conclusion, social media offers both advantages and disadvantages for teenagers. What truly matters is how it is used. By being mindful of its effects, setting healthy limits, and supporting one another, young people can enjoy the benefits of social media while protecting their mental well-being.

There are certainly some positive aspects. Social media can help teenagers stay connected with friends, especially when they are feeling isolated or do not see others in person very often. It also provides opportunities for self-expression through photos, videos, and writing. For those who feel excluded in everyday life, online communities can offer a sense of belonging. Additionally, social media can expose young people to new ideas, hobbies, and causes they care about, which can be both empowering and educational.

These days, it is rare to find a teenager who is not using some form of social media—whether it is Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, or another platform. Social media has become a major part of how young people stay in touch, share their lives, and keep up with what is happening around them. However, as its use continues to grow, many are beginning to ask an important question: is social media doing more harm than good to teenagers' mental health?

On the other hand, social media can also have a negative impact on mental health. Constant exposure to carefully edited images and idealised lifestyles can make some teenagers feel inadequate or left out. The pressure to gain likes, followers, and approval from others can lead to low self-esteem and anxiety. Cyberbullying is another serious issue, as harmful comments and exclusion online can be extremely upsetting. Furthermore, spending too much time on social media—particularly late at night—can affect sleep, increase stress, and reduce focus during the day.

- Discuss how the topic sentences and transitional words or phrases helped them to sequence the text.
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Identifying formal and informal writing contexts

- Explain the differences between formal and informal writing conventions. The following [Formal vs Informal Writing: What's the Difference and When to Use Them](#) provides an explanation. (This activity may take longer if you show the clip to students).
- Consider each of the following contexts and number them from 1 (least formal) to 10 (most formal).
- Discuss your choices in pairs or small groups.
- Write a brief justification for your top 2 (least formal) and bottom 2 (most formal) choices, if there is time.
 - Thank you email to a coach after a school sports event
 - Email to a teacher asking for an extension on an assignment
 - Application letter for a leadership role at school
 - Cover letter for a part-time job application
 - Text message to a friend about weekend plans
 - Email to a sports coordinator asking to join a team
 - Email to whānau members about holiday plans
 - Letter to the principal providing feedback on a school event
 - Letter to the local council about a community issue of concern

*Note: In the follow-up discussion, the importance of the audience, particularly in terms of power differences in the writer-reader relationship, should be highlighted.

Headline match

- In pairs, students match headlines with three short blurbs. One should match and there should be others that are distractors.
- Discuss what helped them to decide the headline they chose.

N.B. Leader/ teachers will need to locate thematically relevant or current event headlines and create the three short blurbs from content.

Connectives cloze

The following activities support learners to increase the range of sentence structures and connectives used in their writing. Learners complete the cloze text below – with or without the connectives bank provided.

Teenagers use social media every day. This helps them stay connected. Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram, _____, are used to chat with friends, share photos and watch videos. These platforms can _____ help teenagers express their identity and creativity.

_____, not all experiences on social media are positive. Some teenagers feel pressure to look perfect or gain more likes and followers. _____ they may compare themselves with others and this can lower self-esteem.

Social media can also be distracting during school hours. _____ teenagers know they should focus on learning, they may still feel the urge to check their phones. This can lead to reduced concentration and low achievement. This is why some countries have banned the use of mobile phones during school hours. _____, social media can spread misinformation, especially when users share content without checking the facts. _____ these challenges, for most teens social media is an important part of their social life.

as a result / also / even though / however / moreover / for example / in spite of

- Each of these starter activities can be used again by changing the text provided.
- For more starter ideas see: Literacy Strategies for Reading and Writing on the following page: [NCEA Literacy and Numeracy resources for kaiako | NCEA](#) and [Curated Resource Bank | NCEA](#).