

GUIDE TO ACCOMPANY PREPARATION FOR LIFE AND WORK (PLW)

GUIDE



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This Guide considers general aspects of specific teaching design issues, not necessarily accommodated in the EDS Modules, for all learners on programmes and courses that come under the heading of ‘preparation for life and work’ (PLW).

Some learners on PLW programmes have recognised and particular learning needs, these are considered in another Guide. Many may have poor digital literacy generally, others may not have mastered the management of their online identity or have poor understanding of the way the world of work uses technology. The FE sector helps prepare all learners for both life and work experiences but this Guide focusses on those who need extra help to find the confidence and insight through practice, as particular features in their preparation. PLW programmes cover a range of subject areas from employability skills to independent travel; from making informed career choices to managing own learning and development. In each case, the distinguishing feature of PLW programmes is delivering the underlying preparation goals through the lens of the course taken.



The Guide deals with issues that arise where teaching options suggested in the EDS modules in delivering the standards may be problematic for PLW learners. Because of the general nature of PLW needs, the solutions are equally broad but relevant to the group. The Guide sets out to both identify those areas where this might occur and possible ways around it, by utilising technology in better ways.



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Teaching the Standards in PLW

PLW learners are working to improve their chances of living as independently as possible with and through the affordances of technology.

They want to demonstrate their capacity to show their accomplishments and activities that flow from independent living. Older learners may also be motivated by wanting to improve their financial security or to support their family. Some learners want to keep pace with the abilities of their children. Those who volunteer may want to improve their digital skills to be more effective volunteers. It can also be a way of accessing employment. It follows that these learners are likely to start from a position of low personal confidence in achieving this, uncertainty over upcoming life choices, and underdeveloped capacity, and/or opportunity to sustain employability.





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Using devices and handling information

The Standards look for users to understand the nature, size, speed, and use of devices as a means of managing an online presence, and how they find, evaluate and synchronise content, both created and found. The Standards include an expectation of keeping up to date with the possibilities of emerging technologies.

The Key point

Learners need to gain good organisation skills and awareness of what is needed or required in online dealings and how to match that to the capacity of their devices, accounts and actions.

What are the challenges, and approaches to address them?

The Standards under this heading require users to have a functional use of technology and to manage their particular devices and activities to meet that.

Problems may occur through not having confidence in doing this and either a lack of knowledge or an over-reliance on what can be the poor influence of others. Lack of access to personal devices may limit learners' practice and therefore familiarity. Consequently, learners need help with the language of components. Not having this knowledge leads to learners having less control over the management of their devices. The result can be the degree to which devices and settings controls the learner.



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Useful steps to consider

It includes knowing when application updates are available and making sure devices are running efficiently. Knowing how to use automatic checks for updates and setting up a regular virus checker on a device will help keep it working well and alert the learner of the need to take action.

De-cluttering devices

Keeping applications on devices limited to those that are really wanted will help prevent compatibility and slow running problems. Settings on devices may be best used to maximum effect and then turned off as skills and confidence develops. The use of filters and 'safe' setting on browsers can help with identifying or avoiding unhelpful content. Learners can be encouraged to use cleaning and checking software that provides regular sweeps and checks to find and remove harmful code and viruses.

Reporting

Using screen time reporting software will provide reports to users on what they are doing. Every device on a computer can be used to screen, check, monitor and report activity back to the owner to act as a reminder of activity and allow any action to protect content and the user from harm.

Ordered filing arrangements that works for the owner

All learners need to find out how to store and retrieve important

content, not least to avoid losing things that are important, precious or vital in maintaining independence. Asking a mentor or friend to create an online filing system can help learners with familiar and basic language to find and file their content. It starts with listing all the important areas, such as house bills, classwork, precious pictures, home details, and so on. Flat rather than tall file structures may be more visual and therefore helpful in finding content.

Portfolios of work

PLW learners may find using a portfolio approach to keeping content they wish to share, such as OneNote or Mahara. Picture-based portfolios allow learners to use pictures to tell their story and show what they have done. Arts-based courses may find this approach particularly helpful. Friends, and buddies can see what is being shared and help learners find insights about what accomplishments are good to share.

Dealing with faults starts, as it does for all users, with a clear understanding of the component parts, so that a vocabulary of components and a language of procedures can be used to accurately describe a fault. Being able to write the problem into a YouTube search or describe it over the phone to a technician is halfway to solving it. Use Access YouTube <https://www.accessyoutube.org.uk> as a way of searching for help.



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Creating and editing

The Standards expect learners to have a knowledge of the types of applications used to create different forms of content and have the skills to manipulate them for personal use and use by others whom they are shared. It includes manipulation of data, creation of charts, and types of presentation that can be used separately or as part of larger documents. Editing includes making improvements that may come from the suggestions and contributions of others in a group effort.

> The Key point

Learners can participate productively in collaborating with others, adding to their own learning and those they mix with online.





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What are the challenges, and approaches to address them?

Users are expected to have a good understanding of how to create, edit and use created and 'found' content for personal use, and that the sharing of it with others can be to mutual advantage. It requires the development of general study skills but with the added skills needed to use the internet to good effect. Learners are expected to be able to manipulate data in spreadsheets allowing the creation of charts and also to interpret them as well as use them as evidence in support of arguments.

For some learners who are isolated socially or geographically, talking to others online who share interests, hobbies or have other aspects of their lives in common, can use technology as a means to start the process of socialisation through virtual communities.

When working with numbers, YouTube videos can provide more informal and conversational ways of showing how to build spreadsheets that may appeal more to learners than the more formal ones offered by Apple and Microsoft. Wikiprojects at <https://www.wikihow.com/wikiHowTo?search=spreadsheets> and 'howtogeek' sites offer two further routes

(<https://www.howtogeek.com/search/?q=spreadsheets>) to informal ways of learning. Teachers can find and share chosen examples.

Ask the learners to choose their own data or select industry or vocation specific data.

Not all content needs be in writing and an audio or video file may be a better method, depending on the content itself and its future use.

Text to speech (or speech to text) can be used for written working. Using online dictionaries or a thesaurus provides immediate word definitions and alternatives when writing. The spell checker also acts as a spelling learner. Learners can also create content by being led in a recorded conversation, responding to questions or prompts.

Photographs taken by a friend, mentor, or buddy that shows a learner completing a task, creating an object, fixing a device, engaging in a social activity, are all methods of creating content.



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Communicating

The Standards on communication require the ability to create and maintain an address book, using groups to create and manage different audiences, and awareness of the importance of the form and function of messages and communications to different audiences (family, friends, colleagues, classmates, etc).

> The Key point

Learners have the confidence in their abilities to use the right method of communication for different purposes, using the right style of communication depending on the group concerned in order to form safe, productive and enjoyable friendships, working relationships and academic discourse.

What are the challenges, and approaches to address them?

In order to work towards independence, learners may find it useful to have a mentor or digital buddy to help inspire confidence; someone to practice messaging or talking to online. It may include some supervision arrangements over the contacts made and maintained, where the learner is not confident of being able to accurately judge the relevance and trustworthiness of contacts found and made. As with any experiential learning, good socialisation comes with practice and learning by insight, listening and responding to replies. Using a digital buddy (a trusted friend or classmate) as well as, or instead of, a mentor can help identify contacts that are helpful.

Some learners may wish to avoid appearing onscreen. The use of an avatar (such as tellagami.com) or making a video call with the video switched off and showing a photograph only is good.

Hold regular online meetings, bringing all learners into a group online practice and enjoy making contributions to conversations using Google Hangouts (<https://hangouts.google.com>) or Skype (<https://www.skype.com/en/>) or use a local virtual meeting application.



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Transacting

The Standards on transacting cover two skills. The first relates to users being comfortable with the process of shopping, negotiating, comparing and making decisions and payments, as would be done on the high street, except adapting the whole process to doing all these things virtually. Teaching this takes that experience and the lessons learned from the real to the virtual world and awareness of the aspects to be wary of and to make the most of.

The second set of standards relate to maintaining financial security while shopping by ordering and taking delivery. The problems of financial security may be heightened online as it is arguably not as acute a problem on the high street. A range of difficulties around online fraud are problematic.

The Key point

The key point likely to be transferring the skills of high street shopping (searching, comparing, negotiating and trading skills) to an online environment with the added responsibilities that come from the need for ensuring financial security and then making decisions about budgeting, spending and affordance. Issues of confidence are likely in conducting online dealings and weaknesses in functional maths may increase the challenge.

What are the challenges, and approaches to address them?

Again, the broad reach of these standards and the range of learners undertaking PLW courses makes finding particular challenges hard, as each learner will come to the standards with their own circumstances. Online transactions are now so common, not being able to participate can be seen to reduce life choices. It is equally true of the process of online banking itself.

Build confidence by using class activities on buying to practice some functional maths in pricing, comparing costs, budgeting and calculating discount percentages, or the merits of buying goods in bulk that generate savings.

Activities can include completing a government petition and exploring online shopping sites as a means of familiarising with online shopping.



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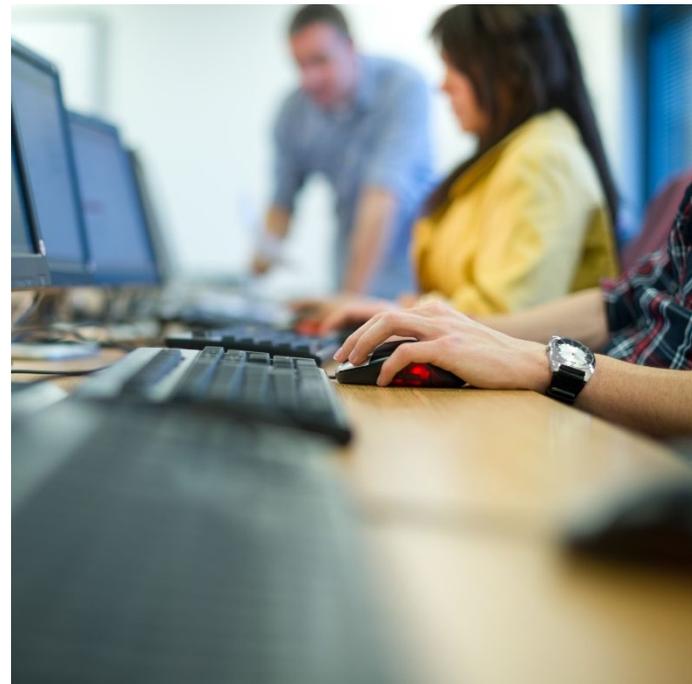
Being safe and responsible online

The Standards in the last area relate to the personal characteristics of a person who uses the web and Cloud to support life and work activities in a manner that is helpful and productive to all those they work with (including their own) as well as protecting safety and the safety of others. Mutuality and mindfulness are important aspects of this group of standards and an awareness of legal responsibilities and remedies that accompany them.

This aspect of the Standards is true to all learners regardless of their circumstances.

> The Key point

The Key point is to establish ownership amongst users of online communities and social media of the mutual responsibility to behave correctly and respectfully in everything that is done online and know at what point legal requirements and remedies exist. This responsibility is no different to this group as to any other.





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What are the challenges, and approaches to address them?

The ability to work successfully and contribute meaningfully to various groups and communities is a critical skill for having a successful online presence. Not only is the avoidance of harm necessary, but there is recognised good practice that positively contributes to the quality of conversation and sharing of ideas. Also, separating out the purposes, groups, styles, formats and applications, depending upon the purpose and group involved, is an important task. As with other achievements in PLW, learning comes from experience and insight best.

It includes a proactive responsibility to behave well and take care in protecting others from inadvertent harm in their own dealings. It is the mutuality – or online culture – that needs to be understood and followed.

Problems of harm caused by physical activity, such as prolonged spells in fixed positions in front of a screen, need to be emphasised along with potential psychological harm that can follow from poor choices of online groups, friends and associations.

Attention to a screen is often achieved by lack of attention to the surrounding environment, including posture and strain. Show examples of poor practice and ask learners to discuss the issues that cause harm. Draw on advice from The Health and Safety

Executive on physical and psychological health issues. For a detailed exploration of the harmful effects, refer to the Essential Digital Skills Module on Wellbeing.

The actions to take here are no different to other groups of learners, as these are issues that affect all learners to some degree and relates to personal circumstances.

However, as with all groups, care and attention in how to deal with the subject will require sensitivity to undisclosed issues and experiences of learners.





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This group of learners is broad so there are unlikely to be universal solutions. However, providing insight using real examples from the world of work, for example, is likely to be helpful on two grounds:

1. It provides authentic examples and approaches to be followed
2. Learning comes from individual insight rather than instruction, so learners are able to compare their own practice to that of others
3. Using role models as mentors, guides, critical friends, supervisors or digital buddies (change the title to reflect the type of relationship) is a useful way of having support developing practice and promoting confidence.

All this advice is undertaken through the lens of the course being completed. Dependent on what that is, the advice will be coloured or changed to reflect the subject and other circumstances of the learning.

Whilst the subject matter is taught, the PLW aspects are more likely 'caught' or acquired, rather than 'taught' with a strong emphasis on adopting the culture of good online behaviour seen in the best examples.



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Tellagami is an example of an app that supports the use of an avatar to animate a learner or teacher voice.	https://tellagami.com
WIKIHOW guides provide insight and less formal instructional approaches.	https://www.wikihow.com/wikiHowTo?search=spreadsheets
Howtogeek is an alternative informal method of delivering instruction.	https://www.howtogeek.com/search/?q=spreadsheets
OneNote is good example of an online portfolio.	https://www.onenote.com/signin?wdorigin=ondc
Mahara is an online portfolio that accommodates pages as posters particularly well.	https://mahara.org
Google education offers another alternative portfolio.	https://edu.google.com/products/gsuite-for-education/?modal_active=none

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