

National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week TOOLKIT



- SEPTEMBER 18–24, 2022 –

About This Toolkit

The media provides an important channel for getting the message out about the impact of low literacy rates among adults in the U.S. There are several media strategies to help your organization or community partnerships spread the word about events, reach potential supporters, and build relationships. ProLiteracy provides this media toolkit to help you promote your program and adult literacy prior to and during National Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Week and International Literacy Day.

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About Adult Education and Family Literacy Week

Every year, the National Coalition for Literacy (on behalf of the adult literacy and basic education field) requests that Congress recognize one week as National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. This year, that week is September 18–24, 2022.

The goal of National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week is to work side-by-side in every state, territory, and district to heighten public awareness, strengthen alliances, leverage resources, and increase the number of people who understand the vital role adult education and family literacy plays in our nation's well-being.

About International Literacy Day

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) founded International Literacy Day.

• The first International Literacy Day was observed on September 8, 1967, and it continues to be celebrated on September 8 every year.

International Literacy Day focuses attention on the need to promote worldwide literacy.

• UNESCO estimates that at least 773 million youth and adults still cannot read and write and 250 million children are failing to acquire basic literacy skills. This results in an exclusion of low-literate and low-skilled youth and adults from full participation in their communities and societies.



U.S. Adult Literacy Facts

U.S. Facts



More than 43 million adults in the United States cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third-grade level.¹

Member Services

50% 50 pr w e>

50% of ProLiteracy member programs put students on a waiting list due to demand exceeding program capacity.²



Less than 10% of adults in need are receiving services.²

The Cost of Low Literacy



Bringing all adults to the equivalent of a sixth-grade reading level would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion in annual income for the country.³

\$ 106-238 Billion

It is estimated between \$106-\$238 billion in health care costs a year are linked to low adult literacy skills. 4

English Language Learners



One-in-Five

The U.S. has the world's largest immigrant population, holding one-in-five of the world's immigrants.⁶



Among immigrants only half (53%) are proficient English speakers.⁷

3X The Earnings

Workers who have less education than a high school diploma have the lowest median weekly earnings (\$592), three times less than the highest level of education.⁵

Incarceration



75% of state incarcerated individuals did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.¹⁰



Incarcerated individuals who participate in correctional education programs are **43% less likely to recidivate** than inmates who do not."



By 2065, immigrants and their

103 MILLION

descendants are projected to increase the U.S. population by 103 million people.⁸

Family Literacy

A mother's reading

skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.⁹



U.S. Adult Literacy Facts

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EVERY ADULT HAS A RIGHT TO LITERACY. 1072

International Adult Literacy Facts



The Global State of Literacy

Despite the steady rise in literacy rates over the past 50 years, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS) data shows that there are still **773 million illiterate adults around the world, most of whom are women**.¹

Southern Asia is home to almost half of the global low literacy population (49%). In addition, 27% of all adults with low literacy skills live in **sub-Saharan Africa**, 10% in **Eastern and South-Eastern Asia**, 9% in **Northern Africa** and **Western Asia**, and about 4% in **Latin America** and the **Caribbean**.²



Women in Literacy



More than half of all poor rural women in developing countries lack basic literacy skills.³

Women comprise, on average, 43% of the agricultural labor force in developing countries and are key for food security and nutrition.⁴



Girls who complete

primary education

are less likely to

mothers. Nearly

deaths could be

education.5

avoided if all girls

completed primary

200.000 maternal

become teen

The Digital Divide



Nearly 87% of people had access to the internet in developed countries in 2019, compared with **47% in developing countries**.⁶

Gender disparities in the digital divide disproportionately affect women and girls. According to a 2018 report by the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, **327 million fewer women than men worldwide have a smartphone and can access the mobile internet**.⁷



Impact of the Pandemic



In 2016, about 263 million children, adolescents, and youth around the world were out of school. $^{\rm 8}$

The number of children being left behind has grown exponentially due to the impact of the 2020 pandemic. UNESCO recently released a report that estimates that as a result of COVID-19, there are now 290 million students (children and youth) out of school.⁹



EVERY ADULT HAS A RIGHT TO LITERACY. 1184

International Adult Literacy Facts

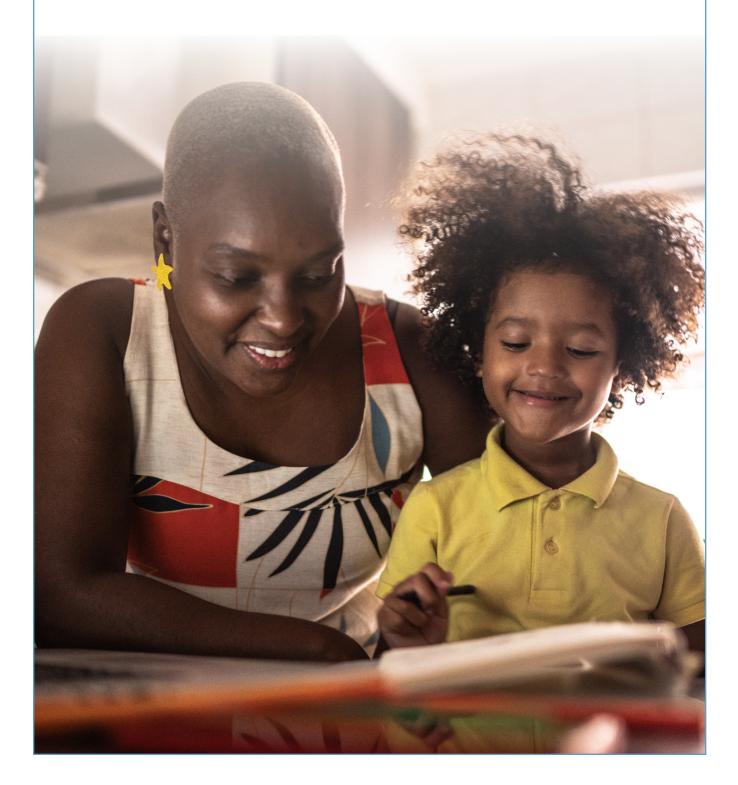
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EVERY ADULT HAS A RIGHT TO LITERACY. 184

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

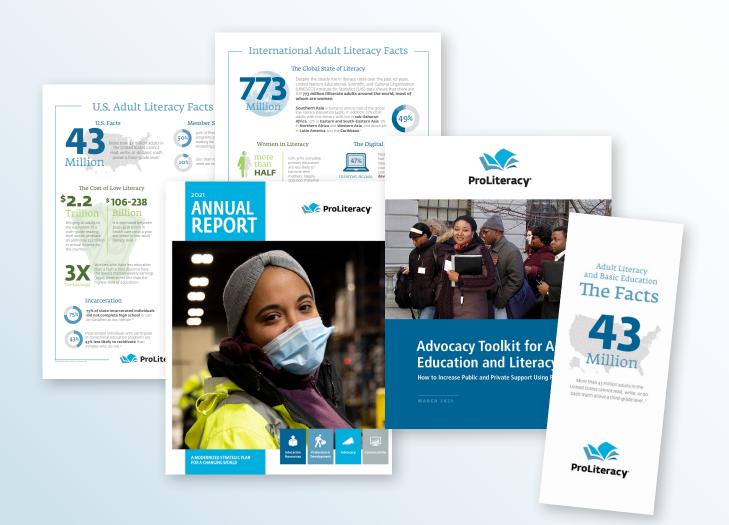


Make the Most of the Opportunity

Before you launch into any endeavor that raises awareness of your program and the need for adult education and language services, review how you currently "make your case" about literacy to your stakeholders:

- Use current resources and statistics, including those produced by ProLiteracy.
- Statistics take on more meaning when you combine them with personal stories or testimonials from learners.
- Be consistent in the use and meaning of terms and language.
- Remember your audience. Avoid jargon and provide examples that help explain to the general public what you mean by "low literacy."
- Keep informed about federal policy and state trends. What is happening in Washington, D.C., and in your state capital? Commit to taking timely and persistent action over the long term.

For information featuring current facts and statistics about adult literacy, visit the "Resources and Publications" section of ProLiteracy's website.

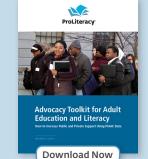


Suggested Activities

- 1. Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece focusing on AEFL Week or International Literacy Day, the importance of adult literacy, and the U.S. adult literacy standing internationally and send it to local news outlets.
- 2. Research local radio and television talk shows in your area. Contact hosts and make yourself available to discuss adult literacy during AEFL Week. Arrange to have an adult literacy student participate.
- 3. Contact your governor, mayor, or leading county official and ask him or her to sign an International Literacy Day proclamation (see *Samples* section).
- 4. Ask your local library to set up a display of books written by your adult learners. Supply the library with fact sheets.
- 5. Partner with local companies in your area to display information about AEFL Week and/or International Literacy Day and literacy rates throughout the world and in your community. For example:
 - a. Starbucks has a strong corporate responsibility program that includes support programs in countries from which it purchases coffee. Contact your local Starbucks stores and ask permission to display information about AEFL Week, International Literacy Day, and literacy rates. (See "Letter of Introduction" in Samples.)
 - b. Barnes & Noble also works with organizations in the communities where they have stores. Ask to speak to the individual at the store (or other bookstores in your community) responsible for community relations and discuss ways you can work together to use International Literacy Day and AEFL Week to promote the issue of adult literacy.
 - c. Visit your local Dollar General store and see if they would be willing to display information (posters, fact sheets) about adult literacy. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation has been a supporter of literacy initiatives since 1993.
- 6. Encourage students in your adult literacy, English language learning, and HSE/GED programs to write letters to your community representatives and to Congress about the importance of adult literacy and the need to support adult education. Use ProLiteracy's advocacy web pages to find contact information for elected officials.
- 7. Encourage students to contact public officials to discuss the importance of literacy. Be sure to supply them with talking points and information about your organization.
- 8. Use social media to raise awareness about adult literacy. See our website (https://www.proliteracy.org/Adult-Literacy-Facts) for suggested messaging.

Additional Activities that Include Elected Officials

- 1. Initiate a local, regional, or statewide virtual meeting to develop an action plan mapping out where adult education and literacy will be in your state by next year, in five years, and in 10 years.
- 2. Educate and inform elected officials at all levels about literacy efforts. This includes:
 - Governors. Research your governor's position on literacy and adult education. Was either mentioned in his or her state-of-the-state address?
 - Candidates running for federal, state, and local office. In particular, note the states where competitive Senate and gubernatorial races are occurring. Work with all candidates and parties to help them incorporate the (nonpartisan) literacy concepts in their official positions on education.
 - State legislators
 - County executives/supervisors
 - Mayors and local councilors



Advocacy Toolkit for Adult Education and Literacy

The Advocacy Toolkit from ProLiteracy describes how adult education and literacy (AEL) programs can use the latest skills data, program activity and success, and student impact stories to advocate with stakeholders at state and local levels.

- 3. Identify and contact local and state people and groups who sponsor candidate forums and get your question about where candidates stand on adult literacy on the forum agenda. Often, newspapers, radio and television stations, and League of Women Voters groups sponsor candidate forums. Be prepared to educate them about the purpose of your organization.
- 4. Work with state and national political parties to help them incorporate adult education and literacy concepts into the education portion of the party's official platform (official stand on all the issues). Find out each party's respective schedules and process for rewriting their platform. National party platforms are rewritten every few years based on input from states.
- 5. Make new friends. Many groups have published social or civic agendas (social priorities, positions, or platforms that explain their stands on issues). Work with as many groups as possible, including but not limited to: League of Women Voters, labor unions (especially teacher's unions), Urban League,

special language-related or culturally focused groups, health councils, faith-based groups, youth groups, and civic organizations. Make a special effort to connect with regional or state groups devoted to education. Work to get your message about adult education and literacy included in their official published position on the issues.

6. Ask your governor and mayor to work to get literacy on the agenda of National Governor's Association and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

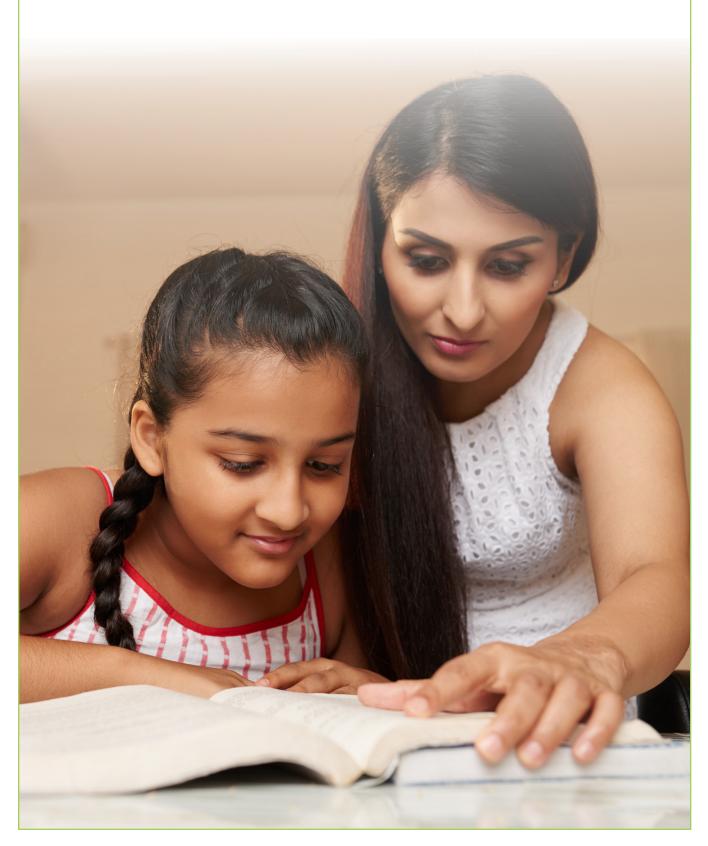


Additional Activities for Schools and Communities

- Organize a special virtual event or webinar, and invite key people from government, business, education, and the media to attend and participate. Ask an adult learner involved in a literacy program to give a testimonial. Rather than holding a formal symposium, consider asking students for creative suggestions for events.
- 2. Establish a one-day hotline parents and community members can call if they have questions about reading education, learning disabilities, literacy programs, and resources. Staff the hotline with reading professionals and volunteers from local literacy organizations.
- 3. Have older students make books of their own that can be shared with younger students at their schools.
- 4. Form links with a school or educational group in another country and use this contact as a way to generate interest in your school's or group's activities, while also helping promote literacy in other regions of the world. Letter-writing campaigns, book collections, and other activities can generate interest among the media and the public.
- 5. Create a partnership with a television or radio station, magazine, or newspaper. Ask to join forces on a specific project; don't just ask for coverage of one event. Remember that media outlets have an interest in promoting literacy, too.
- 6. Approach a manufacturer in your region about helping your organization heighten awareness about a reading or literacy topic. A regional supermarket chain, for instance, might agree to print a literacy message on its shopping bags. A local dairy might agree to carry a series of tips for parents on its packaging.
- 7. Approach a local bookstore about donating books for disadvantaged children or to use as prizes for reading awards at schools.
- 8. Initiate an annual contest or award. Be creative—hold a writing contest for students or for senior citizens, a recognition award for the learning disabled student who has made the most progress, a contest for the best home video about reading, an award for the best literacy tutor in your state/ province, etc.



SAMPLES



Event Cover Letter

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September 2022

Dear "5K" participant:

We are thrilled that you are able to join us for our inaugural "Literacy 5K" event. This event will be a great way to raise awareness for literacy, have fun, and get fit in the process!

Please remember:

Where: Clinton Square, downtown Syracuse When: September XXXXXX 11:30 a.m. start What: A 5K run through Onondaga Lake Park

Enclosed you will find a copy of the day's program and a ProLiteracy brochure for your review. Please do not hesitate to call with any questions you may have.

I look forward to seeing you on September XXXXXXX!

Sincerely,

<Name> <Title>

Need help finding your local literacy statistics?



<u>Click here</u> or scan QR code.

Letter of Introduction

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September Starbucks Address City, State, Zip

Dear XXXXXXX:

Please join (organization's name) in celebrating International Literacy Day, September 8, and National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, September 18-24, 2022.

AEFL Week and International Literacy Day help bring our attention to the nearly 800 million adults worldwide who cannot read, write, or perform simple math calculations. This is a time when individuals, organizations, and countries throughout the world renew their efforts to promote literacy and demonstrate their commitment to providing education for all.

Here in (community or state), XXXXX adults lack the literacy skills they need to get better jobs, help their children with homework, or participate fully in our community. (Program name) is a (volunteer/ community-based/adult education) organization that provides free basic literacy, English as another language, and HSE/GED instruction to adults and out-of-school youth throughout (community). We recruit and train volunteers to work with adults one-to-one or in small groups to help them reach their educational goals.

We know that Starbucks does a great deal for its coffee communities around the world; AEFL Week and International Literacy Day are occasions to show the same support for the adults in our community who are working to improve their literacy skills. We would welcome the opportunity to work together with you to recognize and celebrate AEFL Week and International Literacy Day in (community).

I will contact you soon to discuss how we can work together to raise awareness about the importance of literacy skills in the U.S. and throughout the world.

Sincerely,

<Name> <Title>

Proclamation

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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY 2022 BY THE (elected official) OF THE (city/county/state) OF (name) A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the need for a highly literate citizenry increases as (name of city/county/state) moves toward an increasingly technological future; and

WHEREAS, more than (figure)% of the (name of city/county/state) adults experience literacy issues that impact severely on their lives and families, their ability to work productively, and their full participation as citizens and residents of our (city/count/state); and

WHEREAS, (insert paragraph about adult literacy program statistics; e.g. the following: More than 80,000 students enrolled in Michigan adult education programs between 2006-2007, including 9,839 who received GED certificates and more than 10,000 who learned English as a second language.); and

WHEREAS, the (names of literacy programs requesting the proclamation) work with (names of partners, e.g., local news media, local businesses, etc.) in inviting (e.g., the community, residents of, newspapers, television, and radio stations) to join in highlighting the economic and societal importance of literacy;

NOW, THEREFORE, I (elected official name and title), do hereby proclaim September 8, 2022, as INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY in (name of city/county/state), and urge my fellow citizens to learn more about the importance of literacy and to become involved with literacy in their communities.

News Release Template

For a Word file of this template, please email marketing@proliteracy.org, **click here**, or scan QR code.



Instructions:

On your organization's letterhead, copy this news release format and fill in your local program information according to the instructions for each paragraph (and closing) below. Check with your local newspapers and television and radio stations to see how they prefer news releases to be submitted (email/mail/fax). Call your contact person at each media outlet to let them know to expect it.

News Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Contact Person Title Telephone Number Cell Phone number Email Address

HEADLINE

(This is one of the most important components of the news release as this needs to grab the attention of the editor. It should be in bold type and a size that is larger than the body text. Preferred fonts—Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana.)

The Subtitle Goes Here (Use the subtitle for additional information. Use the same font as the headline, but a smaller size and upper and lower cases.)

<City>, <State>, <Date>—Your first paragraph of the release should be written in a clear and concise manner. It needs to contain information that will entice the reader. Your story must be newsworthy and factual.

Your text should include pertinent information about your event. Be sure to include the date, location of the event, and any other pertinent information. Answer the questions "who?" "what?" "when?" "where?" "why?" and "how?"

You should include a quote from someone who is a credible source, include his or her title or position with the company, and explain why he or she is considered a credible source.

ABOUT <Organization>—Include a brief description of your program along with the products and services it provides.

#

(At the end of the release, use three hashmarks to indicate that the release is ended. The usual method of transmitting your release is via email.)

News Release Sample

For a Word file of this template, please email marketing@proliteracy.org, **click here**, or scan QR code.





For Immediate Release

For more information please contact: Contact Name for Organization Phone Number Email

Local Program Works to Address Low Literacy Among Adults

[ORGANIZATION] CELEBRATES ANNUAL ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY WEEK

[September 9, 2022, City, State Abbr.] – September 18–24, 2022 marks the annual Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, hosted by the National Coalition for Literacy. This week exists to remind us all that reading, writing, and basic math remain an elusive target for millions of adults nationwide, including [Community Rate] in our community. [Organization Name] in [location] is part of a national network of organizations that work to change lives and communities through the power of adult literacy.

According to ProLiteracy, the leading membership organization advancing the cause of adult literacy and basic education in the nation, more than 43 million adults in the U.S. cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third-grade level. ProLiteracy provides more than 1,000 adult education and literacy programs, including [Organization Name], with tools to educate adult learners and help them meet the demands of today's workforce.

"Here at home, in our own community, we know that [fill in with local stats on literacy, high school completion, GED test takers, etc.]," said [Name, title, Organization Name]. "Literacy helps families to be healthier and safer and provides opportunities for adults to support themselves through work, contributing ultimately to the economic growth of our region and our country."

"Low literacy costs the nation more than \$2.2 trillion each year in lost productivity, as well as an additional \$100-\$200 billion in health and safety issues," said Mark Vineis, president and CEO of ProLiteracy. "Every dollar spent on adult literacy and education provides returns to the country through higher employment, added tax revenues, reduced welfare payments, and less crime."

In recognition of Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, [<mark>Organization Name</mark>] is [<mark>insert activity/</mark> activities planned for day with specific locations and times].

For more information on [Organization Name]'s services, visit [Local Website] or call [Phone Number].

Tips for Writing News Releases

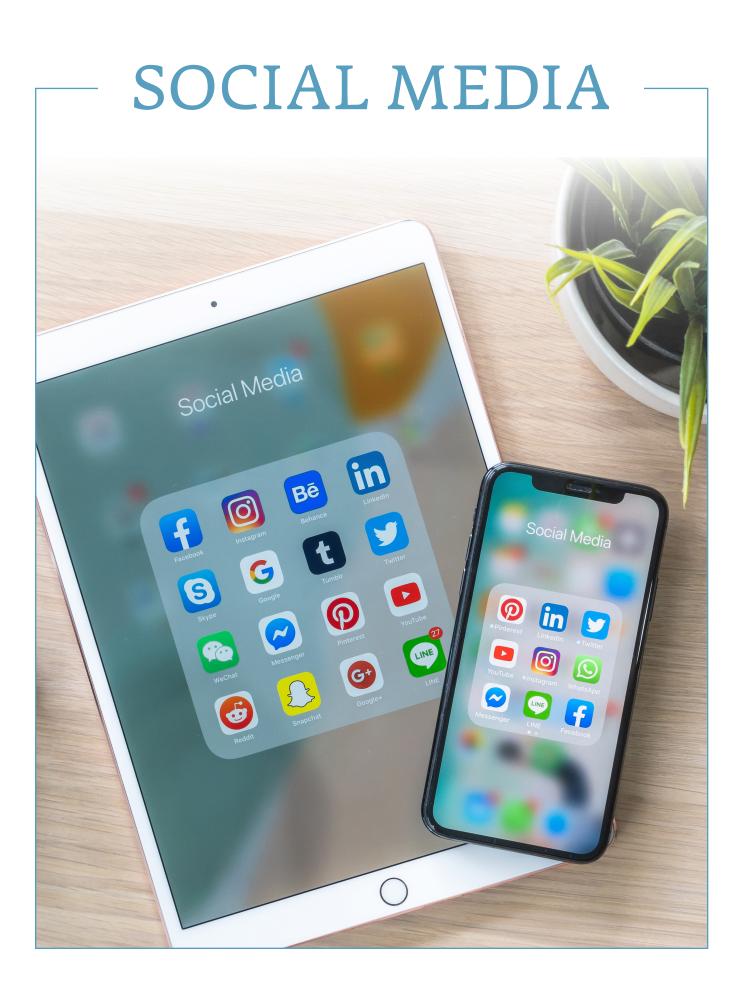
Write news releases that get noticed—publicity is priceless! Knowing how to write a release in a format that will be read by reporters can be more effective than advertising and is inexpensive. News releases must be well written, newsworthy, and presented in a factual manner. Most of all, they must be credible.

Important factors in establishing credibility are:

- The news release is well written and presented properly.
- Information is presented in a factual manner. The media does not accept sales pitches or embellishment. Don't write an advertisement.
- The information is relevant to the recipient.

Writing the content:

- Keep it short. News stories are made up of simple, short sentences with simple words. Break up long sentences into two. The release should be between 300-500 words and no more than two pages.
- Make it newsworthy and timely. Identify the current need for the product and/or service
- Be factual. Do not embellish the facts with opinions.
- Write it from the reader's perspective. The information must be relevant to the recipient.
- Write a powerful headline. What you say here determines whether the reporter will continue reading the release.
- Write a strong opening paragraph. It should contain the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of the product and/or service.
- Give a detailed explanation. This will help establish the value to readers. If you're announcing a new program, be sure to include information on all key points.
- Don't use important words more than once in a paragraph.
- Don't begin a sentence with the same word with which you just finished the previous sentence.
- Edit the story and take out any unnecessary or redundant words. Have other people proof it as well. Remove typos.
- Be careful with your facts, spelling, and grammar.
- Include photos if you can, or make them available digitally on a website.



Social Media Tools

Social media is a great way to spread your message. If you'll be using social media during Adult Education and Family Literacy Week or on International Literacy Day, here are some general guidelines to follow:

- Use hashtags to help further your reach and to connect with others. International Literacy Day's hashtag is #LiteracyDay and Adult Education and Family Literacy Week's hashtag is #AEFLWeek. You might also consider using #AdultEDU, a popular hashtag used for adult education content.
- Don't share only text-based updates. Sharing engaging photos and videos is an excellent way to increase engagement.
- Ask questions on social media and invite people to respond. Make sure to acknowledge users when they respond to you.
- Make sure your social media profiles are on-brand and the look and messages are consistent with your website and other materials.

Social Media Audiences and Best Practices

Facebook

- About 2.9 billion monthly active users
- More than 1.9 billion people use Facebook daily
- Can post a variety of media including text, links, images, videos, and even live-stream video via Facebook Live

Twitter

- Has about 330 million monthly active users
- Most users are between the ages of 18 and 49
- Tweets have a short life span but it's easy to connect with users using hashtags
- Can post short text, links, images, and videos

Instagram

- Has more than 1 billion users
- 500 million daily active users of Instagram Stories
- Most-used social network for teenagers
- Can post images and short videos
- Can include up to 30 hashtags with a post

LinkedIn

- Has about 66.8 million monthly active users
- Most users are over the age of 30
- Known as the "professional" network

When and How Often to Post

Posting times don't follow hard and fast rules and are dependent on many factors such as your audience, industry, and goals. You can use the following posting times and frequency guidelines as a starting point.

Facebook

- Thursdays and Fridays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. are best times to post.
- Post 1-2 times daily.

Twitter

- Between 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays are the best times to post. Good times are 12 p.m., 5 p.m., and 6 p.m.
- Start at 3-5 tweets daily. More is better since tweets have a short life cycle.

Instagram

- Weekdays between 6 a.m. and 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. are best times to post.
- Post 1-2 times daily.

LinkedIn

- Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday during business hours are best times to post
- Post 1-2 times daily.

Helpful Tools

These tools can help you manage your social media channels, and with publishing and scheduling content to social networks.

Buffer

buffer.com

Buffer is an app that allows you to schedule social media posts ahead of time. You can queue up content and then Buffer will automatically post them at the times you choose. Buffer offers both free and paid accounts.

Hootsuite

hootsuite.com

Hootsuite is similar to Buffer in that it allows you to schedule social media posts in advance. You can also view your social media feeds through the service. Hootsuite offers both free and paid accounts.

Pablo

pablo.buffer.com

Pablo is a service by Buffer that allows users to easily create images to use on social media. It allows you to pick the image size you need based on where you will post it, find an image, overlay text, and add a logo or other graphic.

Bitly or TinyURL

bitly.com

tinyurl.com

Bitly and TinyURL are a services that allow you to shorten links. You can use them so that long URLs don't waste precious character counts in social media posts.

Sample Messages

Use the following social media post samples as guidelines or ideas for what to post on Twitter and Facebook. You'll want to include an image or video that supports the message. For videos and images you can use, visit <u>http://tinyurl.com/aeflweek-toolkit</u>.

- National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week (9/18–9/24) raises awareness and assists adults in need of literacy services. #AEFLWeek
- We're gearing up for Adult Education and Family Literacy Week! How will you advocate for #AdultEDU during #AEFLWeek (9/18–9/24)?
- Workers with at least a HS diploma are less likely to be on gov't support, saving states & federal gov't money. #AEFLWeek
- College degree gap needs to be filled by adults currently in workforce. Not enough HS grads to meet demand. #AEFLWeek
- Adult Literacy supports jobs and the economy. #AEFLWeek https://www.proliteracy.org/ Resources/Adult-Literacy-Facts
- 43M adults need to raise their basic reading & math skills. Get the facts! #AEFLWeek
 <u>https://www.proliteracy.org/Resources/Adult-Literacy-Facts</u>
- A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success. #AEFLWeek
- There is no substitute for the parent's role as a child's 1st teacher, best coach, & most concerned advocate. #AEFLWeek
- Teach the parent; reach the child. Support adult literacy and family programs. #AEFLWeek
- Teaching parents reading strategies increases child's language and literacy outcomes. #AEFLWeek
- Preserve and invest in adult and family education. It drives economic mobility for adults and economic recovery for America. #AEFLWeek
- Health literacy programs raise adults' understanding of medical problems b4 they become critical = cost savings. #AEFLWeek
- Adult and family literacy lifts people out of poverty. #AEFLWeek
- Adult literacy benefits the economy: increased tax revenues, business productivity, decreased public assistance. #AEFLWeek

- Literacy benefits adults: Higher salaries, better job opportunities, higher savings, & improved working conditions. #AEFLWeek
- Adult workplace literacy programs help workers gain new levels of skills. #AEFLWeek
- Volunteers are key in improving adult and family literacy rates. Find a program near you! #AEFLWeek www.NLD.org
- Support adult and family literacy and improve lives in your community! Find a program near you. #AEFLWeek – www.NLD.org
- If you could only read as well as a third grader, what would it be like to apply for a job? #AEFLWeek #SupportAdultLiteracy
- If you couldn't speak English, what would you say to your child's teacher on Back-to-School Night? #AEFLWeek #SupportAdultLiteracy
- If you couldn't do basic math, what would it be like to pay your bills each month? #AEFLWeek #SupportAdultLiteracy