



In a sense, illiteracy is invisible. You cannot usually tell from looking at people whether they read poorly or well. Adults with low literacy skills also develop many ways of hiding the signs of reading, writing or arithmetic problems. Consequently, it is difficult to tell if a client has a literacy problem. However, there are some clues that might help.

Consider whether the person:

- reads extremely slowly and laboriously
- cannot summarize for you what has been read
- answers questions on forms incorrectly
- cannot write
- has serious spelling, grammar, and mechanics problems
- says he or she has trouble with reading, writing or arithmetic
- has difficulty speaking English

Uses strategies such as these to avoid literacy tasks:

- forgetting his or her glasses
- not having time to read or write something on the spot
- wanting to take the forms home
- bringing a friend
- becoming angry and leaving
- missing appointments