

Considerations when selecting instructional materials

Essential questions	Reasons why
▶ Are they going to be easy for the instructor/ students to use?	You want materials with clear directions and lots of ways that the instructor can use them.
▶ Are the topics going to be relevant to the students' lives/needs/goals?	Remember students want classes that are practical. Materials designed for children, for example, may be available, but not always appropriate for adults.
▶ Are the topics going to be interesting to students?	They should be based on what the students will be interested in. Sometimes materials are chosen for convenience or because the one doing the choosing are interested in them. Stay focused on the students.
▶ Do they have a wide variety of activities?	Students learn in lots of ways. Materials with group/pair work, open-ended questions, etc. should be used. Just having students fill in blanks and review questions in a workbook is not ideal.
▶ Are they culturally sensitive?	Avoid materials that may offend the students.
▶ Do they allow students to talk about their own experience?	This is key for really engaging the students and helping them internalize the new language, so they can use it later. Adults come with vast experience. They want to talk about it and connect it to what they are learning.
▶ Is there a mix of reading/writing/ listening/speaking?	Most students want and/or need to improve all their skills. Just focusing on grammar and vocabulary, for example, won't get them very far.
▶ Are they connected with the mission of our program? Are they aligned with the standards I selected?	This helps you to focus in on what you are looking for in your materials—or may suggest some modifications to what you will do as a program.
▶ Are they up-to-date?	Books written more than 10 years ago may be less expensive but may not be relevant to students now in terms of topics and approach.
▶ Are they visually appealing?	Visually appealing is not necessarily crucial, but students will be more eager to use materials that are engaging. Do they have colors and pictures? Are they too cluttered?
▶ Are the materials affordable? Can they be used again by students?	Adult ESOL textbooks can be pricey, but if students can use them in multiple sessions, it may be worth it. Many times, rather than having students pay for commercial products, you can find something similar that is free online. For example, instead of paying for ESOL newspapers, students could use online materials such as Breaking News English or Voice of America.