

Reading and Scribing: What you need to know

Reading and writing can be difficult for a learner who has ADHD as both these tasks need focus and concentration. I have noticed that the handwriting of these learners can be very untidy to illegible which frustrates the learner because the educator cannot always read what was written.

Concessions are given to these learners and this could include: a reader, scribe, additional time, additional breaks, a separate venue or special equipment.

What is the difference between a reader and a scribe?

Reading to a learner entails reading the written work or question paper as is with no alterations, additions or omissions. The reader may only read what the learner requests to be read and is not permitted to rephrase or explain the content of the question. As a scribe, you must write exactly what the learner has dictated to you. Some learners are assisted by either but if the learner needs both then the same person (called an amanuensis) can undertake both duties.

What happens in the exam room?

- The learner must at all times be in charge of the exam.
- As a reader and/or scribe you must only speak when spoken to but you can, when necessary, ask the learner to repeat something if you cannot keep up with the dictation
- The learner and the reader/scribe must be comfortable with each other. This puts the learner more at ease and creates a better exam environment for the learner.
- The educators need to understand the needs of the learner as this often gets overlooked. A dedicated staff member should oversee the reading and scribing as this creates continuity and less confusion for the learner/s at a particular education facility. It also enables the reader/scribe to know who to contact in the event of a crisis.
- Check the noise levels of the exam venue. A separate, quiet venue is necessary for the learner as this alleviates the chance of any distractions for that learner and also the other learners who possibly are writing the same exam.
- Make sure that the venue is clean and well ventilated, and does not get too hot or cold.
- Depending on the level of the exams, an invigilator is required to sit in during the exam period.



- The invigilator needs to take into account that the learner is easily distracted and needs to be mindful of what they are doing. A good idea is to sit outside of the learner's view.

Just a few things to note but these can make a huge difference in the attention span and focus the learner has during the exam.

Relationship between the reader/scribe and learner's parents/caregiver

Readers and scribes are paid for by the parents and for this reason it is a good idea to make sure that your child is comfortable with the reader/scribe. The parents need to act united and work as a team when dealing with issues that may arise with the educational staff and/or the facility. The learner's confidentiality is also important. The content of the test or learner's answers and personal information about the student must not be discussed. Being a reader and/or scribe should not be taken lightly as you perform an important task for the learner.

Desirable skills for a good reader/scribe:

- They must be cooperative towards the testing staff and learner
- Maintain clear communication with the learner
- Be accurate and write neatly as legibility is important
- A reader/scribe should commit and undertake to complete the certification course. It makes your job easier as you understand better what the requirements are for you to be a good support for the learner.

The WCED require certification if you are going to scribe for a grade 12 matric learner. Certificates are valid for 5 years and will need renewal after this period.

Conclusion

The role of reader/scribe can be demanding but also very rewarding if you are committed and passionate about helping learners with special concessions.