

BE YOUR OWN BOSS

TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING ELA SKILLS DURING BYOB LESSONS

The use of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills—typically the focus of ABE English Language Arts (ELA) classes—are embedded throughout the Be Your Own Boss unit, with their connections to the CCRSAE noted. These activities are opportunities for students to reinforce skills they may be learning in their ELA classes. However, math instructors who also teach ELA (or work closely with ELA teachers in their program) may want to target more explicitly specific ELA skills encountered in the lessons. Below are some “quick and easy” tips for strengthening and extending key ELA standards¹ addressed in the unit.

WAYS TO ENHANCE COLLABORATION SKILLS

Throughout the unit, students work in pairs or groups to accomplish tasks. Brief but regular discussion and reflection on the skills and strategies needed to work together effectively can enhance the long-term impact of these collaborative activities.

- As a class, identify (or adapt) a list of expected behaviors and responsibilities related to pair and group work (e.g., being prepared, taking turns, sharing ideas, being respectful, asking clarifying questions, inviting others to talk). Display the list on a wall or as a handout that students can refer to regularly.
- Before a group activity, choose one item from the list of behaviors/responsibilities to briefly but explicitly teach or review. Give examples of what the behavior does and does not look like.
- Remind students of expected behaviors and responsibilities every time they work together.
- Invite students to reflect on how pair/group work went—what is going well, challenges they are having, and strategies that they find helpful.

ELA Speaking & Listening 1:

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

WAYS TO ENHANCE LISTENING/VIEWING SKILLS

A core component of the unit is videos that are used to ground the lesson. The following ideas can support students in learning the listening/viewing strategies for lifelong learning.

- Briefly discuss notetaking as a way 1) to stay focused when the goal is to learn from a video or speaker, and 2) to help remember key messages from a video/speaker. Discuss situations in life when this might be helpful (e.g., being trained at a new job, during a lecture or video lesson, etc.).

ELA Speaking & Listening 2:

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

¹ Key ELA standards are presented in the boxes. These are the “anchor standards” mentioned in the ELA section of the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education* (Pimentel, 2013). To see all the ELA anchor standards and how they break down by student performance levels, visit <https://www.sabes.org/content/CCRS-ELA>.

- Show/remind students how to use notetaking strategies. For examples, see *Lesson 2: Hearing from the Student Business Owners* and the *Decision Notes Organizer* in Lesson 3.
 - ⇒ Be sure to model the first time a notetaking strategy is used in the class.
- With each video, cue students for what they should be listening for and how they might adjust their notetaking strategies.
- When discussing the videos, encourage students to provide evidence from the video for their claims.
- Regularly debrief the notetaking strategies students are using and how well they are working.

WAYS TO ENHANCE SPEAKING/SHARING SKILLS

The unit embeds numerous opportunities for students to informally report or more formally present their work. A few, well-placed cues can help shape students’ comfort level with different kinds of presentations now and in the future.

- Prompt students to how informal/formal each sharing is to be. Doing so will help students understand that the presentation style changes with the purpose and audience.
- Ensure that students are clear about what their sharing/reporting should cover. Write the prompts in bullet form on a whiteboard or slide or have students write them down as you go over them (explaining that in work and training settings, these won’t always be posted and we have to take responsibility for keeping track of the expectations ourselves).
- Ask students to make brief notes related to what they need to cover—before sharing. Doing so can help them feel more comfortable reporting out in the unit but also teaches them how to prepare for making focused and succinct remarks in other settings.
- Before students share, cue the class about some aspect of public speaking. For instance: “We need to project our voices when we talk to a group. Let’s focus on that when we share today.”

ELA Speaking & Listening 4:

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.

WAYS TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS

Students encounter a variety of texts across the lessons, from graphs and charts to websites to advertisements used on social media. Some general rules of thumb to keep in mind are covered below.

- Whenever text is used, support students in getting oriented to the text. Discuss with them the *type of text* it is and what they need to keep in mind when reading that kind of text. For instance:
 - ⇒ When students are looking at **webpages**, orient students to the menus and tabs (or remind them to orient themselves when they first arrive on a webpage); encourage students to predict where they might expect to find certain information; and discuss/review strategies for dealing with ads (e.g., ignore, “X” out, skip).

- ⇒ When students are looking at **tables, charts, and graphs**, show/remind them to read the axis, column, and/or row headings before diving into the analysis.
- ⇒ When students are reading/writing **checks** and completing **check registers**, show/remind them to look at the different sections and how they relate to each other.

- Regularly use language like:

“Skilled readers orient themselves to a text before they start to read. What do you notice about how this page/table/graph is set up?”

“Have you ever seen text or graphics like this before? How do you expect it to be organized?”

“What’s tricky about this (kind of) text? What do you need to pay attention to?”

- Show/remind students how to use highlighting, annotation, and notetaking skills to help them read closely and to keep track of key information.
- Encourage students to back up their understandings/claims with evidence from the text.

ELA Reading 5:

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

ELA Reading 7:

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

ELA Reading 1:

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

WAYS TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY SKILLS

Every lesson includes at least one new vocabulary word for students to learn. In order to support students in constructing meanings that they can apply in their communication efforts going forward, try the following.

- Throughout the unit, have students keep a list of new vocabulary encountered and the definitions learned. Consider using quadrant charts and/or flashcards, held together by a notebook ring.

IMPORTANT WORD	DEFINITION / SYNONYMS
EXAMPLES/ PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS	ANTONYMS

FIGURE 1: Quadrant Chart

ELA Language 6:

Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.

- Each day, briefly review vocabulary encountered in previous lessons. You can do this quickly as a large group or have partners “quiz” each other using their quadrant charts or flash cards.
- Encourage students to use the vocabulary from the unit in their discussions, journal writings, exit tickets, and the final performance task.

WAYS TO ENHANCE WRITING SKILLS

At regular points in the unit, students are invited to reflect on their learning or apply their learning through journals and exit tickets. At other times, they develop more formal texts. You can use both kinds of opportunities to strengthen students' writing skills.

- For more informal writing tasks (e.g., learning journals and exit tickets), consider drawing attention to writing skills by:
 - ⇒ Introducing or reminding students of relevant signal words (“first,” “finally,” “another”) they might incorporate into their writing.
 - ⇒ Encouraging students to elaborate by providing reasons, examples, and/or other details.
 - ⇒ Reminding students to use vocabulary words from the unit.
 - ⇒ Conducting a mini-lesson on a relevant writing skill (e.g., editing for complete sentences, varying sentence structure, subject/verb agreement) and inviting students to edit/revise their journals/exit tickets to address the target skill.
- For more involved writing activities (e.g., designing advertisements, business cards, and sharing research), draw students' attention to relevant skills and encourage the use of the full writing process: prewriting/organizing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing.
- When students use technology to design reports, advertisements, and other products, be sure to build in time for them to learn how to use the platform. Provide explicit instruction and invite students to share tips with each other.

ELA Writing 1:

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

ELA Writing 2:

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

ELA Writing 4:

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELA Writing 5:

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

ELA Writing 6:

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

WAYS TO ENHANCE RESEARCH SKILLS

Students have frequent opportunities in the unit to use the Internet or other sources to investigate questions related to running a business. The following tips can support them in building research skills transferable to other areas of their life as well.

- Encourage students to clearly state a focused question.
- Quickly brainstorm search terms with students and have them share strategies with each other.
- Teach students how to take notes and keep track of their sources for each set of notes. Build off the notetaking strategies taught with the listening/viewing activities.
- Show students how to categorize/organize information.

ELA Writing 7:

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

ELA Writing 8:

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.