

I'm not a bot

























Illiteracy is a state whereby one is unable to read and write. In its simplest form, it can be defined as lack of any or sufficient education.Sometimes people who have had very basic education also experience challenges in reading and writing.Illiteracy can also mean ignorance or the lack of knowledge in a specific subject. For example, a person may have gone to school but does not know how to operate a computer. Such an individual has no literacy in computer and is known as computer illiterate. Nearly every job advertised requires one to have computer literacy due to the digitization of most processes at the workplace.A mistake in reading or writing that is seen to be characteristic of an illiterate person is also referred to as illiteracy. For this definition, a speech or letter that has several errors can be said to be full of illiteracies.Functional literacy, on the other hand, is used to describe a situation where a person has writing and reading skills considered inadequate to perform employment duties that demand reading and writing skills that go beyond the basic level.The challenges of illiteracy cut across:GenderAgeRaceGeographical locationCulturesWhat are the causes of illiteracy?There are so many reasons why an individual can be illiterate. These are some of the causes of the inability to read or write1. Illiteracy among parents: Many illiterate parents do not put much emphasis on the importance of education. Several of those born to parents who can neither read nor write end up being illiterate. This is especially true in remote areas where many people in the older generation have not gone through formal education. The reverse is true for those who have been brought up by parents with an elaborate educational background. They realize the necessity of taking their children to school and therefore ensure that they receive a good education.2. Lack of family support: This can be the cause of illiteracy more so where a child has difficulty reading or writing because of dyslexia. In a situation where the family does not understand the child's condition, it may simply be assumed that he or she is not a bright person and maybe school is not meant for everyone. Supportive family members help a child overcome reading disability and go through formal education with minimal challenges.3. Unemployment of the educated: Some people believe that the only reason someone should go to school is so that he or she can get a good job and make a good life. Without the promise of employment, education is not a necessity to them. In a country where many of the educated are unemployed, there may not be enough motivation for the illiterate to go to school. After all, they reckon, why would you spend so much money paying for your education when there is no promise of a return on investment? In countries where those who have gone to school have good jobs and reasonable incomes, there may be sufficient motivating factors for people to get rid of illiteracy.4. Lack of awareness: In places where several members of the local population do not understand why it is important for them to go to school, the level of illiteracy may be high. Disinterest in the benefits of formal learning can also be caused by lack of awareness on the importance of going to school. The number of illiterate people in urban areas tends to be lower than that of those in rural areas. People in towns are more aware of the need to eliminate illiteracy, the challenges that arise from lack of education and the social benefits of being literate compared to those who live in the remote place.5. Social barriers: Many social barriers such as restrictions on girls' education in some societies lead to illiteracy among the affected segment of the population. Education of the girl child has been an issue in some parts of the world leading to the formation of different organizations focused on championing the education of women. Forcing children into marriage is another social issue that causes illiteracy in the community. Family or social norms where female education is not allowed also causes illiteracy. In societies where the caste system is still in force, those who fall into the wrong caste may not get the opportunity to go to school. They are condemned at birth to remain illiterate.6. Lack of affordable education facilities: Those who live in very remote areas with few or no education facilities may remain illiterate. The nearest school might be found several miles away. Instead of going through the tiresome process of walking for long distances on a daily basis just to go to school, many choose to stay at home. Lack of access to education facilities in rural areas has contributed a lot to the high number of illiterate people in these places.7. Poverty: Poor parents with low incomes find it difficult to pay school fees. They are forced to choose between providing basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing and taking their children to school. In countries where basic education is not free, the number of children who do not go to school tends to be higher compared to places where basic education is free and mandatory.What are the consequences and effects of illiteracy?What are the consequences of illiteracy? How does illiteracy affect the life of an individual and the society? These are some of the effects and consequences of the inability to read and write.1. Hinders economic and social progress: Illiteracy greatly inhibits the economic and social progress of an individual as well as that of the country. Education gives one the power to seek opportunities and pursue them. People who have gone to school or are well educated have the expertise and intelligence to make good investment decisions and drive the growth agenda of a nation. Illiteracy, therefore, hinders the development of the country.2. Poverty: Illiteracy leads to poverty. Education equips one with the right skills and expertise for gainful employment. A person who has not gone to school and is unable to read and write may experience a hard time in finding a job especially in a world where the corporate environment is increasingly in demand for employees who are well-trained and can cope with an industry driven by technology. Without a reasonable source of income, taking care of the dependent family members may prove to be difficult.3. Child marriage: This is also a problem that may come about due to illiteracy. Parents may fail to recognize the benefits of taking children to school to learn how to read and write. Instead, the girl child may be forced into early marriage. It may also be a means of raising money through dowry payments to support the rest of the family members. In a way, the girl child is viewed as a property in some cultures. They can be traded to help the family make ends meet. The practice is especially rampant in areas where it has not gone to school.4. Difficult life: An illiterate person can lead a difficult life in so many ways. The inability to find gainful employment can subject one to a life of poverty with poor living conditions. There can be a lack of basic necessities such as good shelter, clothing and decent meals. Illiteracy can also make one a societal misfit more so in areas where many people have gone to school and have the ability to read and write. Such a person can be the center of ridicule and suffer from stress and low self-esteem. Without the ability to read and write, it can be hard to read instructions which in some cases may have dire consequences. They say ignorance is bliss but that is not true when a persons life is on the line.5. Social crimes: Through education, a person can cultivate some civic sense and develop behavior patterns that are socially acceptable. Illiterate people may engage in unlawful acts in the society due to lack of employment or simply as a result of being uncultured. In countries where the number of those who have not gone to school is high, social crime levels also tend to be high.6. Underpayment, Underemployment, Unemployment: We live in a world where the job market favors people who are properly educated with useful skills to drive company growth. Many illiterate people are thus underpaid, underemployed or unemployed. They are unable to earn income and in many cases perform a lot of duties with little pay.7. Intergenerational illiteracy: The issue of illiteracy can cut across generations within a family. It can become cyclic in such a way that even the third or fourth generation family members suffer the same fate. Intergenerational illiteracy mainly comes about because education is given little to no value in the family setup. The children that come along will thus be illiterate as the norm and not making any effort to learn how to read and write.What are the possible solutions to stop or control illiteracy?1. Free education: The provision of free education in schools, colleges, and universities by the government can play a major role in reducing the level of illiteracy in a country by getting more people to school. Since some people fail to attend school due to lack of money to pay for the fees, offering free education can increase the number of people attending school and subsequently reduce illiteracy levels within a society.2. Awareness: Creating awareness about the importance of education can help people understand why they need to go to school. Non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and other concerned parties should put in place deliberate measures to create awareness in the society and reduce the number of people who are unable to read and write.3. Grants: Offering grants, subsidies, and scholarships can reduce the financial burden that parents and students bear in paying for education. It would make it possible for students to learn without interrupting their education due to lack of school fees. Parents would also channel the money that would have been used to pay for school fees towards other income generating projects. The cost of financing education can prove to be too high especially for those who live in poverty.4. Late night classes: Working people can opt for late night classes. In this way, they can learn even as they earn income through their daytime jobs.5. Free books: The government and different foundations can offer free books in schools to encourage students to develop a reading culture. Offering free books can also reduce the financial burden placed on parents in the provision of textbooks.6. Digitization: Since we live in the age of technology and information, creating digital platforms for reading and learning can help reduce illiteracy in the society. It can also help take care of the challenge of shortage of education facilities. Digital libraries can provide a good platform for those who live far away from urban centers to expand their knowledge base and become literate.7. Lower educational cost: Even though education has its rewards, it is very costly to many people. Many graduates usually leave school with huge debts in the form of student loans. It makes saving and investing difficult. The cost of university education has been a key political and social issue in many nations. By lowering the cost of education, the government can make it easier for people to study up to the highest level possible.ConclusionThe value of education cannot be underestimated. Many people like to think of it merely as a process to gain skills and expertise necessary for the job market. Even though education gives an individual a competitive advantage in the job market, that is not all that it does. Going to schools plays a major role in the mental as well as social development of a person. The lessons learned and the experiences that a person goes through while in school prepares him or her for life in the society. One can learn problem-solving skills and develop social intelligence necessary to overcome everyday life challenges. Illiteracy, therefore, has no room in the modern society. The more the number of people who have gone to school, the better the community. Everyone should aspire to be educated and gain knowledge because of the important benefits of being literate. CNA Insider Whats life like for adultswho cant read or write English? The series Write of Passage sheds some light on theirdiffident struggles and over 12 weeks of intensive training, challenges them to achieve some goals. SINGAPORE: At first glance, 33-year-old Stephen Chng looks like any other professional young meet on the street he works as a marine engineer, owns a car and is happily married to Faith, his wife of nearly five years. But theres a part of his life hes guarded about: He struggles to read or write English. Assessed to have thereading level of an eight-year-old, Chng has trouble making out the signs and labels so prevalent in daily life: Road signs, food labels andeven text messages. When he first started dating his wife, he would send her texts like repple massage, when he actually meant reply message, he remembers with a sheepish grin. He has hidden his strugglegwell: In his job, which requires mainly practical work, he gets his wife to help him the few times he has to type out reports. When he drives, he relies on Google Maps to read the signs aloud for him. The few road signs he can read are the names of MRT stations he frequents, after seeing them repeatedly on his commutes. Chng is one of the series Write of Passage, which features adult Singaporeans who have gone through life without knowing how to read or write English. Earlier this year, CNA put out a casting call for people interested in 12 weeks of intensive one-to-one coaching to join the programme. Chng was one of almost 100 people who responded. A HIDDEN PROBLEM Singapore is known to be one of the most English-literate countries in Asia. But adult illiteracy may be more common than expected: According to the Department of Statistics, in 2020, there were about 283,000 Singapore residents aged 15-64 years who are illiterate inEnglish. Who are they? Some are school dropoutslike 60-year-old Jimmy Tan, who left school in Primary Two. A former gang member who was in and out of prison for more than 20 years, he was determined to turn over a new leaf when he was released almost two years ago. But he realised the world had passed him by. All Singapore, a lot of places, all changed, he said. The signboards all English. In his previous life as a gangland big boss, everyone spoke in Mandarin or Cantonese never English. When you talk in English, people would say, Wah, what a show-off. Arrogant, he said. Now in Singapore, you talk to people, open the mouth all in English. Former gang member Jimmy Tan wants to be able to sing Amazing Grace in English. (Photo: Tan Wen Lin) He was assessed to have thereading and writing level of a seven-year-old. By the end of his course, he wants to sing a song in English Amazing Grace, as a testament to his decades-long journey of redemption. Some are individuals like 40-year-old Maya, who wished to be known only by her first name. Until three years ago, she could read, write and even speak normally. A stroke robbed her of the ability to do all this. Her condition, known as aphasia, means that the region of the brain that handles literacy is damaged. About one-third of all strokes result in this condition. While the damage cannot be reversed, speech therapy can help sufferers regain some ability to communicate. There are also others who completed primary school and went on to higher education. According to the Ministry of Educations syllabus, they should be able to read, interpret, respond to and critically analyse a range of texts used in everyday life by Primary Six, which they are still unable to read. Chng remembers the sea of red in his exam papers in school. Numbled by the criticism from his teachers one of whom, he said, made fun of him in front of the other students he felt too embarrassed to stay in the classroom. He struggled to read and write English, but Stephen Chng made it as a marine engineer. (Photo courtesy of Stephen Chng) Every time the lessons started, I would automatically just walk out, he said. This went on for eight to nine months in primary school. It was his maths grades which pulled him up and allowed him to graduate with a polytechnic diploma. Students in school get regular practice in reading and spelling, and this will tide them through exams, said educational therapist Rachel Toh. But at home, she said, they may not have an environment which exposes them to the English language. Not every home has magazines.You dont have storybooks in every household, she said. So, the exposure isnt there. When youre not exposed to these words frequently, it just doesnt stay in our long-term memory. You cant read, but you can be very eloquent, you can be very well-liked among your friends because you are generous and genuine as a person. From there, reading becomes a chore. This means that even though they come across words in their daily lives, they might tend to just skip them, she added. GETTING THROUGH LIFE, HIDING THEIR LACK Individuals who cannot read and write may compensate with something else their personality. You cant read, but you can be very eloquent, you can be very well-liked among your friends because you are generous and genuine as a person, Toh said. Tng Xiao Ling, 35, is one such person. She spoke Mandarin at home and said she never picked up a storybook and never paid attention in school. She hides her lack of language ability behind a smile: She is jovial, often laughing at herself when she mispronounces a word. If people laugh at my English, I just smile back at them, she said. Its okay to let people laugh Before they laugh at me, I laugh at myself first. Maybe then, it wont hurt so much. Tng Xiao Ling wants to help her daughter, Yingxin, with spelling. (Photo: Tan Wen Lin) Assessed to have a reading age of seven, she joined the programme hoping to help her daughter in Primary Five, Yingxin, with her spelling test words. I feel that its very hopeless when I dont know how to teach my girl, she said. Before they laugh at me, I laugh at myself first. Maybe then, it wont hurt so much. Tng Xiao Ling wants to help her daughter, Yingxin, with spelling. 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