

# Reflecting on health literacy: Speech pathologists responding to the needs of people with communication disability

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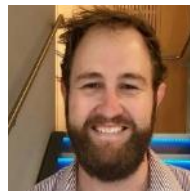
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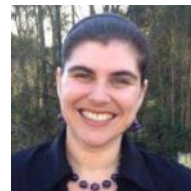
Access a  
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literature  
review:



Ian Skinner,  
Charles Sturt  
University



Charles Sturt  
University



Leigha Dark,  
Scope Australia



Phillippa Carnemolla,  
University of  
Technology Sydney

Workshop at the Speech Pathology Australia National Conference  
Hobart Tasmania 21-24 May, 2023

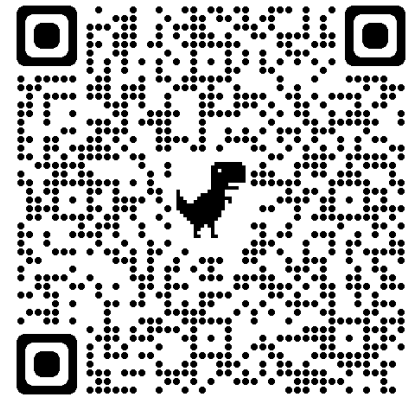




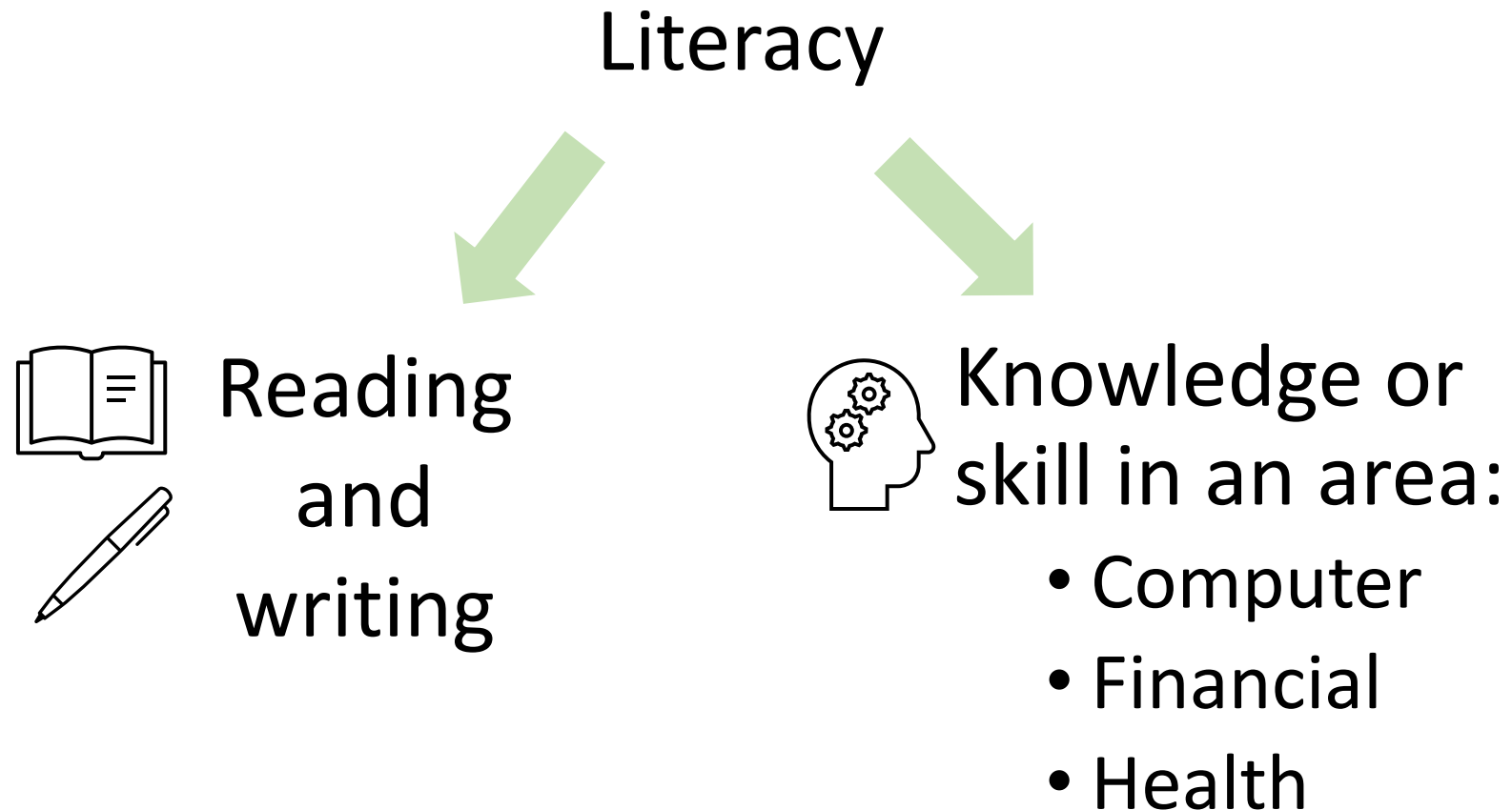
# Learning outcomes

- Define health literacy and its significance in speech pathology practice
- Describe health literacy barriers and facilitators for people with communication disability
- Use evidence-based strategies to support health literacy in a range of clinical settings and situations

Access  
a copy  
of these  
slides:



# What is health literacy?





# What is health literacy?

## A multidimensional concept incorporating:



Individual skills and abilities



Individual and service contexts



Intended or necessary actions



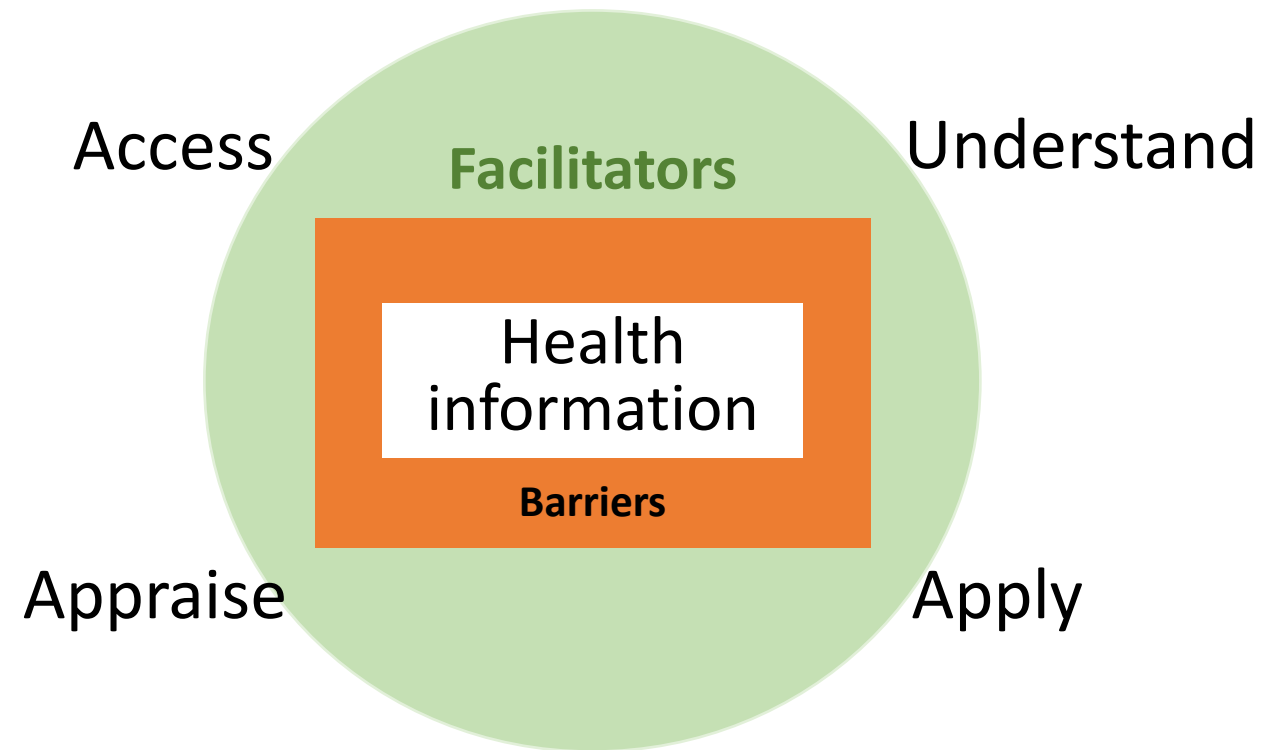
Timeframes (e.g., lifespan)



Health objectives or goals

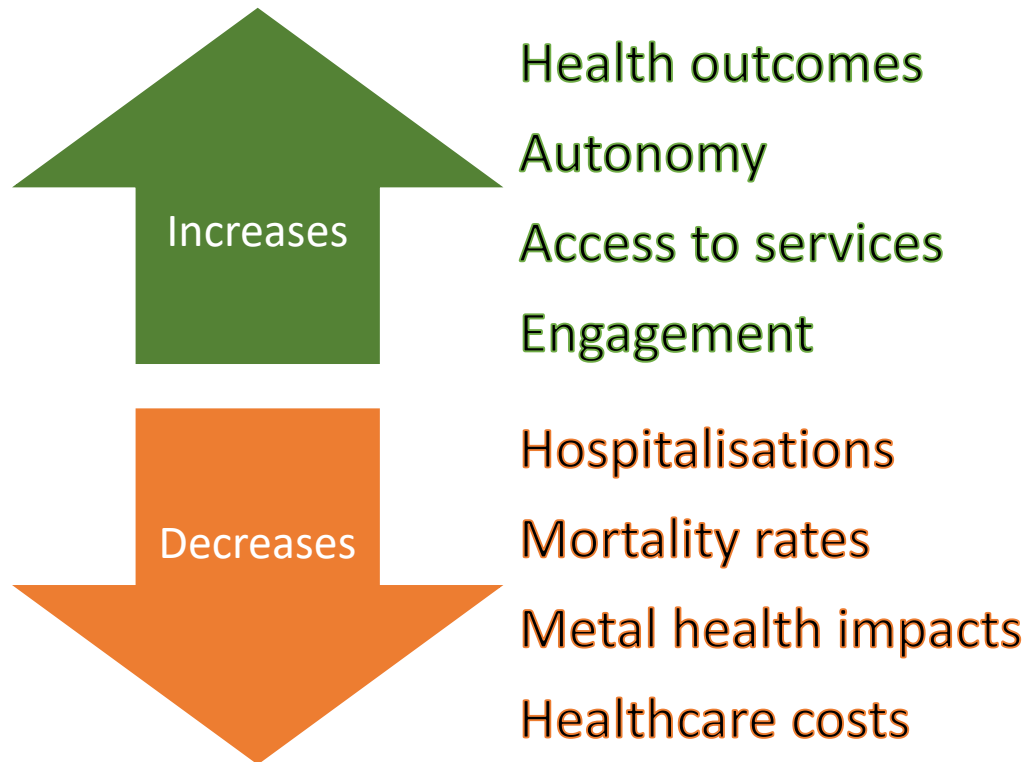
# What is health literacy?

- Ability to:
    - Access
    - Understand
    - Appraise
    - Apply
- } health information
- In the context of:
    - Barriers
    - Facilitators



# Why is this topic important?

## Supporting health literacy:



## More health literacy barriers are experienced by:

- Minority populations
- Lower SES
- Elderly
- English as additional language

# Why is this topic important?

“Health literacy should not be interpreted as a **deficit** of knowledge or understanding at the **individual-level**, but as a tool for policymakers and health providers to use to **improve services** for individuals, families and communities.”

It is not just about individual people.  
It is a way to improve services for all.



# Why is this topic important?



Individual skills and abilities



Individual and service contexts



Intended or necessary actions



Timeframes (e.g., lifespan)



Health objectives or goals

# Why is this topic important?

## In the Australian population:



5% have communication disability

12% find it difficult to find good health information



8% find it difficult to understand health information



17% can't appraise health information

9% can't actively manage health



12% find it difficult to engage with health providers



Higher psychological distress = harder to navigate health system

Younger people report more difficulty navigating health system

Older people have less social support for health care

# Activity: health literacy in your context

## Reflecting on your practice setting and clients/carers/families...

1. Do they understand their health information?
2. How do you support them to understand and appraise health information?
3. Are they able to use information to achieve goals?

Think

Pair

Share

# What are barriers and facilitators?

- ‘Moderators’ of health literacy
- Individual factors
- Environmental factors

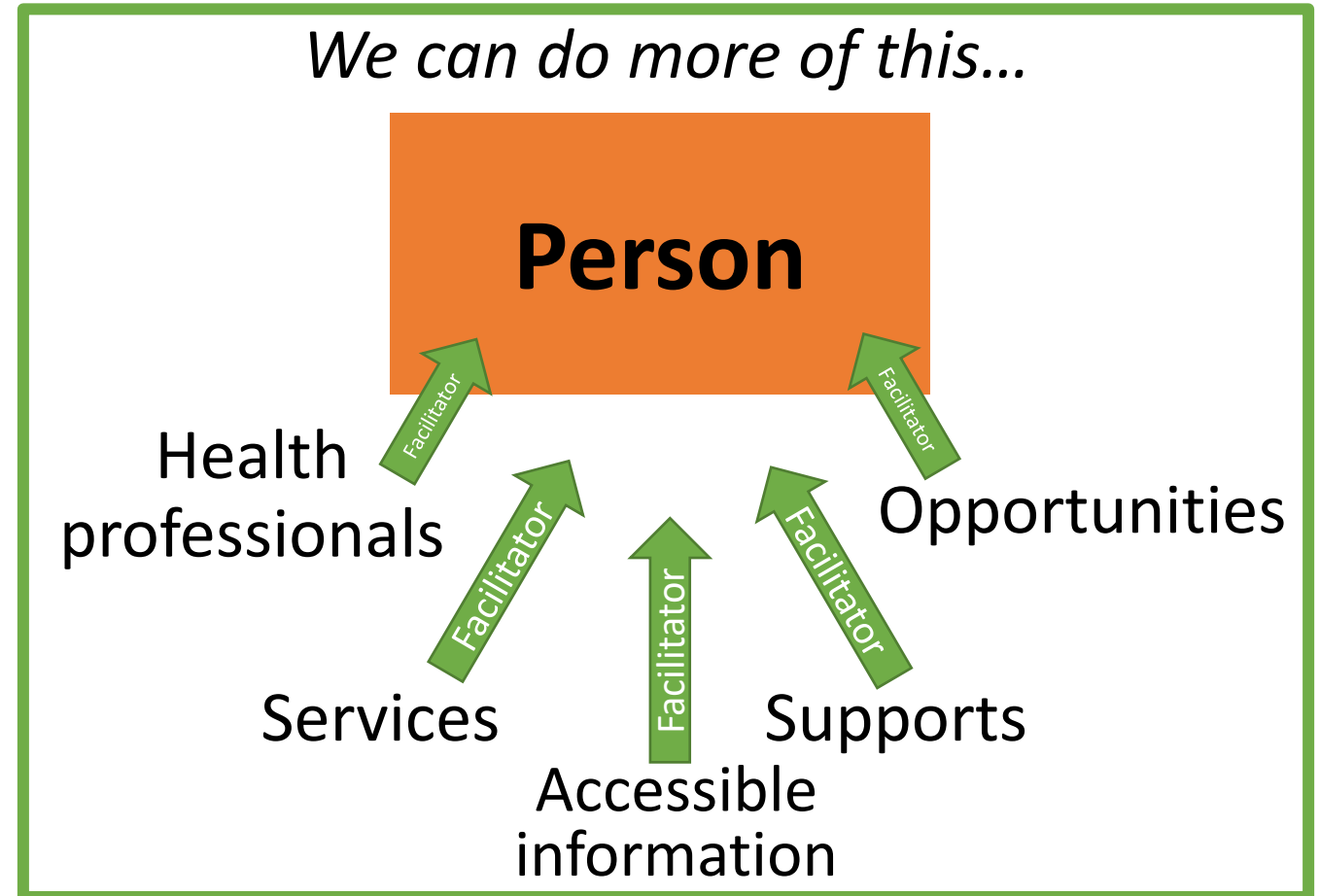
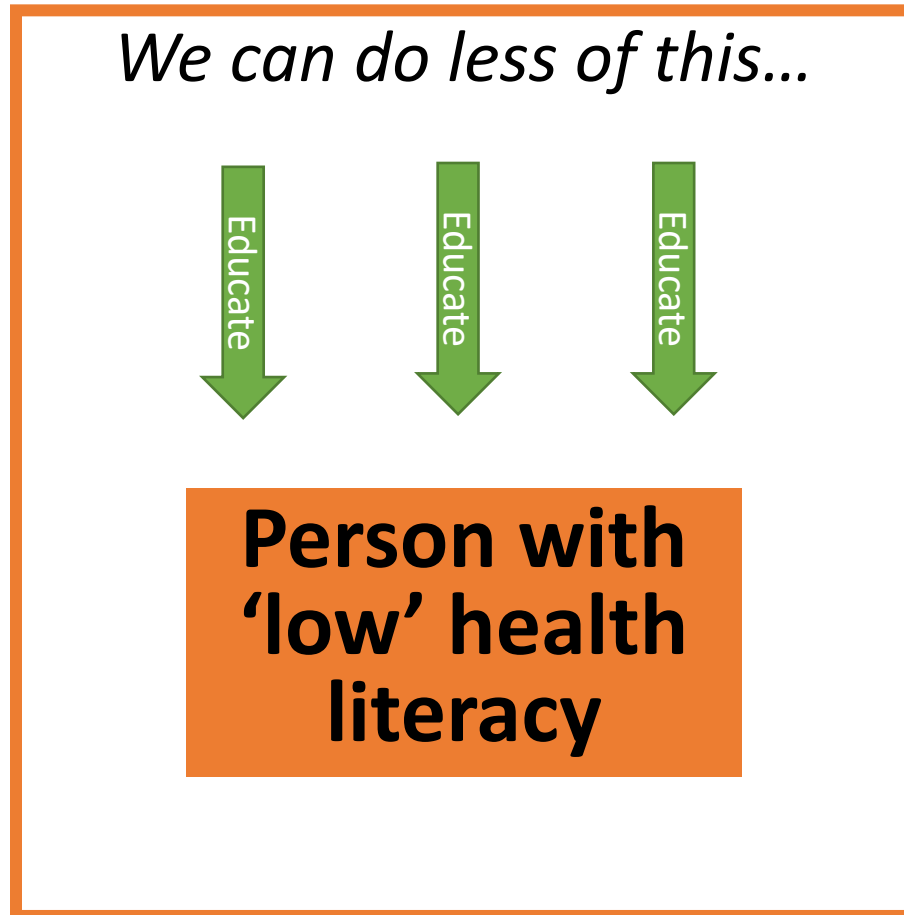
## **Barriers**

Things that negatively impact accessing, understanding, appraising, or applying health information

## **Facilitators**

Things that support accessing, understanding, appraising, or applying health information

# How do we support health literacy?



# What are the barriers and facilitators?

Access -> understand -> appraise -> apply

## Barriers

- Individual:
  - Cognitive disability
  - Communication/social skills
  - Memory or attention problems
- Environmental:
  - Poor interactions
  - Attitudes of staff or family
  - Poor quality information
  - Previous poor experiences

## Facilitators

- Individual:
  - Motivation
  - Self-advocacy, self-determination
  - Resilience
- Environmental:
  - Time
  - Support
  - Accessible information
  - Opportunity to apply information



# Activity: Barriers and facilitators in your context?

Access -> understand -> appraise -> apply

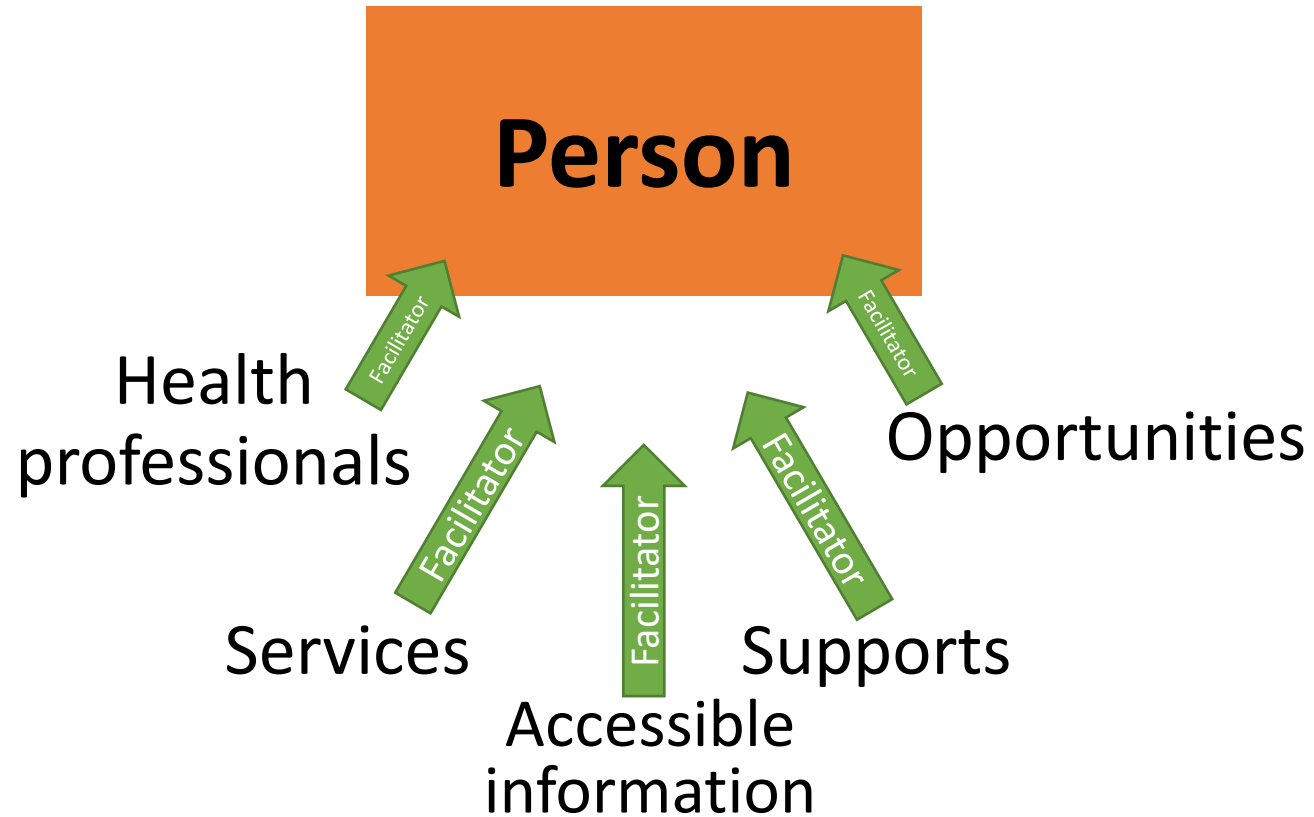
## Barriers

- Individual:
  - 
  - 
  -
- Environmental:
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -

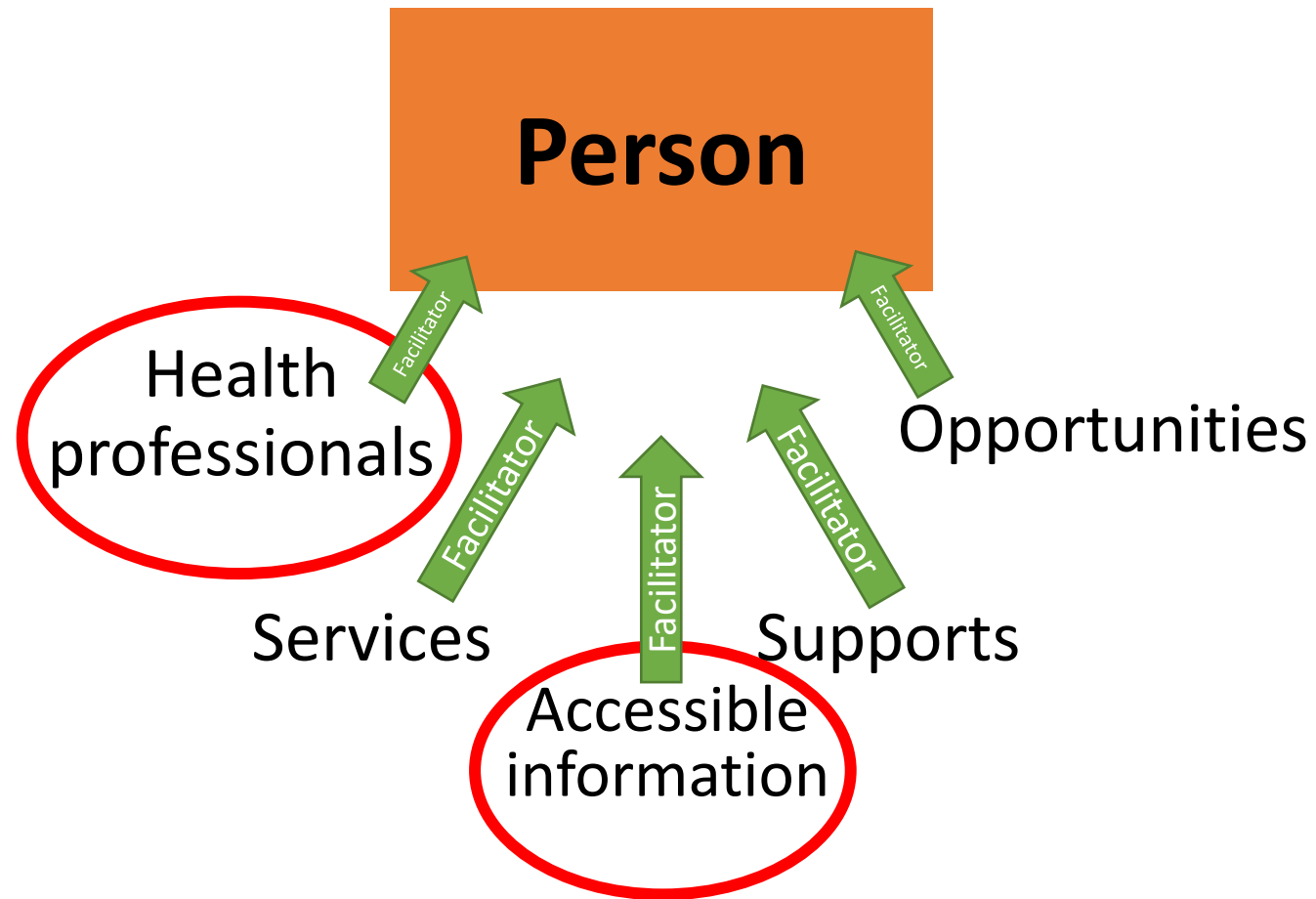
## Facilitators

- Individual:
  - 
  - 
  -
- Environmental:
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -

# So what can we do???



# So what can we do???



# Evidence-based strategy: Teach-back

- A communication tool to improve communication and understanding
- For clinicians and services
  - Explain clearly
  - Ask the person what they understood
  - Give more information or explain differently
- For individuals
  - Listening and processing information
  - Tell the clinician what you heard
  - Fill in gaps

<http://teachback.org/>

<http://teachback.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Teach-back-Checklist.pdf>



**What is teach-back?**

Teach-back is a simple yet effective communication tool used to check understanding.

The key concepts are...

- Let me know that the responsibility to explain things clearly is on you the provider
- Chunk and Check the information you provide
- Use plain language (Keep It Simple for Safety-KISS)
- Find out how I like to learn
- Explain any misunderstandings until understanding is achieved.
- Check your client's current understanding
- Ask your client to explain back in their own words

The infographic features a row of seven diverse people at the bottom, with speech bubbles containing the key concepts listed above them.

# Evidence-based strategy: Accessible information

- Information provided in a way that the reader understands
- Just like a ramp gives access to a building, these strategies give access to information.
- Could include:
  - Plain language
  - Easy read
  - Easy English
  - Aphasia friendly
  - Symbol supported text





Recommended Emergency Supplies Checklist Cont'd		
<input type="checkbox"/>	 <span style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px;">First Aid Kit</span>	<b>First aid kit</b> , e.g. scissors, bandages, gauze, medical tape, disposable gloves, tweezers, etc.

 Birds
  can live
  in bird cages
  in your
  house.

**How to set up NetBank**



1. Go to the website.  
[commbank.com.au/NetBank](http://commbank.com.au/NetBank)
2. Click **Register for NetBank**.
3. Type your card number and PIN.
4. Type the security code.

# A note on 'easy' writing...

- There is no *perfect* accessible resource
- Focus often on easier to understand than more important (harder) ideas
- Might give surface level understanding
- Better understanding could come from interaction and discussion

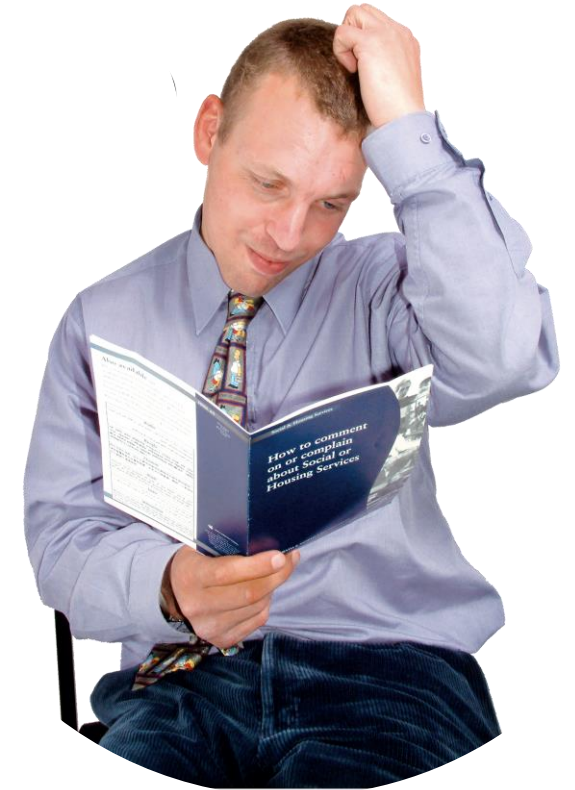




# How people read

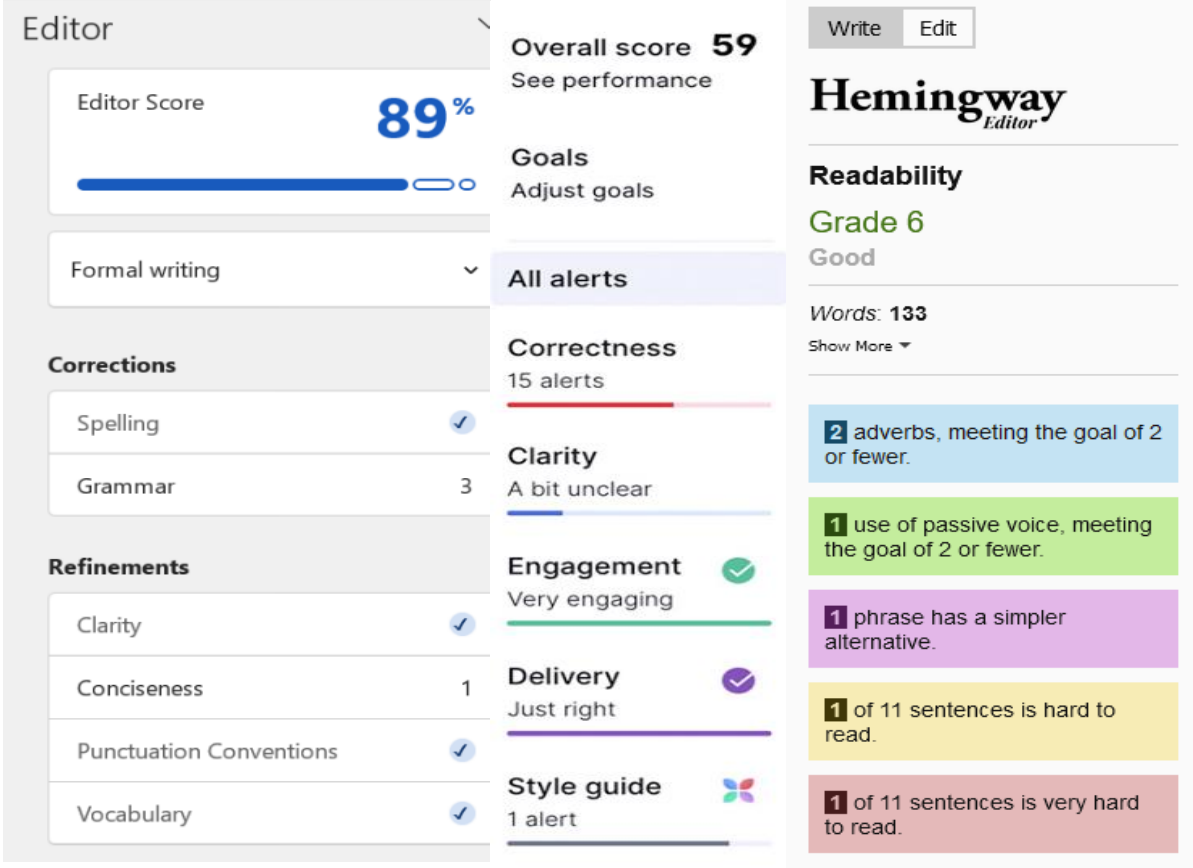
- How we read depends on:
  - How well we already understand the subject
  - Familiarity with the vocabulary
- We skim headings and page structure
- Unfamiliar words slow us down
- Complex sentences are harder
- Variety, rhythm, and mixed sentence length is good
- Paragraphs and line breaks tell readers there's a new idea

(Australian Government, 2022)



# How do we make information more accessible?

- Ask readers: what do they want?
- Structure
  - Chunking information
  - Order of information
  - Options to find more detail
- Language (words and sentences)
  - Readability measures
  - Grammarly
  - <https://hemingwayapp.com/>
- Images
  - Matched to concepts
  - At a level the person understands
- Ask readers for feedback



The screenshot displays the Hemingway Editor interface. On the left, the 'Editor' panel shows an 'Editor Score' of 89% with a progress bar. Below this, 'Formal writing' is selected. The 'Corrections' section lists 'Spelling' (checked) and 'Grammar' (3 alerts). The 'Refinements' section lists 'Clarity' (checked), 'Conciseness' (1 alert), 'Punctuation Conventions' (checked), and 'Vocabulary' (checked). On the right, the 'Overall score' is 59. Below it, 'Goals' and 'All alerts' are visible. The 'Correctness' section shows 15 alerts. The 'Clarity' section shows 'A bit unclear'. The 'Engagement' section shows 'Very engaging' with a green checkmark. The 'Delivery' section shows 'Just right' with a purple checkmark. The 'Style guide' section shows 1 alert. On the far right, the 'Hemingway Editor' logo is at the top. Below it, 'Readability' is shown as 'Grade 6' and 'Good'. 'Words: 133' are listed. Several alerts are shown in colored boxes: 2 adverbs (blue), 1 use of passive voice (green), 1 phrase with a simpler alternative (purple), 1 of 11 sentences hard to read (yellow), and 1 of 11 sentences very hard to read (red).

# Activity: Making information more accessible

## Evaluate and rewrite speech pathology fact sheets

1. Discuss who the readers are  
(i.e., People with communication disability? Support workers? Teachers? Parents?)
2. What information is most relevant to the readers?
3. Structure and chunk the information
4. What words will be unfamiliar?
5. Rewrite complex sentences
6. Will images be helpful?

### Raising Bilingual Children



#### TIPS FOR USING MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE WITH YOUR CHILD

**Most children** are able to learn two (or more) languages at the same time without difficulty. The more exposure a child has to each language, the better they will be able to learn the language and communicate.

**TIP 1:** Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable with more often (or all the time if you desire).

**TIP 2:** Give your child many opportunities to speak and hear both languages in different situations and with different people.

**TIP 3:** Help your child tell the difference between the languages by having clear boundaries (e.g. using home language with family and English at the shops).

**TIP 4:** Read your child's favourite books and/or tell them stories in both languages. Listening to stories many times helps language development.

# Activity: Using teach-back

## With your new-and-improved speech pathology fact sheets

1. Find someone at another table
2. Teach them about the information
3. Use teach-back
4. Swap roles

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# Resources

Harmony's Research Blog:

<https://www.harmonyturnbull.org/2022/07/23/understanding-and-supporting-the-health-literacy/>

Accessible content style manual:

<https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/how-people-read>

Health Literacy Resources: <http://teachback.org/health-literacy-resources/>

Teach-back: <http://teachback.org/>