

Background information

Essex ACL learner case study: a numeracy learner's experience

My beginnings in maths were not brilliant! School was a nightmare, sat at the back of the class, never understanding a word the teacher said, I soon resigned myself to the fact that maths was not for me. Over the years I tried again, but I was once again afraid to ask for help, and confidence slipped away.

Then last year the centre where I worked gave me the opportunity and I was enrolled on a maths summer school. I was apprehensive about attending, I was so sure I would not understand, but I was surprised. I was in a class of just eight, all feeling the same way I did. For the first time the barriers I had built up came down, and for the first time I felt ok to ask and say 'help, I don't understand'.

The teaching was simple, small numbers were used, and confidence gained. I attempted a few mock tests each week, each time I ran out of time, having completed only a third of the questions, but for the first time I looked at where I was falling short, asked questions, then just practised. I was supported by great teaching, it was simple, and done in a way that I understood.

I was also supported by the centre by being introduced to the 'BBC Skillswise' website, and it worked! I sat at home and practised over and over again, and I passed Level 1 – I had a Level 1 maths qualification!

After nearly 20 years of trying to grasp basic maths I got there. It has given me confidence; I no longer feel I have to hide away from numbers. So I then decided to move on to my Level 2 and I decided to do this using the new online course.

Online learning

Where can I start? Well comfort is the best way to describe ACL online learning, no-one is pressurising me in a classroom, asking me to give an answer to the class. I log on (which is straightforward enough), sit at home and teach myself, by using simple instruction, and the video lessons I can sit and re-watch over and over again. The lessons are simple and not time consuming, but the biggest skill I have learnt is when I don't understand, walk away, and try later.

The e-learning site is easy to navigate; submitting work is a matter of a few clicks. I feel happy to share my learning with others; I recently found some helpful maths videos on sites such as YouTube, as well as a site which offers free practice work sheets, all of which I was able to share with the learning staff.

The tutors are always there at the end of an email if I need them and if I get really stuck I can arrange a tutorial. It's great!

I am not alone, there are others like me, who have struggled with maths, and I have seen the light at the end of the tunnel. I hope to gain a Level 2 maths this summer, then next year attempt a GCSE maths and then go on to retrain as an accountant, I know I can do it!

I have gained confidence to tackle maths and to keep trying until I find a way I can work the problem out. The online course is suited to me, and many others. It just works.

Dave Llewellyn