

Bridge to Reading

## The Adult Literacy Ministry of Mercy, Inc.



### Bridge to Bible Reading

also available in [French](#) and in [Swahili](#)



Bridge to Reading is a church-based model to train volunteers to tutor adults and adolescents in reading, writing, and basic mathematics. It gives tutors simple tools to teach people to read the words they say and think.

This *Bridge to Bible Reading* guide provides a brief introduction to Bridge to **Reading training of literacy tutors using materials developed by “I am Second” by e3 Partners Ministries. Their goal is a “world where people become second, serving and loving each other as they put Jesus first.”**

This document is a summary of key points that are fully developed in the *Bridge to Reading Tutor Trainer Guide*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with two videos that demonstrate how a tutor and a learner collaborate to develop a Bridge to Reading Story and work with sight words.

The Bridge to Bible Reading videos are available online in English, French, and Swahili. See [www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr](http://www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr). Email questions and comments to [BTR@mercyinc.org](mailto:BTR@mercyinc.org).

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## Introduction to the Bridge to Reading Tutor Training Model

### What is Bridge to Reading?

Bridge to Reading is the Adult Literacy Ministry of Mercy, Inc.

The Bridge to Reading (BTR) tutor training model combines two literacy education approaches,

each with strong records of success: “*whole language*” and phonics. When used together, they have proven more effective than when either is used alone. The whole language aspect is adapted from *Guide for Training Adult*

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BTR also gratefully acknowledges permission to use primers created by Literacy International. These primers are used to teach the sounds and structure of more than 270 languages around the world.

Through the vision and leadership of One Mission Society (OMS) missionary Dean Paul Davis, D.Min., the BTR approach was developed for use by trainers of literacy tutors associated with the church multiplication efforts of OMS worldwide. BTR became a program of Mercy, Inc., in 2019.

The BTR program would not have been possible without the support of hundreds of people on several continents who contributed ideas, effort, funds, and prayer. We especially wish to express our sincere appreciation for church and missions leaders, translators, trainers, tutors, and learners.

James Kigamwa, Ph.D., is the Director of Bridge to Reading for Mercy, Inc. The BTR materials were developed by educators Constance Davis Schwein, M.A.E., BTR founder, Reading Specialist,

and member of Literacy New Jersey's Master Trainer Corps; and Wendy Calla McDermott, Ph.D. Richard R. Schwein, M.S.J., provided technical and editorial support.

The user agrees that these materials may be used only to train volunteers who will provide free tutoring to low literate people. The user further agrees not to post these materials on the internet or make them available through other channels in which access and revisions cannot be controlled.

### How Adults Learn

Adults learn differently from children. Their motivation, their life experience and the intellectual development that they bring to learning are different. BTR training and tutoring is tailored to the ways that adults process, comprehend, retain, and use information. Tutors and trainers capitalize on that strength by acknowledging and affirming it.

1. Adults prefer self-directed learning: Adults are more fully engaged with training when they choose how, when and why they learn. Allow learners to set their pace and plan their learning activities.

2. Adults use their life experience to facilitate learning: Participants who have not had an opportunity to attend school nevertheless are very smart. Successful training stimulates them to use their existing knowledge and life skills in new ways and in new situations, building on the competence that they already have.

3. Adults are focused on achieving goals: When adults are given the tools and information that will help them set clear, achievable goals for themselves, they are motivated and energized.

4. Adults need to know how the information is relevant: Adults engage with learning when they see both its short-term and long-term benefits.

5. Adults are practical: Learning materials that include real-world scenarios and problem-solving allows learners to build on their experience and knowledge.

6. Adults appreciate mentorship: Adults understand the benefit of a role model who can help them access new knowledge and avoid common mistakes.

## How Bridge to Reading Trainers and Tutors Teach

1. People learn best in a place of emotional safety, in a non-judgmental environment. They are engaged in learning when they are given meaningful, relevant tasks to do in a relaxed atmosphere. Laughter enhances learning. Trainers and tutors welcome participants to the training and address people by name. They present the objectives of the training, provide timely breaks, respect the time frame of the training, and listen carefully to participants. Setting a short, but ample, time frame for tasks keeps the energy level high.

2. BTR uses more dialogue than monologue. Participants work in small groups on learning tasks that promote discussion. Tutors and trainers invite participants to examine new information, add to it, or change it.

3. BTR lets participants discover many concepts for themselves. Materials invite participants to *analyze, synthesize, and implement* the new learning. This process helps them effectively *integrate and retain* it.

4. Effective learning involves ideas, feelings, and actions. Too often education tends to focus only on the study of ideas and concepts. Learning also involves how we feel (emotions) about the concept and its application.

5. **Affirming the participants'** contributions and celebrating

their achievements is one of the tutor and trainer's most important tasks. The questions, the testimony, the examples, and the expressed doubts that come from the learners all contribute to the group's learning experience. None of us is as smart as all of us.

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Part 1: Steps in the Bridge to Reading Story  
Watch Video 1 Bridge to Reading Story - English  
([www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr#story](http://www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr#story))

## SUMMARY

1. Tutor and learners CONVERSE.
2. Tutor WRITES a first draft.
3. Tutor READS first draft to the learners.
4. Tutor and learners EDIT/REVISE.
5. Tutor READS whole story to the learners.
6. Tutor and learners READ sentences:
  - a. Tutor reads the first sentence alone.
  - b. Learners read the first sentence chorally with the tutor.
  - c. Learners read the first sentence chorally without the tutor.
  - d. Tutor asks for a volunteer to read the sentence alone.
  - e. Continue with remaining dictated sentences.
7. Tutor READS whole story.
8. Learners READ whole story chorally with the tutor.
9. Learners READ the whole story chorally without the tutor; tutor asks for volunteers to read the whole story alone.
10. Learners CHOOSE and LEARN sight words.
11. Learners PRACTICE.

## DETAILS

1. Tutor and learners converse about something of interest to the learners, such as life goals; family concerns and so forth. The learners will begin to read the words and sentences they have just said in the conversation. The tutor sits near the learners to show that they are equal partners in the learning process.
2. Tutor writes: The learners choose to tell a group story based on the conversation. The tutor writes the story exactly as the learners dictate it. Leave four lines blank between each line of the story (see Handout #3 for sample). This allows room for matching the sight word cards with the words in the story. Start with a story of three to five short sentences. The tutor prints the story using very careful manuscript letters (printing) on lined paper or a chalkboard. If the learners mispronounce a word, write that word using standard spelling. Even if the learners use grammar or word choice that is incorrect, the tutor does not correct it. The point is to **use the learners' own language as the basis for acquiring reading**.
3. Tutor reads first draft to the learners, drawing hand under the words as they read, without stopping at each word. Tutor asks learners if the story is what they wanted to express.

4. Tutor and learners edit/revise: Tutor makes any changes the learners desire until they are satisfied that the story reflects what they want to say.
5. Tutor reads whole story to the learners, drawing the hand under the words as they are read.
6. Tutor and learners read sentences:
  - a. Tutor reads the first sentence alone.
  - b. Tutor invites the learners to read the sentence aloud chorally with the tutor (at the same time as the tutor).
  - c. Learners read the first sentence chorally without the tutor.
  - d. Tutor asks for a volunteer to read the sentence alone.
  - e. Continue sentence by sentence until each sentence has been read, always drawing the hand under the words as they are read.
7. Tutor reads whole story to the learners.
8. Learners read the whole story chorally, with the tutor.
9. Learners read the whole story chorally without the tutor several times; tutor asks for a few volunteers to read the whole story alone. If the learners have difficulty, the tutor quickly supplies the word. Repetition is essential to learning to read.
10. Learners choose and learn sight words: Tutor asks the learners to choose three to five words they would like to learn to read wherever they see them. Tutor writes each word on a card. Tutor and learners create a new sentence for each sight word, and tutor writes it on the back of the card. Learners practice reading the sight word cards. See HANDOUT #2, Teaching Sight Words.
11. Learners practice: Learners can copy the story to practice writing. Learners take a copy of their story and sight word cards home to read daily, both silently and aloud. Many learners keep all their stories together in a booklet. Use an envelope to hold the word cards.

The key to the BTR approach is that the learners – even beginners – start to read the words and sentences they already can say and understand; they are words and ideas that are important to them in everyday life.

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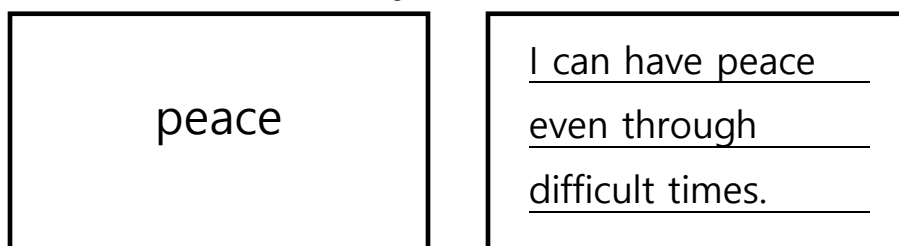
Part 2: Sight Word Techniques <sup>4</sup>  
Watch Video 2 Sight Words - English  
([www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr#words](http://www.FreedomHopeChurch.com/btr#words))

As an experienced reader, how many words do you read without breaking the word into syllables or thinking of the sounds of the letters? Many of the words that accomplished readers see are processed as sight words. They are stored in our memory and we can retrieve them instantly. We have learned these words **over time by seeing them repeatedly. We recognize the “shape” of the word as a whole.** We perceive the pattern of the letters together as a unit rather than as individual letters. With much practice, word recognition becomes more efficient, effortless and automatic. <sup>5</sup>

This is Step #10 on HANDOUT #1, Steps in the Bridge to Reading Story. See Handout #3 for sample story.

- A. Learners choose words to learn as sight words: The tutor asks the learners to choose three to five words from the story to learn immediately. It is imperative that the learners choose the words that are important to them.
- B. Tutor makes word cards: The tutor writes each word on a card. For stories written on lined notebook paper, use cards cut in quarters or small pieces of paper (1½ -inch x 2½ -inch) (3.5 cm x 6 cm). For stories written on a large chalkboard, use full-size cards or pieces of paper (3-inch x 5-inch) (7 cm x 12 cm). On the back of each card, write the word in a new sentence that the learners dictate. **An example of a new sentence for “peace” might be “I can have peace even through difficult times.”**

Example of a word card for **“peace” in a Bridge to Reading Story** (front and back):



- C. Learners read the first card: The tutor holds up a card and says: **“This word is \_\_\_\_\_ . Read \_\_\_\_\_ .”** Pause while the learners read the word. For instance, if the word is “peace” say,

- **“This word is *peace*. Read *peace*.”** Learners say “peace” while looking at the word.
- **“Again.”** Peace.



- **“What is this word?”** Peace.
- **“Very good!”**

- D. Repeat Step C once more with the first card. Repetition helps the learners.
- E. Connect the word with the story context: The tutor says **“Match this card with the same word in the story. Put the card under that word.”** (For this reason, the tutor leaves four blank lines between the lines of the story – so there is room for the card.)
- F. Connect the word with the context of the new sentence: The tutor says **“Read the sentence on the back of the card with me.”**
- The tutor reads the sentence to the learners.
  - The learners read the sentence together *with* the tutor.
  - The learners read the sentence together *without* the tutor.
  - The tutor asks for a volunteer to read the sentence alone.
- G. Review the word on the card: The tutor flips over the card to show the sight word to the learners. The tutor asks, **“What is this word?”**
- H. Repeat with each card: The tutor repeats Steps A through G with each sight word card.

Continue with Step #11 on HANDOUT #1, Steps in the Bridge to Reading Story. Have the learners practice manuscript by copying the story on lined paper. After the lesson, each learner takes home a set of sight word cards and a copy of the story to practice every day until the next lesson.

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Part 3: Lesson Plans and Practice for Bridge to Bible Reading  
Review Videos 1 and 2, as needed

**“I am Second” was created by e3 Partners Ministries.** It was adapted for use by Bridge to Reading tutors as a way to share the good news of Jesus Christ with adult literacy students. **We call this adaptation “Bridge to Bible Reading.”**

Tutors choose a short portion of scripture to read to the learners – ideally one that tells a story and is no more than 4 to 10 verses. Together they discuss their thoughts and feelings about the scripture, responding to six questions over several sessions. For each session, **tutors write the learners’** ideas on a chalkboard and use them to create a Bridge to Reading story. Next, the learners choose several words from their story that they would like to learn as sight words. The tutors and learners review the stories and sight words over several sessions.

During tutor training, participants play the roles of tutors and learners until they have mastered the techniques. Then they are invited to teach small groups of literacy students to begin to learn to read Bible truth.

Examples of Bible stories the tutor can use:

1. Prayer – **The Lord’s Prayer; Matthew 6:9-15.**  
Purpose: Model how to pray.
2. Share – The woman at the well; John 4:28-30 and 39-42.  
Purpose: Discuss sharing our story about Jesus with others.
3. Love – The Greatest Commandment; Matthew 22: 34-39.  
Purpose: Discuss loving God and others.
4. Bible – **Obey Jesus’ teachings; John 14:23-27.**  
Purpose: Discuss how people that love Jesus will obey him.
5. Fellowship – Early church community; Acts 2:42-47.  
Purpose: Discuss the meeting together of the early church.
6. Love – Healing of a blind man; Luke 18:31-43.  
**Purpose: Discuss God’s power and love for us.**

Additional suggested topics:

1. Security in Jesus – Jesus does not lose sheep; John 10:27-30.
2. Immediate baptism – Ethiopian eunuch; Acts 8:26-40.
3. Jesus came to save sinners – Zacchaeus; Luke 19: 1-9.
4. Salvation is by faith not works – Faith; Ephesians 2:8-10.

5. Purpose of the Law and Faith – Paul and righteousness by faith; Romans 3: 19-26.
6. Reconciliation – Jesus teaches dispute resolution; Matthew 18: 15-20.
7. **God's power over demons** – Demon possessed man; Mark 5: 1-20.
8. Do not worry – Today has enough troubles; Matthew 6: 25-34.

### Suggested Lesson Plans:

#### First Session:

1. The tutor reads a short portion of scripture (10 verses or fewer) from a recent sermon or a story – see examples.
2. In this first session, the tutor asks, (1) **“What did you like about the story that I just read from the Bible?”** and writes two or three of the learners' comments on the chalkboard.
3. The tutor asks, (2) **“What did you not like or find confusing about the story?”** and writes two or three of the learners' comments on the chalkboard.
4. Using the ideas on the chalkboard, the tutor elicits a Bridge to Reading story from the learners, following HANDOUT #1, Steps in the Bridge to Reading Story (see example below and Video 1).
5. The tutor asks the learners to choose three to five words from their story that they would like to learn as sight words.
6. The tutor teaches the sight words, following the steps on HANDOUT #2, Teaching Sight Words (see Video 2).
7. The tutor and learners review the story and sight words again.
8. The learners write a copy of the story and take it home to practice reading it both aloud and silently.
9. End the tutoring session with a simple prayer asking God to make His Word come alive in the heart of each person in the group.

#### Second Session:

1. The tutor and the learners review the scripture, the Bridge to Reading story they created, and the sight words they chose from the previous session.
2. Following the same procedure as in Session One above, the tutor asks two new questions: (3) **“What does this scripture teach about people?”** and (4) **“What does this scripture teach about God?”**

3. Using the responses to these two questions, the tutor and the learners create a second, different Bridge to Reading story, and practice reading it.
4. The tutor teaches three to five new sight words that the learners have chosen.
5. The tutor and the learners review the story and sight words again.
6. The learners write a copy of the story and take it home to practice reading it.
7. Pray at the end of the tutoring session asking God to help people to understand His Word.

### Third Session:

1. The tutor and the learners review the scripture, Bridge to Reading stories and sight words from the previous sessions.
2. The tutor asks, (5) **“How will you put into practice what you learned today? Be specific. In a group of two to four people talk about this question for about 5 minutes.”**
3. The tutor asks each group to share one idea. The tutor writes each idea on the chalkboard.
4. From the comments on the chalkboard, the tutor and the learners create a third, different Bridge to Reading story, and practice reading it.
5. The tutor asks the learners, (6) **“Who will you tell about what you have learned.”**
6. The tutor writes this sentence on the chalkboard: I will tell \_\_\_\_\_ how I plan to live out this Bible story.
7. The tutor **says, “Please copy this sentence** at the bottom of your third story. If you are able, put the first letter of the name of the person in the **blank. I will walk around and help anyone spell a name.”**
8. At the end of the tutoring session, the tutor prays aloud asking God to show each learner how to live out the truths that have been discussed. Ask God to give each person the boldness to tell what they have learned to the person they have named.

Example of a Bridge to Bible Reading story:

John 14:23-27 — What I like  
I like two things from this  
Bible reading. Jesus says that  
he will give me peace. He  
also says that the Holy  
Spirit will teach me all  
things. I am glad about that!

Practice 1: Teach the Bridge to Reading Story:

In groups of four or five:

1. Choose one person to play the role of the tutor. The others will play the role of the students.
2. The tutor will follow the lesson plan for the first session on HANDOUT #3, Lesson Plans for Bridge to Bible Reading, based on the story of the woman at the well in John 4:28-30 and 39-42.
3. Participants share their observations with the large group.

Practice 2: Teach Sight Words:

In the same groups of four or five:

4. Choose a different person to play the role of the tutor. The others will play the role of the students.
5. Using the story developed in Practice 1 above, the tutor teaches several sight words to the group according to the steps on Handout #2, Teaching Sight Words.
6. Participants share their observations with the large group.

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Endnotes:

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1 Handouts #1 through #4 are based on Handouts #20, 27, 49, 50, and 51 in the full *Bridge to Reading Tutor Trainer Guide*.

**2 The Bridge to Reading story (BRS) is a written expression of students' own words on a topic they find interesting.** The story helps students make the connections between the words they speak and the words they read on a page. The students dictate the story, the tutor records it word for word and then follows a process to teach students to read the words they have spoken. See Handout #1, Steps in the Bridge to Reading.

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3 A **“sight word”** is a word that a reader learns to recognize and read as a single unit, rather than analyzing the component parts of the word each time the word is encountered. See Handout #2, Teaching Sight Words.

4 Some tutors make the mistake of skipping the Bridge to Reading Story in a rush to teach words in isolation. Always teach new words in connection with a meaningful context such as a BRS or real-life materials. Reconnect the word with its context as you finish each part of the lesson.

5 Because languages differ in significant ways, the process of learning sight words may vary also. Nevertheless, all students benefit from learning sight words. In languages similar to Swahili, words can be quite long. Words are formed by combining several shorter meaningful units, or sub-parts (**sometimes called “morphemes”**). **These sub-parts** communicate meaning and tell readers how the word functions in the sentence. Some sub-parts provide grammatical information, such as verb tense. Some provide other types of information, such as a speaker showing respect for the listener. The sub-units can be a single syllable or groups of syllables. An example of a one-syllable unit in Swahili, is **“ta”** (future tense). An example of a two-syllable unit is **“nina”** (“I do” or “I want”).

Literacy students can learn to break long words into smaller meaningful sub-parts. With practice they learn to recognize sub-parts on sight (without having to process the individual sounds every time the sub-parts occur). Tutors use all three of the following strategies:

(1) The tutor invites students to choose several words from their own written story that are personally meaningful or valuable to them to learn as sight words, even if the words are fairly long. This personalizes the learning experience for students, and demonstrates that their choices are respected; AND

(2) The tutor helps students break long words apart into smaller meaningful units, and draws attention to units that occur frequently, in a variety of words. The tutor starts with short, highly predictable units; AND

(3) The tutor identifies several short, common words **in the students’ own** written story, such as Biblia, Yesu, Roho, and some of the connectives. The tutor invites the students to choose a few of them to learn as sight words.

## **We Learn Best When...**

- We feel respected
- We can use the information immediately
- The information is relevant to our lives

## **We Remember...**

- 20% of what we hear
- 40% of what we hear and see
- 80% of what we hear, see, and do

Bridge to Reading is the adult literacy program of Mercy, Inc., working in cooperation with the Village Church Planting Ministry of One Mission Society



[www.mercyinc.org](http://www.mercyinc.org)