

Dyslexia and Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

ICT can help children and adults in education, at work and at home by helping address many difficulties associated with dyslexia.

'Text-to-Speech' Software

This can be used to create a spoken sound version of the text in a computer document such as a Word file. This allows you to hear the text you are looking at. 'The Scottish Voice' (www.thescottishvoice.org.uk) is a free high-quality computer voice downloadable from CALL Scotland. Once installed, it can be used with most text to speech programs, electronic books, PDF files and other Word documents.

Spellcheckers

As well as general spellcheckers such as Microsoft Word which also shows possible grammatical errors, there are more specialist spellcheckers which deal with phonic approximations better than Word does. They also offer a better range of alternatives. Using 'Autocorrect' can help with correcting commonly mis-typed words.

Some software programmes predict what you are typing and complete the word or phrase for you. Words that you use regularly can be added to the programme.

Virtual overlays

Some people with dyslexia find that the glare of text on a white background causes visual stress. This can make it uncomfortable to read and can in some cases distort the text or cause it to move. In some cases, coloured overlays can help with this. Virtual overlays in a range of colours can be used on a computer or other device to reduce this problem.

'Speech Recognition' Software

Sometimes called Voice-to-Text, this converts spoken words to written text. This allows you to talk to the computer and your words appear in the correct spelling on the screen so you don't have to physically type.

Basic versions of Text-to-Speech and Speech-Recognition Software are built into Windows from XP upwards.

Screen settings

Screen settings such as coloured backgrounds and changing the size, font and colour of the text can be modified on a personal computer to suit the user. These can also be changed in your web browser to suit your needs.

Touch typing

For some people, being able to touch type can be very helpful as it frees the brain to focus on the content of what is being written rather than the actual process of writing text. Learning to touch type can take a while, but there are many advantages for children and adults with dyslexia.

Apps for dyslexia

If you have a smart phone there are a variety of free and low cost Apps you can download to help with reading, writing, numbers and organisation. You can also use Apps on tablet computers.

EduApps (www.eduapps.org) is a collection of free downloadable software including examples of many of the features mentioned here. CALL Scotland's 'Wheel of Apps' for dyslexia lists iPad and Android Apps for learners with reading and writing difficulties.

Smart pens

A Smart Pen is a writing tool that records spoken words and synchronises them with notes written on special paper. This could be used, for example by a student to record a lecture and replay any part of it later by tapping the pen on words written throughout the class. Information recorded can be transferred to a computer.

Further information

- CALL Scotland – technology for people with communication difficulties www.callscotland.org.uk – see their 'Wheels of Apps' on this website
- Ability Net – adapting and adjusting technology www.abilitynet.org.uk
- Online Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit – this free resource includes a section about technology. The homepage of the toolkit is at www.addressingdyslexia.org
- BDA Tech – British Dyslexia Association list of popular software www.bdatech.org
- Iansyst – assistive technology and disability services suppliers www.iansyst.co.uk
- Crick Software – educational software www.cricksoft.com
- Concept Northern – supporting people in employment, education and at home www.conceptnorthern.co.uk
- Dyslexia Scotland Helpline 0344 800 8484 or helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk

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