

# ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

# HELP SHEET 6

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*Technology has many things to offer which can help with reading and writing as well as helping with improving study skills. This help sheet outlines a few possibilities but please do let us know of things you have used that help and we can add them to our list.*

## Speech to text:

Word 7 and later editions of Word have speech recognition software. A more sophisticated software is Dragon Naturally Speaking, for home use, it is possible to buy a version of Dragon for about £50.00\*, to find out more about the Dragon programme go to : <http://www.nuance.co.uk/dragon/index.htm> ( you will find lots of different offers). We recommend you scroll down the page a little to view a video entitled: Dragon in Action.

## Text to Speech:

This is useful if you find reading blocks of text can either take a long time or is challenging. There are a number of programmes which will do this. Balabolka is free. Visit <http://balabolka.en.softonic.com/> to download it. You can then put any piece of text in it and it will be read to you. The voice is a little robotic; if you want a better voice you can buy one from Ivona: <http://www.ivona.com/en/voices/>. Another programme which will let you do this is Read Write from Text Help. There is a standard version and a gold version which does a lot more than just read to you. For help and explanations visit <http://www.texthelp.com/UK>. Don't forget you can buy earlier versions cheaper on Amazon.

## Mind Mapping:

Planning work is often one of the hardest things for dyslexic people. Most schools use mind maps now as a way of creating ideas and moving to planning. There are ways that this can be managed on a PC or on an I Pad. One mind mapping tool is 'Inspiration', find out more about it at: <http://www.inspiration.com/> Inspiration Version 9 costs around £55\*, don't forget you can buy earlier versions cheaper on Amazon.

## Editing:

Editing is an important skill for dyslexic people and there are programmes to help. Read Write Gold (mentioned above) is one such programme. Support includes reading what you are writing as you write so you can spot mistakes as you go along; alternatively, you can ask it to read your text when you have finished and again mistakes will jump out at you. It also has a sophisticated spellchecker so that if you have confused two words, it will give you the meanings (they can be read to you). In addition, this programme actually improves spelling as it makes the user more familiar with the sorts of errors they make.

## Echo Pen:

An echo pen allows you to record something as does a Dictaphone. However, it is much more sophisticated than that. It comes with special paper and/or a notebook. If listening to a talk or lecture, brief notes can be made on the paper. Later on, when you wish to hear that part of the talk again, you tap on the relevant note and it will repeat that part of the lecture. This means that organizing your recording is so much easier. It also has a facility to connect with Word so



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there is a much easier way to make use of notes. You can find out more about this pen at:  
<http://www.livescribe.com/uk/>

### I Pad apps:

I pads have many downloadable educational apps visit our Computer and Technology Link in our website for suggestions. However, as there are so many new ones coming out we recommend you explore for yourself but to get you started. Memory Workout helps improve both short term and working memory and Prizmo is an app for i-phones, i-pads and other i- products (not androids). You can take a photograph of text and the app will read it to you. To motivate yourself to write a story why not take some pictures with your I pad and write a story using the pictures?

### Load2Learn:

Useful for secondary school pupils or teaching staff. **Membership of Load2Learn is FREE! to educators in the UK** who are supporting print-impaired learners and allows schools to download curriculum resources, including textbooks. (Dyslexia Action and the RNIB joined together and received government funding for this resource) Only schools can join it; individuals cannot. However, once a school has joined all text books can be opened up on a computer and read to a person with a print impairment – in other words someone with a visual impairment or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia.

### Iansyst:

Iansyst is one of the UK's leading Assistive Technology (AT) and disability services suppliers who are experienced in helping people with dyslexia, dyspraxia, visual impairment, physical disabilities and much more. They offer disability solutions for individuals, educational institutions and commercial organisations and their web address is: <http://www.iansyst.co.uk/> If you have a query, you can ring them up and they will make time to discuss it with you or alternatively visit their site in Cambridge and they will advise you on any assistive technology you are interested in, with absolutely no obligation to buy.

### Equality Learning Ltd :

<http://www.equalitylearning.com> provides one-to-one or group training sessions to a range of different learners. They support students in receipt of Disability Support Allowance, employees in receipt of Access to Work funding and work along SENCO's to trainer learners throughout the education system. They aim to provide training that is accessible to all, flexible and delivered by experts.

**IT information** Further information about computer based resources can be found on the **BDA Technologies website**.

*NB: Products/companies on this help sheet are not endorsed by WFDA. these are only suggestions.*

*\*Prices quoted February 2014*



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