



Assistive technology

Assistive technology can help children and adults in education, at work and at home in many ways. A lot of this technology is free or low cost. These are just some of the tools that can help you with common dyslexic difficulties.

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 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-processed documents.

Speech recognition software

Sometimes called 'voice-to-text', this converts spoken word to text. This means that you can dictate words to your computer or device and the words appear on the screen. It can take a little bit of time and practice. Basic versions of text-to-speech and speech recognition software are built into Windows from XP upwards and AI tools such as Otter and Notta can also turn speech to text.



Spellcheckers

As well as general spellcheckers such as those in Microsoft Word or Apple's Pages, there are more specialist spellcheckers, some of which also help with grammar.

Using autocorrect features can help you to easily correct mis-spelled words.

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

Virtual overlays

People with dyslexia who also have visual difficulties sometimes find high contrasting text and background colours (such as black on white) uncomfortable to read, as it seems to distort the text or cause it to appear to move. Some people find that virtual overlays in a range of colours can be used on a computer or other device to help this problem.

Screen settings

Screen settings such as coloured backgrounds and font size and colour can be modified on a laptop or PC and even on your mobile phone – they can also be changed in your web browser to suit your needs.

Lots of websites have accessibility toolbars that allow you to customise the website appearance, read text aloud or translate it into other languages. Dyslexia Scotland's website uses Recite-Me, which you can activate by clicking on the circular icon with the human figure.

Touch-typing

For some people, being able to touch type can be very helpful as it frees your brain to focus on the content of what you're typing rather than the actual process of writing text. Learning to touch type can take a while, but there are advantages for children and adults with dyslexia. There are several free online courses.

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 devices.

EduApps 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 listen to it later by tapping the pen on words written in notes throughout the class. Information recorded can be transferred to a computer.

**Learn more about assistive technology
from CALL Scotland's website**

www.callscotland.org.uk/

