

TECHNOLOGY AND DYSLEXIA

Common difficulties experienced by dyslexics

Sequencing and memory
Reading, writing words and text
Processing information
Writing as fast as they can to get the task 'over with'
Presentation
Working independently
Demonstrating their true ability
Visual difficulties
Organising and planning
Fatigue
Frustration, anger and self-esteem

Can computers help?

They can help:

- Sequencing and memory – computers are patient; they can repeat words and instructions and have no body language
- Children control their pace of their learning
- Provide a multi-sensory learning approach
- Discreet/self corrective support
- Self esteem- ICT can offer real opportunities to succeed and work independently
- Reading text
- Writing and spelling-onscreen word banks, spellcheckers and predictive text
- Writing and presentation
- Organising and planning

Choosing software:

There are many programs available, features to consider are:

- An uncluttered screen
- Choices to change colour of background
- Spelling and word lists can be shown in lower case letters
- Help menus
- Speech support – can text be seen and heard
- Opportunities to listen again and repeat an activity
- Structured progression

Consider putting the computer in a family room so that there are opportunities to share and supervise.

Ensure child knows how to handle data, insert pendrives and use the printer.

Make sure school work is saved on a pendrive or on the VLE so it that can be shared between home and school.

Stress the need to save any work in at least two places, in case of loss, and to save work with a recognisable name and in an appropriate folder.

Possible areas to develop:

Keyboard Skills

It is difficult to use computers without knowledge of key positions etc.

Many dyslexic and dyspraxic children will find this skill difficult and can be frustrated by searching for letter positions. Software needs to be supervised and practised regularly.

Some software programs: **Ultra Keys, Jump Ahead Typing, Magic Type, Type to Learn, English Type, Nessy Fingers.**

Also learn to type online at:

www.typeonline.co.uk

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>

Reading

Dyslexic children may find it hard to cope with reading demands at secondary school

- Investigate recording key texts
- Investigate commercially produced programs - Harper Collins, Sherston
- To help older children work independently at increasing their reading speed try **Lexia Plus** [www.lexialearning.com] and **SCANit Plus** [www.maia.co.uk]
- A talking dictionary may help the understanding of key words – giving an explanation to read and listen to.
- Many dyslexics enjoy having interactive texts available good examples are found in books such as **Trackers, Find Out** and **Write About**, there are many titles available from **Sherston** [www.sherston.com]
- There are a number of hand-held reading pens on the market which scan a line of text show the words on the LCD screen and pronounces the word and gives a definition **ReadingPen TS**, however this is expensive.
- **Virtual Reading Ruler** [www.crossboweducation.com] – a mobile tinted overlay that 'floats' above an application and is moved around the screen with a mouse, making text clearer to read. Also **Claro View** [www.clarosoftware.com] and **Readable** [www.dyslexic.com]

Spelling

(See Spelling document)

Writing and Voice Recognition Software

Some children will benefit from a program that tries to predict the word that is being typed (similar to a mobile phone), **Co-Writer** [www.donjohnston.co.uk], **Write Outloud, Co-Writer, TextHelp, Textease** [www.r-e-m.co.uk], **Dragon Software** [www.dyslexia.com] [www.texthelp.com]

Other programs can be used to help organise ideas as mind maps **Kidspiration, Inspiration** [www.dyslexia.com]

Speech Recognition

Good points

- All words that appear on screen are correctly spelt
- You speak and your words are written on the computer screen
- You need fewer keyboard skills
- You can say word processing commands such as 'open file', 'new line'
- Words can be played back
- It is particularly helpful for those who are already familiar with computers and word processing programs.
- Some dyslexic users have found it liberating

However

- You need a powerful, modern computer
- You need a good quality sound card and microphone
- You have to learn and then remember how to use the software and say the commands and punctuation consistently
- The software has to learn your voice and cannot be trained by someone else
- You need dictation skills
- Proof reading is hard for dyslexic users
- Correcting errors can be time consuming and frustrating
- Boys may need to retrain the program after their voices have broken
- A success rate of 90 – 98% is claimed i.e. one in ten words may be wrong