



Using Technology to Support and Develop Writing Skills

This advice sheet is designed to help schools use technology to support writing development for pupils with additional needs,

Why Use Technology?

Technology can offer a range of tools and software to support the writing process which can help overcome specific barriers to writing and promote independence, confidence and accessibility.

Points you may consider when using low/high tech tools to support writing:

- Support for writing doesn't have to be high tech and can include:
 - handwriting tools such as grips and boards
 - alternative keyboards and touchscreens
 - word prediction tools – see Call Scotland's guide here – which includes links to example tools www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/books/a-guide-to-word-prediction
 - spelling and grammar checking tools
 - word banks and scaffolds
 - graphic organisers
 - adapted dictionaries and thesauri
- See the built in assistive technology software on devices including laptops and tablets.
- Consider access to speech-to-text (dictation) tools for written responses for those pupils who find recording particularly challenging.
- Empower pupils to select tools that suit their preferences by providing choices.
- Model and demonstrate the use of any programme or writing tool and provide scaffolded practice, before expecting children to be able to use them independently.
- Share successes and achievements.

Safeguarding & Digital Literacy

- Use school-approved platforms with appropriate privacy settings.
- Teach pupils safe and respectful use of technology.
- Monitor usage and provide adult support where needed.

Tools and platforms:

The tools, programmes and apps highlighted are examples that can be accessed, and many others are available online.

- A range of resources, tools and apps to support pupils with writing difficulties can be found on the attached link from Call Scotland www.callscotland.org.uk/information/dyslexia/writing/
- See also an overview of technology to support writing at - <https://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/>



- See Call Scotland's writing and spelling wheels for links to appropriate apps at www.callscotland.org.uk
- Also see these short guides to using the iPad's built-in tools support literacy difficulties. www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLm66eliPiNXOwdTtnxnJV7fK-yA1X7GZ
- **MyStudyBar** www.callscotland.org.uk/mystudybar/ - designed to support students from planning and structuring their thoughts and ideas to support with reading and writing.
- **Widgit Online** – www.widgetonline.com Symbol-supported texts for pupils with communication needs.

Speech to text and other technologies to support writing- examples include:

- [Read&Write by Texthelp](#) – Literacy toolbar with text-to-speech, word prediction, picture dictionaries, vocabulary lists, check it tools and Voice to text
- **Orbitnote** - For students using Chromebooks - www.orbitnote.texthelp.com . Dictation feature can be used in line with JCQ access arrangements
- **Everway ClaroRead** – www.texthelp.com Supports reading and writing and includes dictation features.
- **Dragon NaturallySpeaking**- www.nuance.com -Voice recognition software
- **Microsoft Dictate / Windows Speech Recognition**
 - Built into Windows and Microsoft 365 apps (Word, Outlook, OneNote)
 - Free and easy to use
 - Good accuracy rate and minimal setup required
 - Windows Dictation (Win + H) is user-friendly but requires internet access
- **Google Docs Voice Typing**
 - Free and accessible via Chrome browser
 - Ideal for Chromebook users
 - Easy to use with Google Workspace for Education
 - Not suitable for exams as requires internet access
- **Apple Dictation / Siri**
 - Built into iPads, iPhones, and Macs
 - Free and simple to enable
 - Works well with Notes, Pages, and Mail
 - Some are not suitable for exams as internet access required

Reader Pens to read back writing. Examples include:

- [Claro ScanPen \(Android\)](#) – Reads printed text aloud using OCR.
- **C-Pen** – www.cpen.com – text to speech reading support and exam reader available.



Writing support tools and programmes- examples include:

- **Crick Software Clicker Writer** – www.cricksoftware.com – supports reluctant and struggling writers throughout the writing process. It is available for Windows, iPad and Chromebook and offers numerous tools such as word prediction, word banks, text-to-speech and more. Clicker Writer is aimed at primary school pupils.
- **Crick Software DocsPlus** – www.cricksoftware.com -Comprehensive writing support tool designed to support secondary students in their normal way of working, including during assessments.
- **Ghotit** – desktop and mobile writing and reading assistant to support children with developing independence – www.ghotit.com
- **Book Creator** www.bookcreator.com - support for building literacy skills and creating digital stories, reports, newsletters etc. See - 50 Ways to use Book Creator in your classroom for teachers on their website.
- **Nessy Learning Programme** – www.nessy.com Literacy intervention includes practise with reading, spelling and vocabulary.

Typing practice and familiarisation – programmes include:

- English Type junior - www.englishtype.com
- BBC Dance Mat Typing <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/z3c6tfr>
- Doorway online – www.doorwayonline.org.uk
- Nessy Fingers – www.nessy.com
- For a range of Typing games for children to access at home see - <https://www.todayparent.com/family/fun-typing-games-for-kids/>

Mind Mapping & Organisation

- XMind – www.xmind.com
- Ayoa MindMaps for kids – available for Apple devices
- MindNode – www.mindnode.com – available for Apple devices
- Popplet Lite – www.popplet.com
- Inspiration Maps app – organisation and planning app for ages 10+ available for Apple devices

Spelling

- Twinkl Spelling – www.twinkl.co.uk
- Doodle Spelling – www.doodlelearning.com
- Spelling Shed – www.spellingshed.com
- Night Zookeeper – www.nightzookeeper.com – interactive lessons and word games to boost spelling
- Spelling for Success – Literacy Planet – www.literacyplanet.com
- See Call Scotland's writing and spelling wheels for links to appropriate apps at www.callscotland.org.uk