100+ FREE SOLUTIONS & RESOURCES TO IMPROVE GRADES FOR DYSLEXICS

Set dyslexics up for success without wasting money

By Caroline Bateman

Achieve Now

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1 Introduction

Thank you for downloading this eBook

I'd like to start by introducing myself and explaining why I've collated this information. My name is Caroline Bateman. I am dyslexic, married to a dyslexic (not knowingly) and I have three dyslexic children.

I started Achieve Now to pass on technology and techniques that I've seen help dyslexics to achieve. Initially, I started my quest to find solutions to help my own children who were failing dreadfully at school. Thankfully, they are all doing extremely well academically now. I was amazed and delighted by what I found and I have gone on to pass this knowledge onto many educational professionals, parents and students.

I strongly believe that technology, if implemented well, can help overcome the problems dyslexics often experience with reading, writing, spelling and remembering, enabling them to overcome these difficulties and achieve their true potential.

Over the years, I have wasted a lot of money on technology that turned out to be useless, and I know of many families and schools that have done the same.

I'm acutely aware that having children with special needs can be expensive. It's easy to spend money on sub optimal solutions, so I always recommend trying free solutions first.

Click here to watch a video that shares how to avoid wasting money

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I hope you find this information on FREE technology for students with dyslexia helpful and that you can utilise it to help learners achieve their full potential without spending money unnecessarily. As you read, please remember I'm hideously dyslexic and Achieve Now is essentially me and a few wonderful friends who help me occasionally. I'm compiling this book, not because I'm a talented writer, but because I have a genuine desire to help. I hate to think of learners struggling needlessly when free solutions exist. Please be graceful when you find spelling/grammar/typing mistakes!

I am very keen to pass on what I have learnt so that others won't have to struggle, hence I've taken the time to create this eBook, which believe me is not a small task for someone as dyslexic as me! I'd be grateful if you could pass on my details to anyone else who could benefit, so that they can sign up to get a copy. This way I can keep them informed of updates.

This document is a work in progress and as such it will never be finished. There will always be new products and free trials, (and corrections to my poor English!) as this is a rapidly advancing area. My intention is to keep updating the information, hence it's an eBook, it will never be printed.

If I waited for this to be perfectly written/edited, with all possible solutions included, it would simply never be distributed, and no one would benefit.

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Life transforming technology freely available

Few know it exists

Consequently many continue to struggle needlessly

I have gathered over 50 FREE solutions that I think are worth sharing. There are many more that didn't make the cut. Some of the free tech outlined in my eBook are offered free in the hopes that you will purchase a better paid version, others are offered as a free trial for a limited period. It is always wise to try before you buy. Certain functionality/solutions have always been and will always be free.

I have attempted to include technologies that can be utilised by students of all ages on different types of devices, in the hopes that everyone reading will find something helpful that they can use.

Below are ten areas in which I have successfully utilised technology to raise attainment.

Categories of Technology to raise attainment

Screen
Learn to read
Encourage reading
Read to learn
Take notes
Improve understanding
Get organised
Produce written work
Learn & Revise
Assist in exams
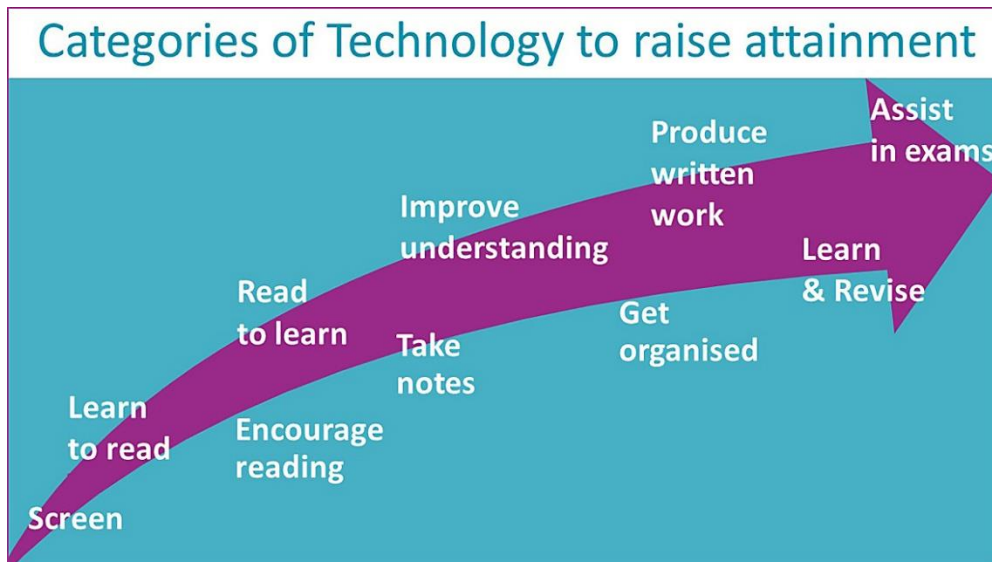
Click here to see a video that better explains each of these categories & how to find technology to help in each

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I have organised the solutions I have found broadly into these sections. Alas, I couldn't find good free tech in every area. If you know of a free tech solution that I have omitted, please do let me know so I can include it and share it with others.

This PDF is designed to **be read on a device.**

Printing out the whole document is NOT recommended.

The links included are intended to be clicked on rather than retyped into a browser.

The embedded links lead to:

- further helpful information
- websites where solutions can be downloaded

At the time of creation all the links worked. If this changes, please let us know. Screen shots are also provided to help users utilise functionality successfully. If you have any suggestions of how I can improvement/update the information, please email info@achievenow.org.uk.

Much of the functionality included in this PDF will be available in video format on the Achieve Now YouTube Channel. Sometimes it is easier to see how something is done rather than read about it. I recommend you check out this channel and if you want to be informed about when my new videos are added please Subscribe and hit the bell icon.

Click here to see an introduction to the Achieve Now YouTube Channel

Click here to see a short playlist that helps decide which area to concentrate on first to best help your child

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2 Barriers to success when implementing technology

Before I launch into listing the plethora of technologies that can help, I need to warn you of the biggest barrier to success I've experienced.

The biggest barrier to a student's success is their lack of self-belief

While technology can transform learning for students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties (SpLD), technology is NOT a cure all. I'll warn you of another problem I have witnessed.

Technology can be very expensive and achieve very little

One reason for this is that students who struggle with literacy often feel overwhelmed, exhausted and defeated. Some have totally given up on education. In these cases, it is hard to motivate them to invest additional time and effort into learning new technologies or techniques.

Learners need to understand that
- they are intelligent, but they struggle with literacy
- their intelligence is NOT defined by their literacy ability
- technology can help them overcome their difficulties.

Only when a student **starts to believe in their own ability** will they embrace new tech. When they begin to see the benefits of expending the effort required to use new methods of working, they become more open to learning more solutions to help them overcome the difficulties that are limiting their success.

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How can you help young learners understand that they are bright when they experience such difficulties with learning at school? Sometimes parents and teachers can repeat this information many times and yet it does not appear to impact the student.

2.1 **What I've seen help**

It can be encouraging, inspiring and motivating to watch videos in which dyslexics, including celebrities, speak about how they have overcome their learning difficulties and not been held back by them.

I have gathered together **several videos** to help parents, teachers and children better understand dyslexia specifically and learning differences in general. The videos selected are the ones that positively impacted students in my after-school Achieve Clubs. They are **free** and can be accessed from any device, phone, tablet, desktop or laptop. I have supplied numerous videos as what would help one individual might not help another.

What inspires one learner might demotivate another. I therefore recommend that adults watch the videos first and decide which ones might be the most appropriate to show their children/students.

Much of the functionality included in this PDF will be available in video format on the **Achieve Now YouTube Channel**. Sometimes it is easier to see how something is done rather than read about it. I recommend you check out this channel and **if you want to be informed** about when my new videos are added, just **Subscribe** and hit the **bell icon.**

Click here to see more information on how to build confidence in dyslexic children

If you know of other helpful videos that are not included in my list, please let me know!

Click here to see a playlist of encouraging videos on the Achieve Now YouTube Channel

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2.2 **Realistic expectations**

Have realistic expectations, huge change doesn't tend to occur over night but you need to keep moving in the right direction.

Even when students understand that they are bright and that technology can help them achieve, it still takes a little time to go from "struggling" to "succeeding". Even with my best success stories students haven't gone from achieving D's to A*'s overnight.

Experience suggests that progress is an iterative process that starts with students developing a sense of belief in their own ability.

Self-belief and self-confidence underpin the process of progress. As self-belief grows and becomes more embedded, the dyslexic learner will be more open to integrate new technology into their lives. As they see the progress that they are making through use of various solutions, this often inspires them to persevere and be more open to try other solutions and techniques.

2.3 **Advantages of introducing technology early**

Our work is twofold – building self-confidence and introducing IT. It can be problematic if we introduce the latter without building the former.

When learners haven't had their self-esteem damaged by years of struggling at school, this process is much easier. The graph below is a light-hearted representation of why it is good to introduce technology early.
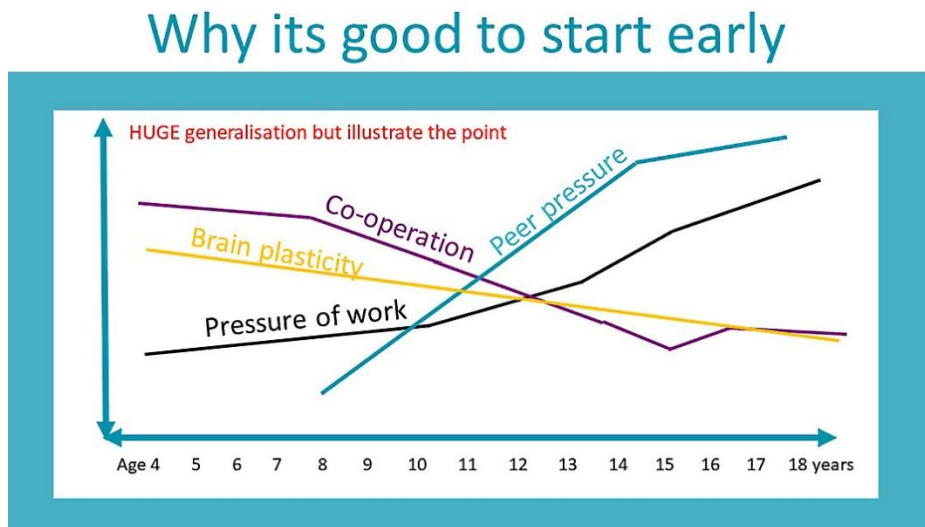
Younger children whose self-esteem is not damaged by years of struggling at school, are often more receptive to using technology and techniques to improve learning. They are frequently excited about being able to use technology for schoolwork.

As students get older, they care a lot more about fitting in with their peer group. Some don't want to be different in any way, even if that means getting lower marks /grades. These students resist using technology and are often so overwhelmed by the sheer volume of schoolwork they have that they do not have the headspace to learn how to use new technology or to techniques to improve their grades.

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3 Teaching your child to read and spell

Some children find learning to read and spell very difficult. They need multi-sensory and fun strategies that keep them engaged so that they are happy to repeat them regularly to reinforce learning.

I differentiate between solutions that **teach reading and spelling** and those that help children **prepare for spelling tests**. While the former will hopefully help children prepare for weekly spell tests, there are many solutions specifically designed to help learn the lists of words children are given. This will be handled in a separate section. See**. Section 5 Preparing for Spell Tests**

Don't wait!!!

Parents often receive well intentioned advice "don't worry they're just a late developer". While I would agree you shouldn't worry, I would advise you **NOT to wait.** The earlier the intervention the better chance of catching up. Alternately they could fall even further behind, then reducing the gap will be harder. Your child can only benefit from your support, so please don't delay.

Quick warning to parents

I need to warn parents that just because *you* find reading easy, it doesn't mean that you will find teaching a child to read straightforward.

The English language is extremely complicated and for some, it is extremely difficult to learn to read. Teaching one's own child how to recognise the 26 letters of the alphabet is a gross oversimplification and will not be sufficient to overcome difficulties with reading.

Thankfully online training exists on to help parents better understand all that is required when teaching children to read.

Get equipped to teach your child

I have put together some helpful resources for parents my website on

3.1 How Children Learn to Read – the Science of Reading by Sound

This is an amazingly comprehensive blog post by Marnie Ginsberg contains a wealth of information plus number of how-to videos.

3.2 Helpful video for parents from Dyslexia Daily

Learn How to READ and SPELL helpful video if you want to help your child learn to read.

The speaker Liz Dunoon runs **Dyslexia Daily** https://www.dyslexiadaily.com/.

Dyslexia Daily sell a paid 'ten minute a day' solution but they also provide a lot of free resources on their YouTube channel. If you sign up to their email list, you will be informed when they are running offers.

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3.3 Springboard - A Parent's Little Guide to Helping Children Read

https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/documents/files/Springboard%20A%20Parent's%20Little%20Guide%20to%20Helping%20Children%20Read.pdf

3.4 Why phonemic awareness is so critical to teaching students to read

In this free webinar provided by Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education - CORE, Dr.David Kilpatrick explains why phonemic awareness is so critical to teaching students to read. You must register to watch but I have not received any unwanted emails as a result. I'd be delighted if they did contact me with follow-up information.

Access the on-demand webinar here http://ow.ly/M6Z450wseqa

Dangers of teaching your children to read

Even if you are totally knowledgeable on how to teach a child to read, when it's your own child, he/she can react differently to you and it can be more challenging.

Tutoring your own child can negatively impact family harmony. Personally, I had three dyslexic children who needed my help at exactly the same time.

Personally, I opted to use technology (intervention solutions) rather than working directly with my own children all the time. I found that the solution on the device became 'the tutor' and I remained 'the mum' who helped them to do the work the programme set for them. This helped to maintain family harmony and it was far more efficient, as it enabled me to work with my three children at the same time.

Another alternative is to find a qualified tutor. Unfortunately, in some areas demand is greater than supply.

3.5 Tutor /Asser Searches

To find a local tutor or assessor in the UK, have a look at these websites:-

 https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/About-the-Tutor-Index

https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/tutor-list

Unfortunately, in some areas demand is greater than supply.

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4 Learn read - intervention solutions

Technology is a perfect medium for creating engaging, entertaining and even addictive solutions to help children to learn. These are known as **intervention solutions**.

Learn more on why technology is an ideal medium for intervention solutions.

Click here to see a video introduction to intervention solutions

Click here to see a video explaining why I abandoned paper-based solutions for technology with my own children

Most intervention solutions are NOT free as they cost a lot to develop but they do tend to be reasonably priced**. This is an area where investing money in technology is worthwhile.**

Full intervention solutions start with an assessment that sets specific targets for learners and then guides them through a personalised program of study that helps them overcome specific areas of weakness.

They are ideal for those who are not trained specifically to help dyslexics as they guide learners through a structured tailored programme.

Good solutions adapt to suit the needs of the individual.

If budgets are tight and you are not able to pay for a full intervention program, ask your child's school if they can provide a solution.

If you are a school, investing in these solutions is worthwhile because:

- Schools get preferential rates due to economies of scale.
- Tech solutions are far more cost effective and flexible than training staff to support dyslexic learning.
- Every school has a significant proportion of children who would benefit from an investment in this area.

Reasonably priced solutions include:

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- Nessy, https://www.nessy.com/ Learn more by watching this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Q_Ushl03YM&ab_channel=Nessy
- Dyslexia Gold, https://dyslexiagold.co.uk/
- Lexia, https://www.lexialearning.com/
- Wordshark Online https://www.wordshark.co.uk/wordshark/parents/
- Units of Sound https://www.unitsofsound.com/ This is the best option to help adults
- Dyslexia Daily https://www.dyslexiadaily.com/.

Click here to see a video introducing 7 reasonably priced intervention solutions

While my children benefitted from the services of dyslexia tutors, they tended to only see them once a week. I used intervention solutions to solidify what they had been taught throughout the week.

Dyslexic learners benefit from studying little and often/daily. Another benefit of intervention solutions is that they are portable. An iPad or lightweight laptop can be carried around and used while on the go making the most of any downtime.

Free solutions to help children learn to read:

4.1 **Alphablocks**

Alphablocks is a BBC TV Show that teaches phonics. It is on the BBC iPlayer but I couldn't find the first series on the iPlayer and as there might be licensing issue for anyone outside the UK, I am linking you to their YouTube Channel. You can purchase accompanying books but the videos are FREE. They also do interactive episodes and Numberblocks.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_qs3c0ehDvZkbiEbOj6Drg?&ab_channel=Alphablocks

4.2 **Teach your Monster to Read**

https://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/ Watch the trailer.

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The **computer** version of this product is free.

4.3 Free Trial of Nessy Reading & Spelling for 7 days

The children I've worked with, love Nessy! It makes the repetition required to embed phonics not only bearable but fun. I totally agree with their strap line "Learning happens when it's fun".

They have a number of different products. Below is a 7 day free trial of one of their **Reading and Spelling** product. Their free trials for schools tend to be for much longer.

https://www.nessy.com/uk/register-trial-2/
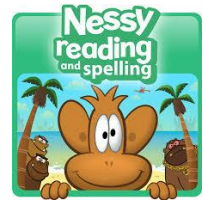
It you go on to purchase Nessy, Achieve Now has a **Discount code 56par.** From experience, I would advise parents to engage with and understand that the objectives of this solution to ensure that children stay focused on progressing through their targets NOT simply to earn as many nuggets as possible. It will not be as effective without supervision as dyslexic kids are smart and can figure out how to do the minimum.

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4.4 Dyslexia Gold - Engaging Eyes, Fluency Builder, Spelling Tutor, & Times Table Tutor

Dyslexia Gold very kindly created a free trial of all their products on my request. Their products are competitively priced and are paid for on a monthly basis, with no minimum period, hence there wasn't a free offering. I'm very grateful they responded positively to my request.

It creates an account that can be used **5 times and** then you need to subscribe if you want to keep playing. Dyslexia Gold is a suite of four very different products that help deal with a range of difficulties often experienced by dyslexics. These solutions go way beyond helping children with phonics.

Two of the products have been shown to dramatically improve reading:

- Engaging Eyes (convergence & tracking)
- Fluency Builder (phonological awareness)

All four solutions can be purchased in the bundle or you can select the product(s) you require.

free trial: https://dyslexiagold.co.uk/Trial# Utilise this free trial when you have time to test it out and work out which solutions will help your child.

To play the target practice game in Engaging Eyes, students need to wear **3D glasses.**

If you decide to buy Engaging Eyes, Dyslexia Gold will send you a pair. To help you when using the trial, I have tracked down the cheapest version of 3D glasses I can find. These ones are very affordable (£1.49 when found) they are sourced from the UK Click here for more information.
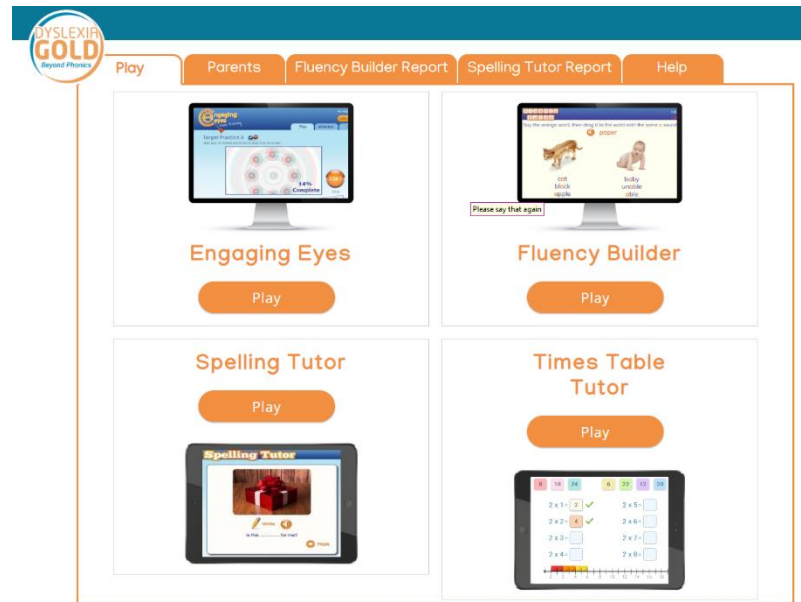
4.5 Reading Eggs Free Trial
https://readingeggs.co.uk/parents/signup/

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This is not a solution I have used. It's included because I've seen positive reviews in Dyslexia forums, and felt its addition was required for the sake of completeness when listing the solutions in this area. I'd be interested to hear what you think of it.

4.6 Education.com

This site has a number of useful games, including those that help improve phonological awareness
https://gb.education.com/games/phonological-awareness/

Help for adults

The choice of solutions to help adults to learn to read are more limited. While an adult's literacy competence might seem similar to a child's, I would not recommend using the same solutions. The features that make games fun for children can be demeaning and frustrating for adults.

4.7 Skillswise English and maths for adults

https://www.skillsworkshop.org/index.php/english

4.8 More information on adult literacy

This is not my area of expertise so I will direct you to organisations that know better.

https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/

https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/tips/tools-to-support-adult-literacy.html

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4.9 **Visual issues**

Sometimes a child's poor reading can be caused by visual issues that do not show up on regular eye tests. Below is a fantastic free resource that provides parents with fun eye exercises to enhance their children's visual processing skills for better school performance and sustained attention.

http://eyecanlearn.com/

"Glasses **can**'t help, but **eye** exercises **can**!" This website **will** give you "good information on vision-based **learning** problems, and they have even provided an assessment tool to determine if your child is at risk." The exercises on this website are **not vision therapy**.

Vision therapy is a medical treatment prescribed by developmental optometrists. More information can be found on http://babo.co.uk/. This website helps parents find a developments optometrist in the UK http://babo.co.uk/find-a-behavioural-optometrist/

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5 Preparing for spelling tests

Spelling tests can be extremely demoralising for dyslexic children and preparing for them can be time consuming and stressful for the whole family. This article suggests ways in which parents can help children be resilient if they don't do well in spelling test https://www.achievenow.org.uk/spelling.

There are many IT solutions to help children prepare for spelling tests. Below are some you can try for free. These are not comprehensive intervention solutions, but they can help children overcome the need to learn a specific list or learning sight words.

They help students learn and, more importantly, test spelling. Repeating spell tests can be very time consuming for adults to supervise, so these solutions free up parents/staff.

Technology should really be a complement to and not a complete replacement for traditional learning methods. **There is still HUGE value in 'look, cover, write, check',** no matter how much more appealing playing games on a tablet or computer can be to children.

Recent research has shown that writing by hand engages the brain differently than typing. Forming letters by hand rather than hitting a fully formed letter is a different task.

I see these solutions as just another multisensory tool that you can pull out if required. I found my children didn't want to spend any time looking, covering writing etc. Instead they wanted me to test them all the time, being sure they'd magically get them correct next time. This proved time consuming and ineffective hence I used these solutions.

The best solution for an individual depends on the:

- Age of the child. Some have graphics suitable for younger children.
- Device they work on (iPad, laptop, Mac, etc). Solutions are often written for a platform/device.

Here are some of the options.

5.1 **Spelling City**

If your child doesn't do well with American accents, then this isn't the solution for you!
https://www.spellingcity.com/free-trial.html

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Parents can set up free teacher accounts where they can add spelling lists. There isn't an option to record your own voice saying the words.

The free account allows you to create word lists, play a limited number of games, (when compared to the paid version), and complete spell tests.
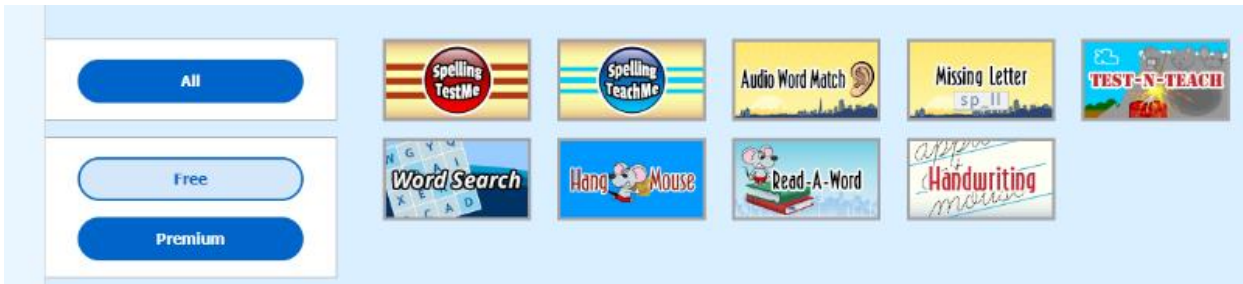
5.2 **Squeebles**

Only offer a free trial account to schools, but their apps are competitively priced. This app has the option of recording your own voice, which can be fun for younger children.
For more information see. https://keystagefun.co.uk/schools/

5.3 **A+ Spelling Test App**

A+ Spelling App allows users to create their own word list and record their own voice that it then uses. Rather than just take test students, A+ has a practice mode and enables users to play games to unscramble spellings, which is more fun in my opinion than just testing.
Unfortunately there is only an iPad/iPhone version.

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/a-spelling-test/id501211008

5.4 **Spellzone**

Spellzone give families a 10 day free trial

https://www.spellzone.com/register/page1.cfm?type=home&users=4&code=home17

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Learning Sight words

Sight words are commonly used words that cannot be "sounded out." because they don't follow the rules of spelling. Children need to learn them 'by sight', that is recognise rather than sound them out. Helping dyslexic children master these words while initially difficult will help them enormously when it comes to reading as it will save them continuously wasting time trying to decode words that simply cannot be decoded.

Here are a few free options to help.

5.5 Learn Sight Words for Apple

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/learn-sight-words/id341456761?mt=8

5.6 Learn Sight Words for android tablet or phone

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=cz.cfc.androidgp.sightwordslite&hl=en

5.7 Learn sight words for Windows

https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/sight-words-to-help-kids-read/9nblggh6hvqd?activetab=pivot:overviewtab

5.8 100 most common English words

When teaching children to read and spell it helpful to know the most common words in the English language, also known as **high frequency words.** Many of these words follow phonetic rules, other are 'sight words'.

Once children have mastered these reading English isn't as difficult. Plus, they form the basis of many of the words

The crucial 100 words
· a, about, after, all, am, an, and, are, as, at, away
· back, be, because, big, but, by
· call, came, can, come, could
· did, do, down
· for, from

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· get, go, got
· had, has, have, he, her, here, him, his
· in, into, is, it
· last, like, little, live, look
· made, make, me, my
· new, next, not, now
· of, off, old, on, once, one, other, our, out, over
· put
· saw, said, see, she, so, some
· take, that, the, their, them, then, there, they, this, three, time, to, today, too, two
· up, us
· very
· was, we, were, went, what, when, will, with
· you

5.9 **Quizlet to teach the most common English words**

I have created a **Quizlet study set** to help children learn the most common English words in sentences. You can use this now if you have a Quizlet account.

If not, I'd recommend creating a free Quizlet account as it is a fantastic learning resource and only takes seconds to create.

https://quizlet.com/_72oqwe

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5.10 **Helpful vocabulary lists**

Helpful vocabulary lists can be found in this webpage https://www.ef.co.uk/english-resources/english-vocabulary/

These include

- A list of the 100 most common words in English
- A list of the 50 most common nouns in English
- A list of the 50 most common verbs in English
- A list of the 50 most common adjectives in English

5.11 **NEVER let poor spelling kill creativity or confidence**

Many children I work with are far too fearful of making spelling mistakes. Having had the negative experience of doing badly in spelling tests, they can become reluctant to write.

Dyslexic children need to be encouraged to use their considerable talents, to be creative, innovative, problem solve and think outside the box. In the real world, the quality of thinking and content of what is written is important, NOT spelling ability.

If children spell something wrong, it really isn't a big deal!

When I teach, I make sure that I make lots of spelling mistakes (which isn't hard) and then I shrug my shoulders and say. 'I cannot spell, so what? There's always spell check!'

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6 Encourage reluctant readers

Most children love stories and many like learning facts, but for some dyslexic children, having to decode letters on a page is frustrating, painful and even traumatic.

When this is the case, children often avoid reading and subsequently fail to develop vital vocabulary, sentence construction and comprehension skills. More importantly, they don't develop a love of reading.

Forcing these children to read can have a negative impact on family harmony and can lead to a child developing a deeply rooted dislike of and resistance to reading.

Reading to and with these children is advisable. However, parents don't always have an infinite amount of time to do so and children get to an age where they feel they are too old to be read to.

This section is packed full of wide-ranging solutions and technology that can make the reading experience more tolerable, even fun!

Click here to see a video introduction to encouraging reluctant readers

6.1 Benefits of reading for pleasure

Not only does reading for pleasure improve academic success, but it has also been shown to improve: emotional intelligence, empathy, creativity, confidence, well being.

The list of benefits goes on and on. More research can be found here.

Today, children have so many entertainment options available to them that struggling through reading isn't attractive. Evidence suggests that most children say that they don't enjoy reading.

If for whatever reason a child struggles learning to read, expecting them to read for pleasure is ambitious.

Knowing from first - hand experience how very hard it can be to instil a love of reading in dyslexic children I've created this video to share honestly about the mistakes I made and what I would do if I had my time over again.

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Learning to read	Reading for pleasure
Necessary life skill	Activity to be enjoyed
Often difficult for dyslexics	NOT skill dependent

Achieve Now — Transforming Learning achievenow.org.uk

With my children I made the mistake of confusing these two separate activities.

- Learning to read
- Reading for pleasure

6.2 Tips to help instil a love of reading

Here are some top tips for parents of reluctant readers.

1. Negotiate a later bedtime that can only be used for reading together.

2. Don't force a child to finish a book they don't like, find books they enjoy.

3.Try to find books where their names appear, or where the main character has something in common with them.

4. If you struggle to find books they enjoy, try comics as they can be less intimidating.

5. Don't make a child read, read to them. Perhaps they could read every fourth page, this keeps the pace of the story engaging. Some these are mutually exclusive activities.

6. If a child stumbles on a word, quickly supply it, keep the story enjoyable.

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7. Resist the opportunity to get children to 'spell out' difficult words. Remember reading for pleasure i
NOT an opportunity to teach children how to read

8. Make sure child(ren) see you read for pleasure.

9. Take child(ren) to the library regularly. It could be to participate in a library holiday program.

10. Don't be distracted by your phone or other devices when reading to child(ren), they need to se
you model putting books before devices.

11. If reading on a device experiment with different fonts, background colours, and layouts. For
some readers, these small changes can make reading much easier and therefore more enjoyable.

12. Where parents struggle to read out loud well, listen to audiobooks together. Children are
perceptive if parents aren't enjoying reading chances are they will pick it up.

There are many great options to listen together these include CDs or mp4 downloads

13. When listening to a book together, consider following along with the print version, particularly if
there are illustrations.

Read-along books are when the text and illustrations are accompanied by professional narration.
Libraries often supply Read along books free of charge.

14. For children that really resist sitting down to read together, try a captivating audiobook when on a
journey. Hopefully, the story will hook them (when it is the only entertainment available), then finish
book at home.

15. Stop to ask what the child thinks will happen, what would have been a better ending, this helps
develop creativity.

16. Read (or listen to) books that have been made into movies and then watch the movie and do a
comparison. I suspect most times the book will be preferred

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Audio Books

Listening to audio books is a great solution and thankfully there are many ways you can do this for free.

Library Apps

You can get FREE eBooks and audio books from your library.

You need to be a member of the library and have your **membership card** and **pin**. These can be easily obtained from your library. **Audio books can be played on phones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers**. There are many solutions available, I advise that you check with your local library to see which app they would recommend. To read library books on desktop or laptop machines, you can get more information from the relevant websites.

Solutions I am familiar with are:

6.3 RB Digital

https://rbdigital.com/

6.4 Overdrive

https://www.overdrive.com

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6.5 Borrow Box

https://www.borrowbox.com/

To listen to books on your **phone** or **tablet** you need to **download the relevant app**. These apps are free.

Charities

Several charities also provide audio books. Their service is free for those that need it. A nominal contribution to the charity might be requested.

6.6 Calibre

https://www.calibre.org.uk/

6.7 Listening Books

https://www.listening-books.org.uk/downloadable.aspx

Read Along Books

Read Along Books have the added benefit of highlighting the text to help children read along as the book is read by an actor, not an electronic voice. Sometimes the text is in an electronic book, other times you can borrow the hard copy book from the library. Many read along books are available for a small charge. It would be worthwhile searching to see if Read Along Books exist for a child's favourite character or interest.

I managed to find a few available for free.

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6.8 Overdrive – Read along books

For example, Return of the Jedi https://www.overdrive.com/media/2247971/return-of-the-jedi
Each word is highlighted in the electronic copy of the book as it is read by the actor, complete with sound effects. Alternatively, the physical book can be borrowed from the library. The narration plays a particular sound to direct the reader to turn the page.

6.9 Toy Story read along books (for Android devices)

https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Toy_Story_2_Read_Along_Storybook?id=ywyTGVJYPzUC&hl=en_US

Read-along Books on YouTube

This might seem like a strange concept. Why watch a video? Why not just read a book to the child? While reading to your child is preferable, it might not always be possible. These videos are 'screen time' that could help your child to develop a love of reading. There are a numerous YouTube videos and channels devoted to read along books. They don't highlight each individual word, but the pages of the book are available for children to read. Here is a small selection of what is available.

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Free trials of paid services

6.10 Epic Digital Library

<u>Video to explain</u>
Instantly access 35,000 of the best books, learning videos, quizzes & more for Kids 12 & Under

6.11 FarFaria e-Book App

<u>Video to show you how it works</u>
This is a subscription service. I downloaded it onto my iPad and am able to see a limited number of books available without subscribing. Each word is highlighted and the graphics are attractive for young children. The narrator has an American accent.

6.12 Audible

Free Audiobook with 30-Day Trial/Audible.co.uk
Immersion Reading from Amazon is **NOT free** but I feel that I should mention it here as it can help many reluctant readers to read books when Read Along Books are not available. Here's a quick video to explain what immersion reading is.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcNrwpx2c58&ab_channel=BrianMeersma

6.13 Scribd

<u>Free 30 Day Trial https://www.scribd.com</u>

Read along books on YouTube

6.14 Pink Penguiny

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpBEkAmNULV5HpnQpA8fshqJqo0KfbkDp
Traditional stories read by an American child. You can see the text clearly but words are not highlighted.

6.15 Living Books – Cat in the Hat

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0reO2N0KgVU

e-Readers & e-Books

An e-reader is a handheld device on which electronic versions of books, newspapers, magazines, etc can be read. For example, a Kindle Paper White.

An eBook is an electronic book, that can be read on any computer or tablet. You don't have to buy an e-reader. The advantage an e-readers over a tablets or computers for dyslexic children is that children cannot play games on them. Therefore, if a child is sent to bed with an e-reader they won't be tempted to play a game on it instead of reading.

eReaders **are not free** but they often have **free functionality** that can be very helpful for dyslexics. Sometimes eBooks exists for a title when audio versions do not.

Click here to see a <u>Video of Kindle Dyslexia Friendly functionality</u>

eBooks can be less intimidating

Using an eBook can be beneficial as the size of the book is not off putting to the reluctant reader.

Sometimes the sight of a thick book can intimidate a child. The number of pages in a book is not obvious when using an e-reader.

6.16 Have eBooks read aloud

Electronic books can be read aloud if the device you are reading it on has speakers. Modern Kindles do NOT have speakers, but Kindle Fire tablets do. If you are reading an eBook on a computer, you can often have it read using text-to-speech functionality.

The Kindle Fire App has text-to-speech functionality that can be switched on. While it is not as good as professional narration, it can still be helpful.

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It is better to have an eBook read by an electronic reader than a child not being able to read a book at all.

6.17 **Kindle Fire - Word Runner**

This Free functionality can be found on Kindle Fire tablets. For some students it can make reading easier. To see this in action watch the video above.

Dyslexia friendly fonts

For some readers, changing the font and background page colour can greatly improve the reading experience.

Simply making the **font size** larger can make a book dyslexia-friendly. For some readers, using a dyslexia friendly font can aid reading significantly.

Article explaining dyslexic fonts and how they work

https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/dyslexia-friendly-font

Click here to see a playlist explaining how to use dyslexic friendly fonts on different devices

6.18 Open Dyslexic

Open Dyslexic is a free typeface/font designed to mitigate some of the common reading errors caused by dyslexia. These dyslexia-friendly fonts improve the ability of some dyslexics to read. Download Open dyslexic font http://opendyslexic.org/download/

6.19 Open Dyslexic Font for Chrome

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/opendyslexic-font-for-chr/cdnapgfjopgaggbmfgbiinmmbdcglnam?hl=en

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This Is an example of the Open Dyslexic Typeface

Dyslexia Friendly Books

Some publishers make dyslexia friendly books available. These books are not free, but you can request them from your local library.

6.19.1   Dyslexia friendly Harry Potter

https://www.businessinsider.com/harry-potter-companion-books-dyslexia-friendly-2019-3?r=US&IR=T
In an effort to make the magic of the wizarding world accessible to everyone, Bloomsbury Publishing just debuted a collection of dyslexia-friendly "Harry Potter" books.

6.19.2   Barrington Stokes

https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/. Barrington Stokes publish super-readable, accessible books that help every child experience the joy of reading.

6.19.3   Hank Zipzer

A series of children's books by actor Henry Winkler. Hank Zipzer was made into a BBC TV series. The books are printed in Dyslexie font designed to assist dyslexics with reading.
See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hank_Zipzer

6.19.4   Dyslexia Friendly Literature

https://www.dyslexia-books.co.uk/dyslexia-friendly-literature

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7 Reading to learn – Text to Speech (TTS)

Students are expected read in order to learn. If a student finds reading difficult, they are disadvantaged across the whole curriculum. This does not need to be the case, as **any text on a computer, tablet or phone can be read aloud** by the device. This functionality is known as **text to speech (TTS).** How to have text read aloud differs depending on the device you are using and what is being read. I have listed how to switch on this transformational functionality on the following devices/applications:

- Apple Mac computers
- Microsoft Machine
    - Office
    - Internet
        - Google Chrome
        - Internet Explorer
        Solution exists for all internet providers.
- IPad/iPhone
    - Speak selected text
    - Speak page

This functionality is explained in detail in the **Achieve Now YouTube channel -Read to learn section**

Click here to see videos explain text to speech functionality and how it can be used to help dyslexics achieve more

Click here for a playlist explaining how to use text to speech functionality on different devices

7.1 **Apple Mac computer**

To switch on Text to speech.
Select: **System Preferences**. Then **Speech**

Achieve Now
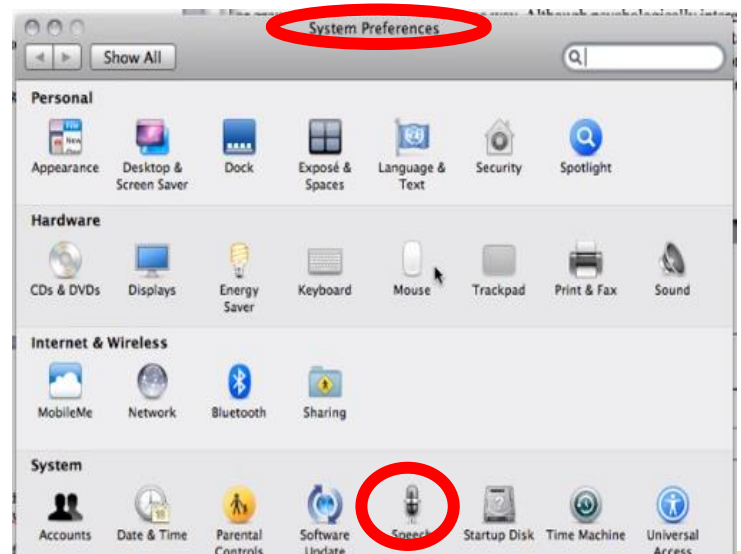
Tick **Speak selected text when the key is pressed**
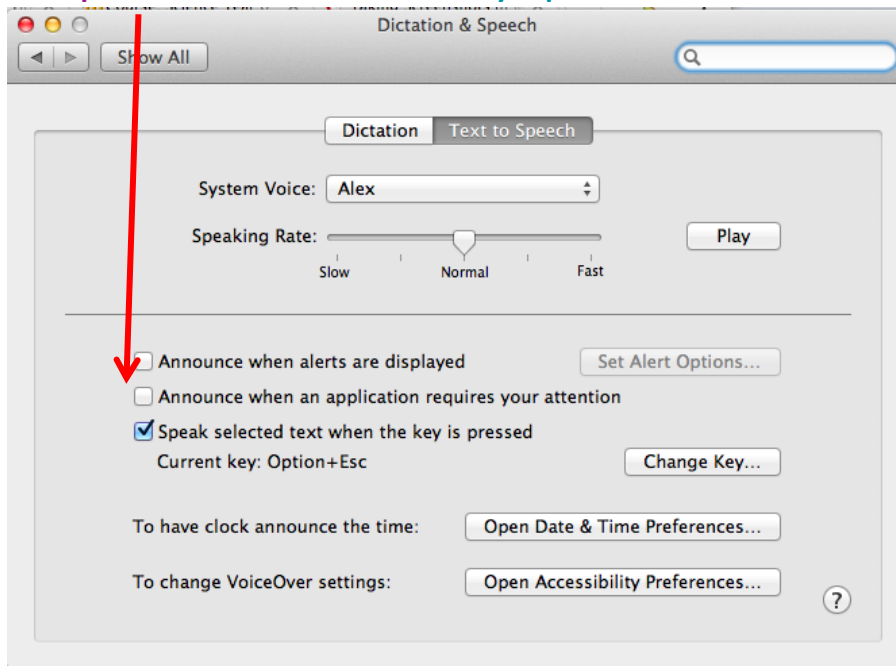
It is possible to change the System Voice and the speed

Achieve Now
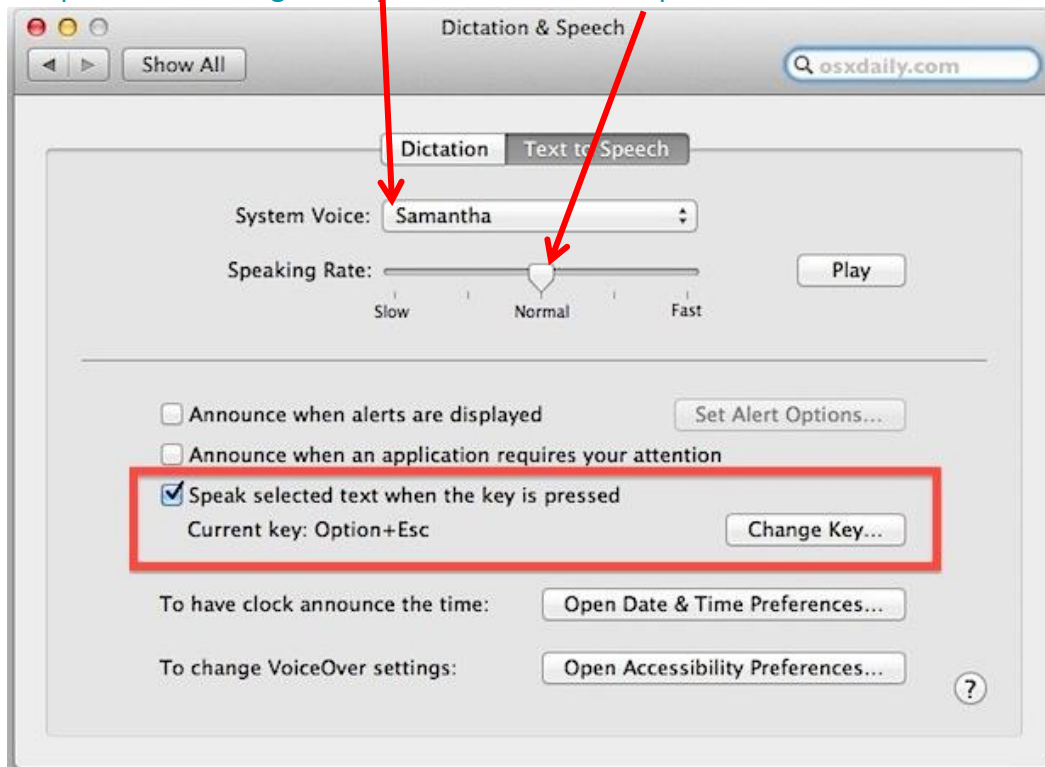
Once this setting is in place, **any text highlighted can be read by pressing the Option and Esc keys at the same time.**

It is possible to change the key combinations required to Speak selected text by pressing the **Change Key option.**

Set a key combination to speak selected text.

Type one or more modifier keys (Command, Shift, Option, or Control) and another key below. Use this key combination to hear your computer speak selected text. If the computer is speaking, press the keys to stop.

Shift+S

Cancel   OK
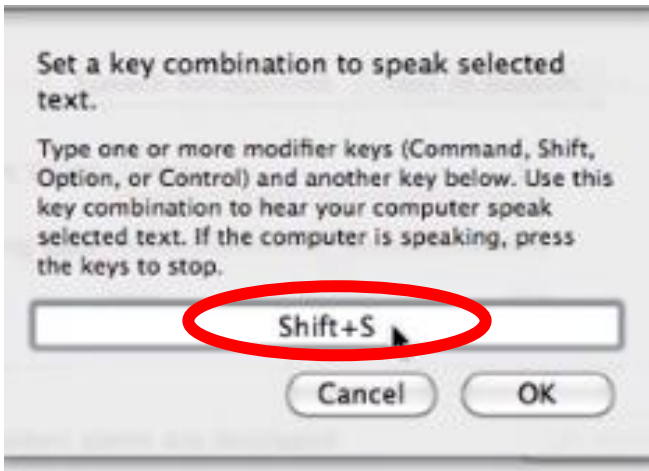
Once text-to-speech is enabled on a Mac, **it works anywhere text is available**.

There is no need to use the text-to-speech options listed in the rest of this section if you use a Mac. On Mac computers once you switch on this functionality **it works everywhere** on a Mac, in Word documents, the internet, pdfs.... anywhere there is text.

On a Microsoft machine you need to switch text to speech functionality on for different applications.

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7.2 **Microsoft Office**

Microsoft has significantly improved their accessibility features recently. How to best use text-to-speech depends on the Office installation you have.

Office 365

7.2.1 **Microsoft Read aloud**

Read aloud is found in the **Review** tab of the tool bar.
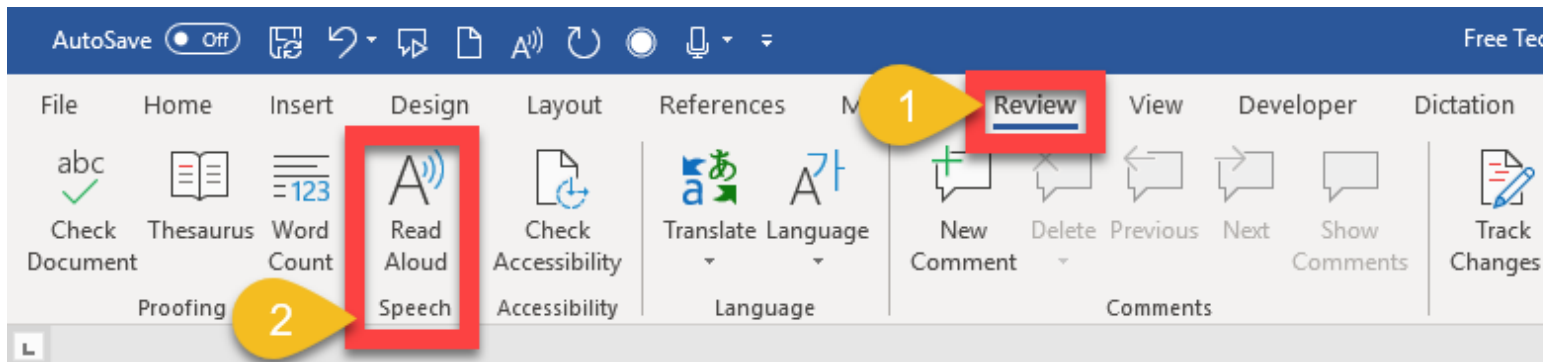
To have a document read aloud simply click on the **Read Aloud** option.
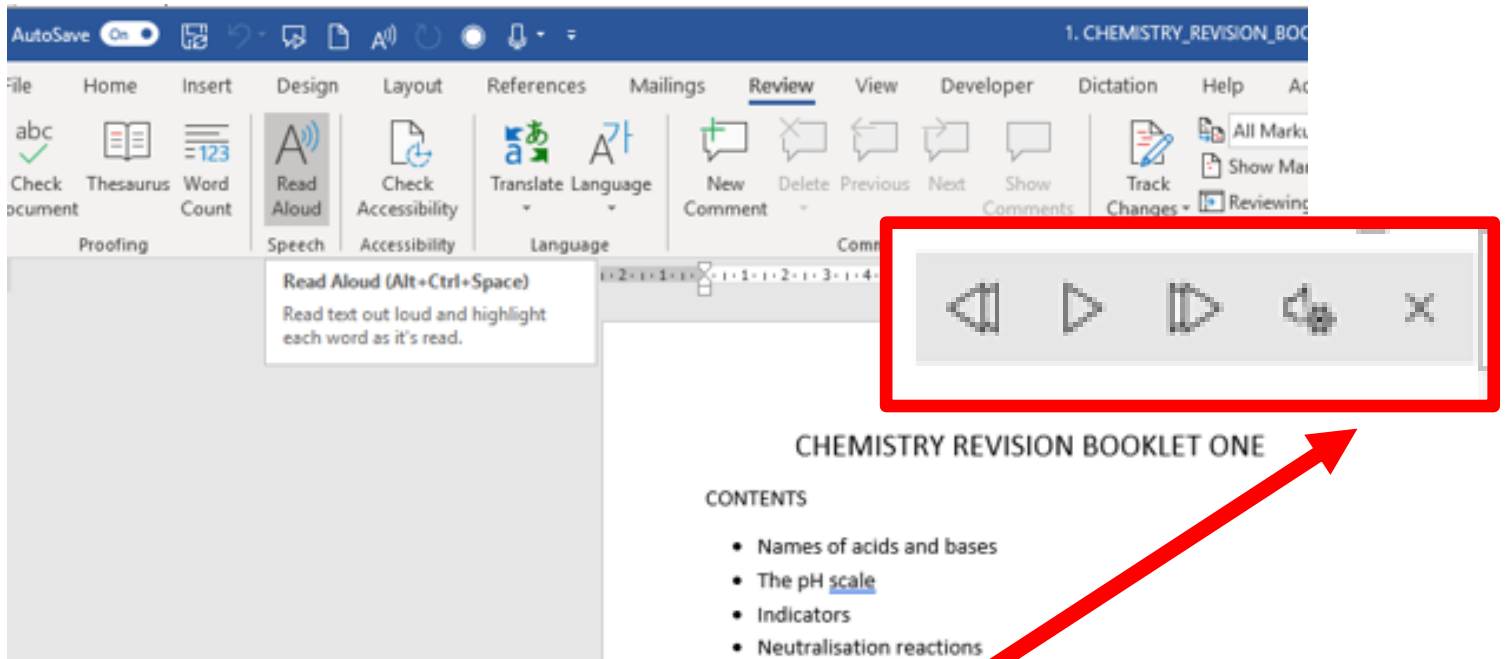
Control voice and speed within application using the options displayed

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7.2.2 **Microsoft Learning Tools**

Learning Tools are found in the **View** tab
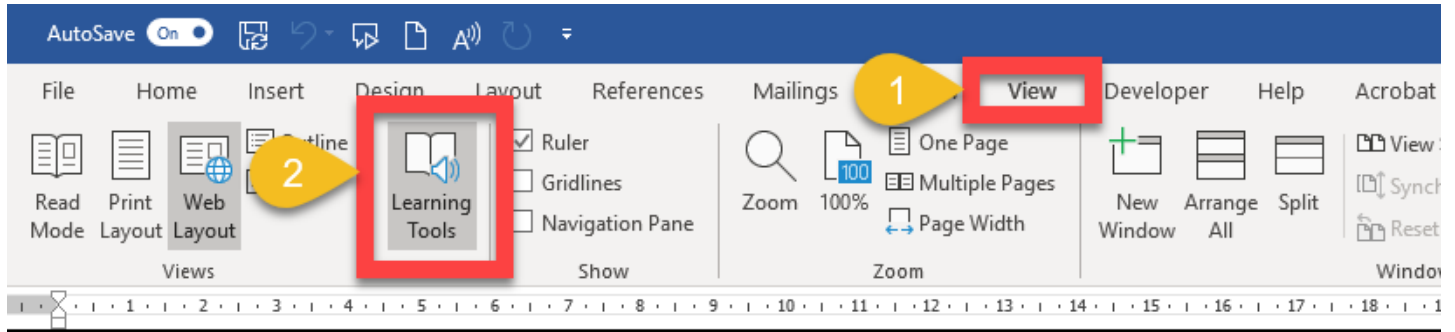
When opened **Learning Tools** display the following options for immersive reading.
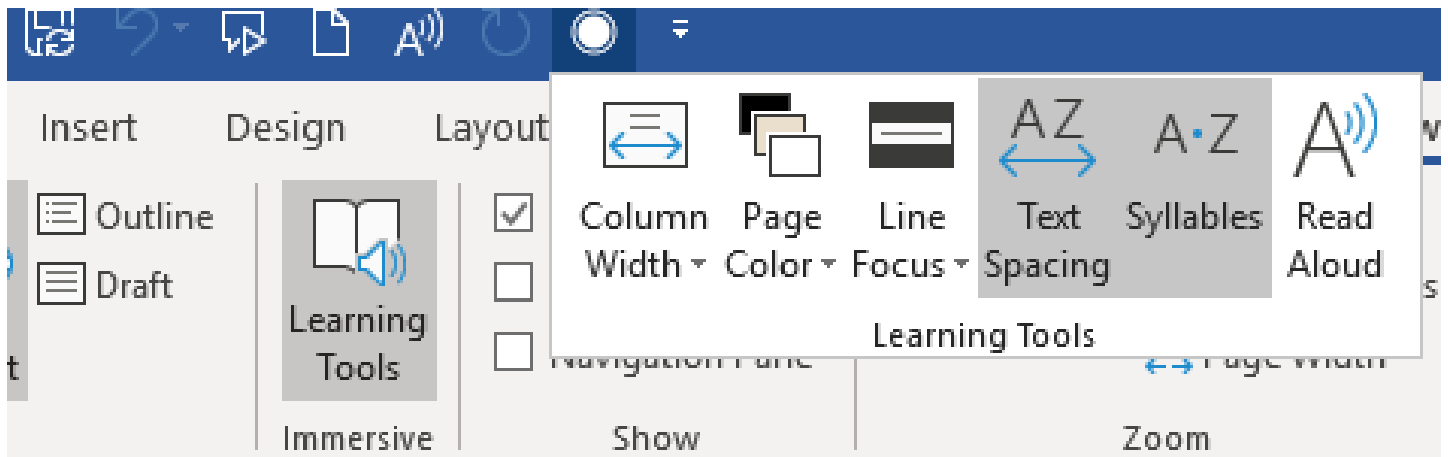
These options can be used to **amend the view** seen by the person editing to make the document easier to navigate for those with preference, **WITHOUT changing the actual document**.

If multiple users are collaborating on a single document, each user could use options within Learning Tools to have a totally different view of the same information.
The options available include:

- Colum Width
- Page colour
- Line focus
- Text spacing
- Syllable division

The **Read Aloud** functionality is also available in Learning tools

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An example of how **Learning Tools** can change the **view** of a document.
This is the same document with different options selected.

Achieve Now
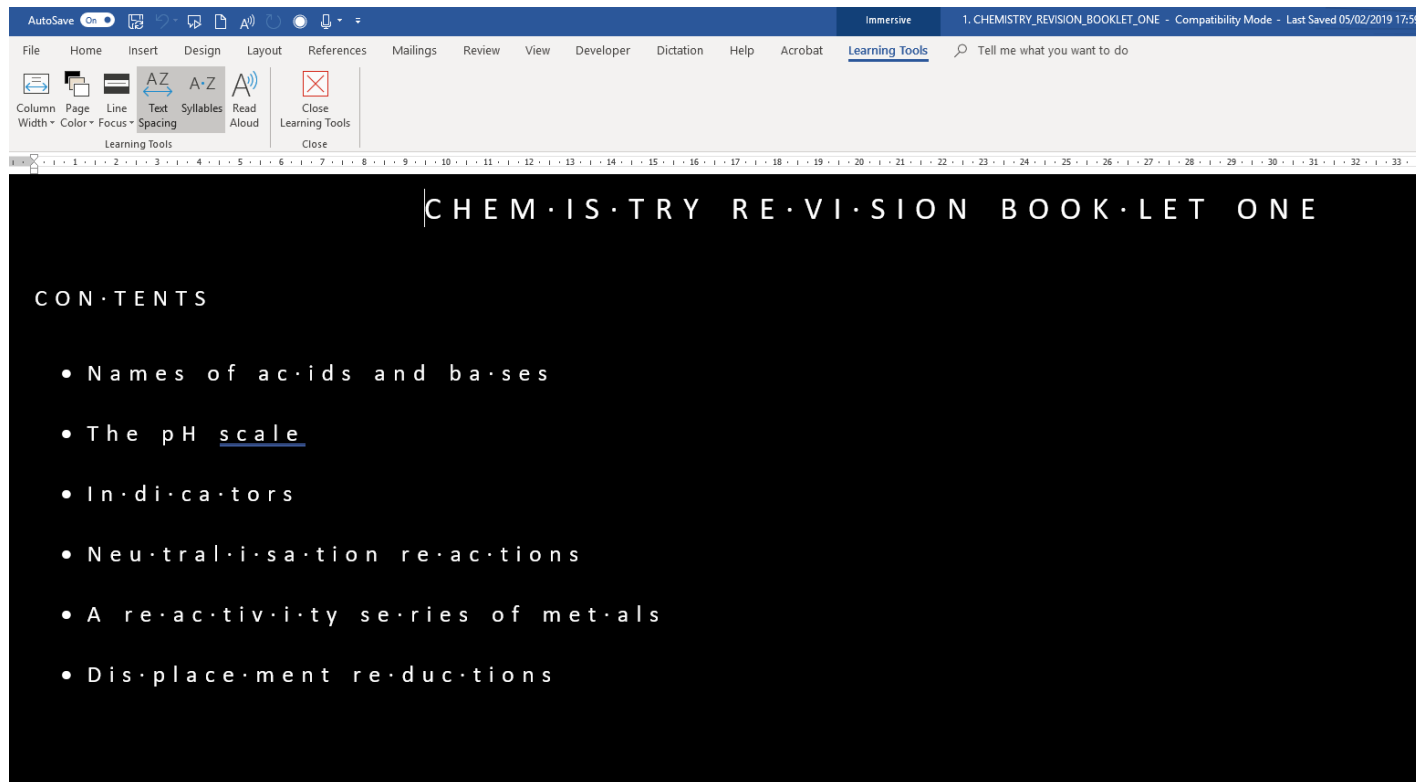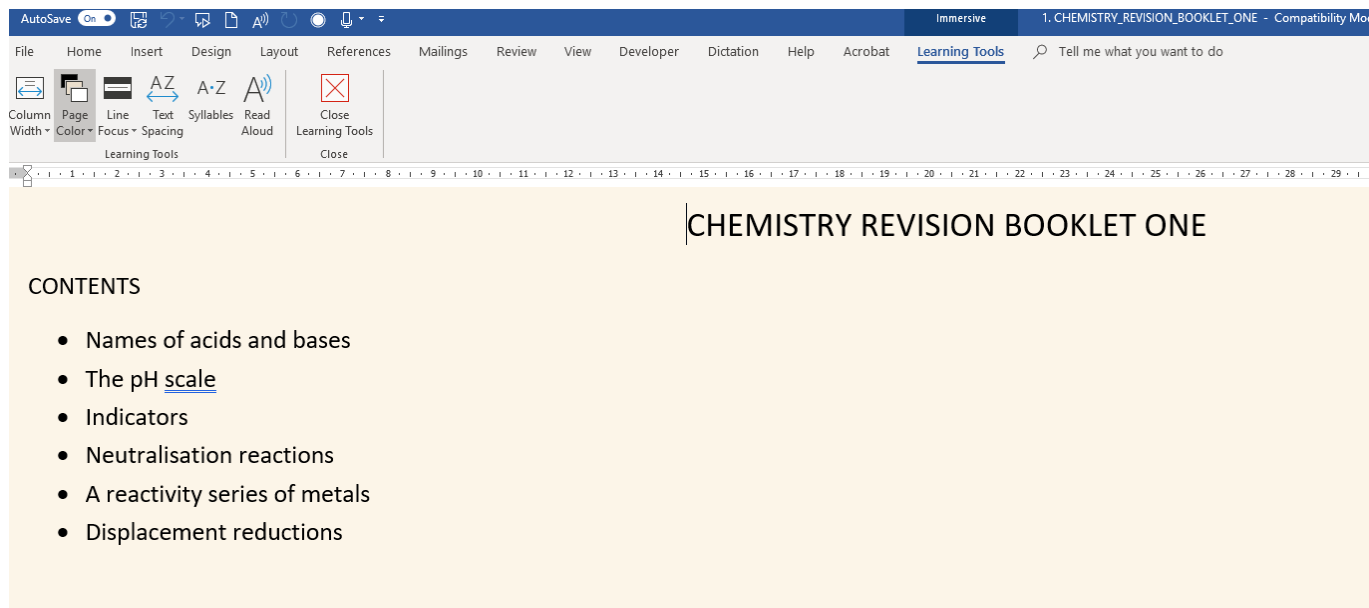
To close the **Learning Tools** view
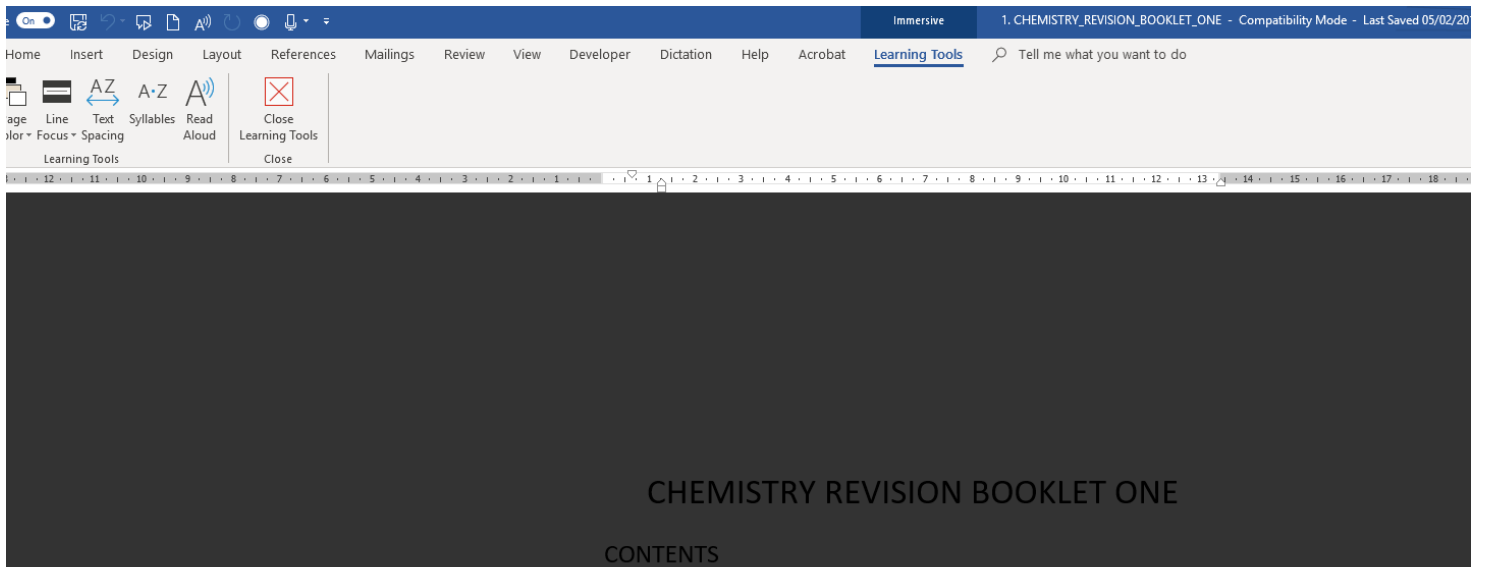
Achieve Now
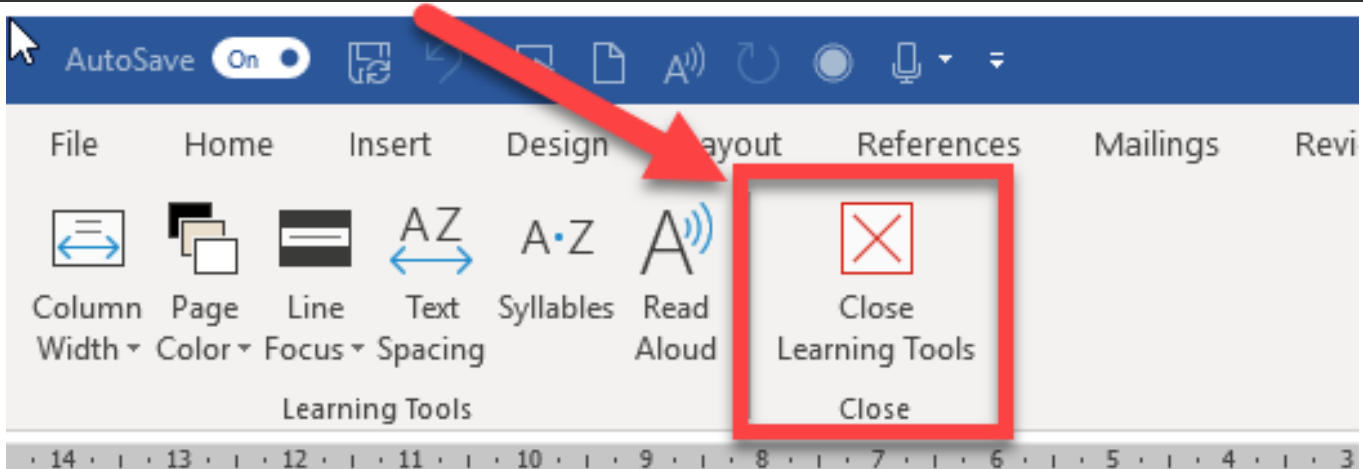
7.3 When reading information on the internet

The internet provides learners with an overwhelming amount of information. Thankfully, anything on the internet can be read aloud. Again, how this is done depends on the internet provider used.

There are many different options available. I have listed a few:

7.3.1 Microsoft Edge
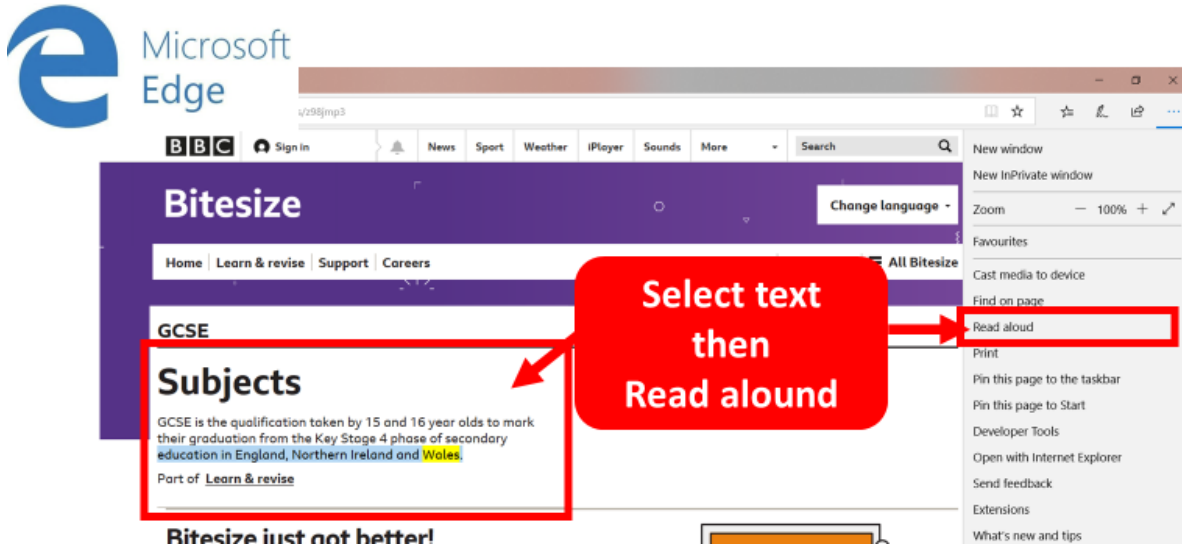
7.3.2 Google Chrome

There are several Chrome extensions that enable text to be read. Each works slightly differently. They only take seconds to install so it's worthwhile checking to see which one you prefer.

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- Speak it

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/speakit/ogcmdndkjibojdigkjpccjiekcdfdhlb

- Read&Write
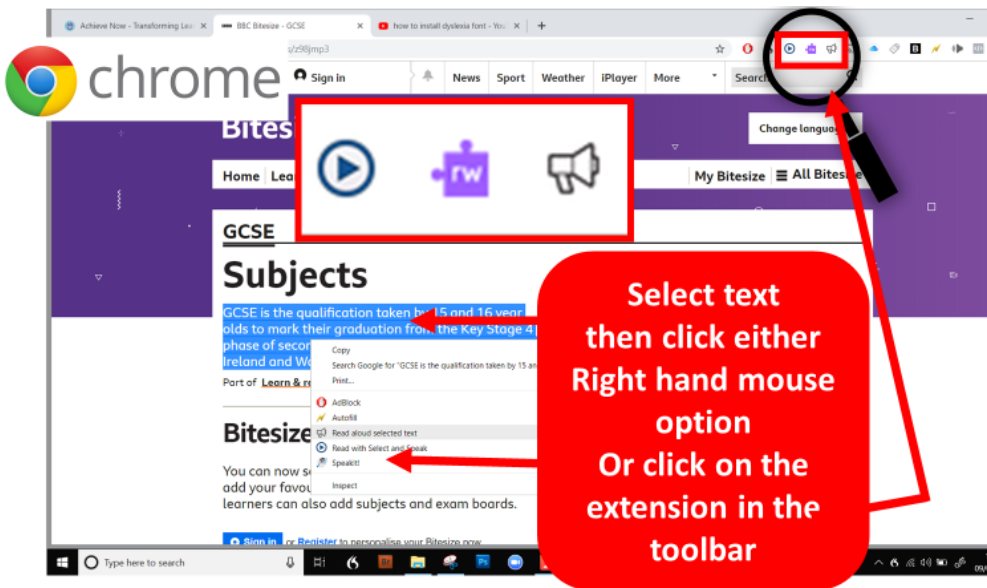
https://www.texthelp.com/en-gb/company/education-blog/march-2016/read-write-is-still-free-for-teachers/
(Paid premium version - free trial for 30 days)

- Read Aloud Voice Reader

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/read-aloud-a-text-to-spee/hdhinadidafjejdhmfkjgnolgimiaplp?hl=en

7.4 **iPad / iPhone**

Switch on text-to-speech on an iPad/iPhone. This functionality must be enabled before it can be used. There are two options, Speak selected text and Speak page

When iPads are delivered this helpful functionality is not enabled.

Go into Settings
  Select General
    Select Accessibility

    Select **Speech**

Achieve Now
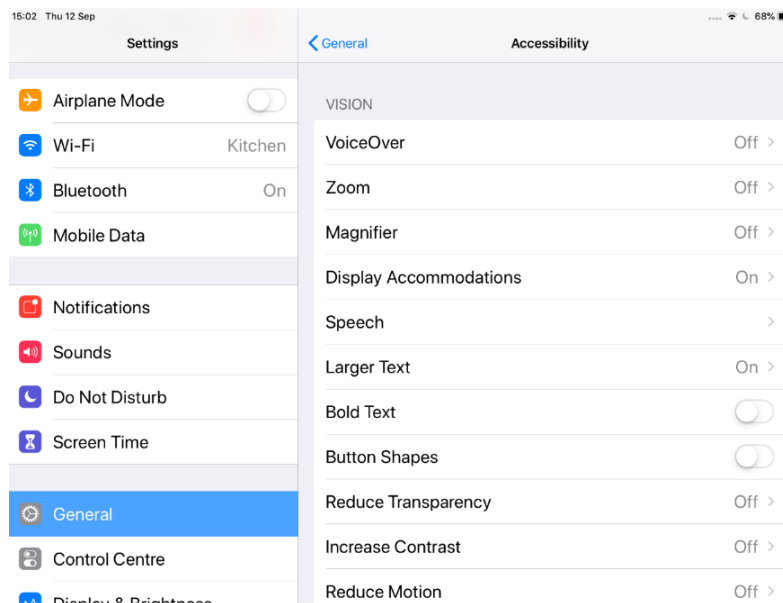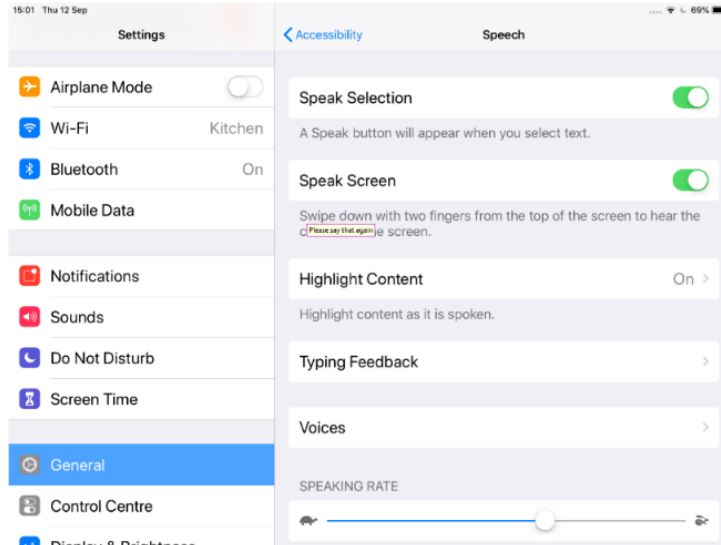
If you select voices, you get options to choose from
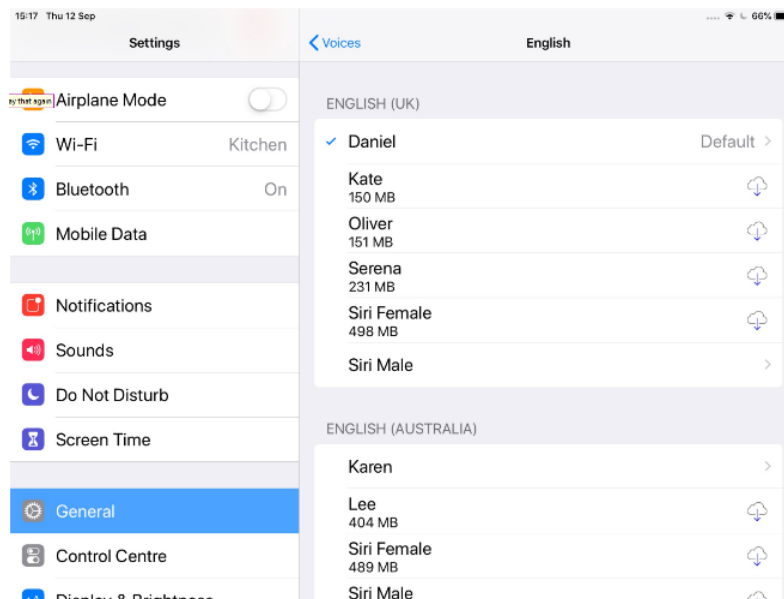
7.4.1 Speak selected text

This functionality enables users to select text on the screen and have it read aloud. Switch **Speak Selection ON**.

You can then select out words highlighted in red, the typing speed.

Achieve Now

7.4.2 **Speak page**

This functionality needs to be switched on by turning on the **Speak Screen** option in accessibility settings. It can be used to read the whole screen aloud when two fingers are swiped from the top of the screen down.

It is not advisable to use this when there is a lot of superfluous information on a page.

Achieve Now
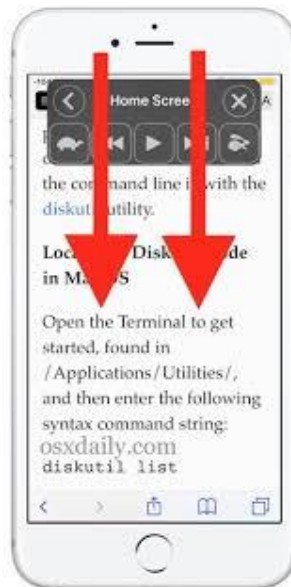
7.5 Electronic Text Books - RNIB Bookshare

While many publishers now sell electronic versions of books some of these books are formatted in such a way that they cannot be read aloud or cut & pasted into revision notes/apps. **RNIB Bookshare** is a **free service** provided **to schools** which enables **print disabled students** to access **electronic books.** These books can then be **read aloud** using an electronic voice. They are particularly useful for students who have difficulty taking comprehensive notes during lessons. Simply ask teachers to recommend the textbook that best follows the syllabus being taught. Information can then be extracted from the textbook and used to complete homework and create revision notes rather than having to rely on incomplete class notes.

Most books can be obtained via RNIB Bookshare, but it is **particularly helpful for textbooks for students**.

Novels and books read for pleasure are more enjoyable when read by an actor rather than an electronic voice, however this option is available and is a free option when compared to purchasing audiobooks.

This wonderful resource is underutilised.

RNIB Bookshare
UK education collection

For more information on RNIB including instruction on how to register follow this link

Achieve Now

8 Take Notes

For some students it is hard to understand what is being taught in a lesson because they are concentrating on taking notes rather than listening to what is being taught. Note taking is a cognitively complex task. Dyslexics can struggle to take comprehensive notes that can then be used to create quality homework or to revise from for exams.

When schools do not supply accompanying text books (which is often the case in state schools), students' notes are simply insufficient to be used to produce homework or to revise from. Children with incomplete or even incorrect class notes are therefore at a huge disadvantage.

A highly effective FREE method is for **teachers to supply electronic notes**. Ideally, students should receive these before that particular class so that they can print them out and annotate them during the lesson. If there is insufficient budget for schools to provide handouts, then electronic notes that students have printed out themselves would mean that school would not incur these additional costs. These notes can then be amended by the student to create revision notes, homework assignments and they could be cut and pasted into revision apps.

From my experience, this is one of the single most helpful ways a teacher can make their lessons more dyslexia friendly. Many teachers are not able to supply electronic notes, in which case, teachers can be asked to recommend the best textbook to accompany what they are teaching. This textbook can then downloaded for print disabled students using **RNIB Bookshare**.

While there appear to be many **free note taking apps**, I personally have never got on with them. This is an area where I use paid solutions. While I think it's worth spending money on note taking apps, to help those on a low budget, I have found this review of free note taking solutions.

https://clickup.com/blog/note-taking-apps/

If you can recommend a free solution, please do let me know what it is and what you like about it!

Click here to see a video explaining how dyslexics can be helped to take notes

Achieve Now

9 Improve Understanding

How can technology help students better understand the content of lessons/lectures? There are many solutions that teach, so if a student misses a lesson, or doesn't completely understand, they can watch them and learn.

Many of these solutions could be utilised before attending classes. Pre-learning sets students up to engage well in the lesson, being prepared and able to ask pertinent questions. Knowledge of what topics are going to be covered in advanced is required but teachers can often provide this information with the proviso that in a dynamic learning environment plans are prone to change.

There are numerous excellent online teaching resources. These broadly fall into these categories:
- Apps
- Websites
- Videos
- Podcasts

Click here to see a video explaining how technology can be used to improve understanding

Many are available at a price, but I have found many brilliant solutions that are free. This is by no means an exhaustive list, many more free resources exist, I have selected these because they have been used and liked by my students.

Apps
Many parents ask me for solutions that will help their children to better understand maths. Here are some of my favourites:

9.1 **PhotoMath**

Photomath reads and solves mathematical problems instantly by using the camera of a mobile device to check work for any printed or handwritten problems. It is available for both Apple and android devices.

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9.1.1 **Photomath for iPad/iPhone**

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/photomath/id919087726?mt=8

9.1.2 **Photomath for Android**

https://photomath.en.uptodown.com/android

9.2 **Duolingo**

Many dyslexics struggle to learn foreign languages but enjoy using Duolingo. Duolingo is a free language-learning solution that is available via the website, phone and tablet. It consists of 85 different language courses in 24 languages. It is the most downloaded education app in the world.

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/duolingo-learn-spanish-french/id570060128?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D2
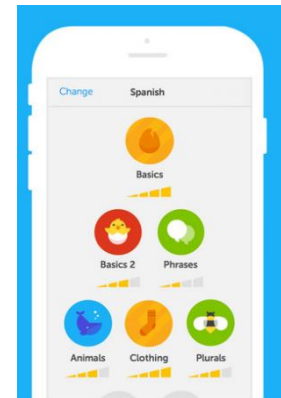
Websites

9.3 **BBC Bitesize**

BBC bite-size is an excellent free resource for Key Stage 1, 2, 3 and GCSE students. It has revision tools, videos, quizzes and much more. It is particularly helpful for students studying for GCSEs. However, it is the most commonly used site for students in the UK and therefore it will not necessarily help a student's GCSE answers to stand out from the crowd.

I will not attempt to list all the helpful pages as there are way too many, but below are the subjects covered.

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All GCSE subjects

Art and Design	Biology (Single Science)	Business	Chemistry (Single Science)	Combined Science	Computer Science
Design and Technology	Digital Technology (CCEA)	Drama	English Language	English Literature	French
Geography	German	History	Home Economics: Food and Nutrition (CCEA)	ICT	Irish – Learners (CCEA)

Journalism (CCEA)	Learning for Life and Work (CCEA)	Mandarin	Maths	Maths Numeracy (WJEC)	Media Studies
Modern Foreign Languages	Moving Image Arts (CCEA)	Music	Physical Education	Physics (Single Science)	PSHE and Citizenship
Religious Studies	Science	Sociology	Spanish	Welsh Second Language (WJEC)	

I would guide students towards their BBC Bitesize English literature resources. This is an exam subject that many dyslexics struggle with and the resources made available by the BBC are extremely helpful. Here are two examples:

Bitesize AQA GCSE Macbeth

https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/topics/zgq3dmn

Bitesize AQA English Language

https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/examspecs/zcbchv4

9.4 The Student Room

The Student Room is the UK's biggest student community. Go here to boost your grades, learn with free study tools, find your perfect university place & get answers to any question on the forums.

https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/

Videos

Watching videos is a great way for visual learners to acquire knowledge. Videos can be paused, rewound or watched multiple times. Here is a small selection of what is available:

9.5 Crash Course

This YouTube channel is best understood by watching the introductory video.

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https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcourse

I love these videos as they are always engaging and fun. Many more subjects have been included since the introductory video was recorded. It is worth bearing in mind the videos are recorded in America, so they do not necessarily provide comprehensive information when preparing for exams in other countries. They are, however, a great way of supplementing knowledge.

9.6 **MyGCSEScience.com**

Students need to pay for the full version which is great value as it involves MUCH more than videos.

The paid version has:
– information sheets
– quizzes
– exam questions
– model answers with mark schemes

Basic videos are available for free on YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/user/myGCSEscience
This way you get to try before you buy.

Videos to help students with Maths

9.7 **Numberblocks**

BBC (CBeebies) programme

Video also available on YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPlwvN0w4qFSP1FllALB92w?&ab_channel=Numberblocks

Achieve Now

9.8 I'm Stuck GCSE & A level Revision

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC14dDzM6HDofIR0vgwq4rOg?&ab_channel=I%27mStuck-GCSEandA-LevelRevision

9.9 Mister Woo Maths YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/user/misterwootube?fbclid=IwAR36NjS4prZSye0LaGSz5NdE_6XLstokkrZuvo7q-izdvwV-Bc3suTACA8c
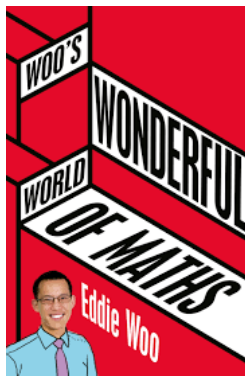
9.10 MathsAntics

All the videos are free but you have to subscribe to get exercises.

http://mathantics.com/
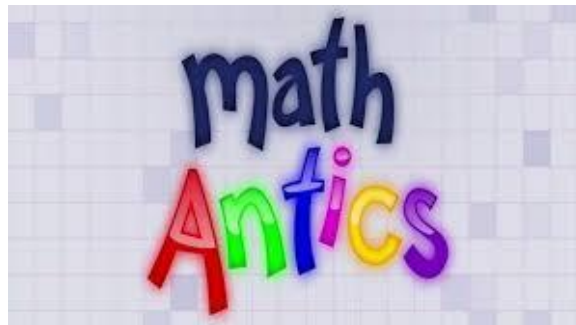
9.11 GCSE Foundation Maths from Scratch

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLg2tfDG3Ww4u24RaU5mAdmEa0K11oGUKu&fbclid=IwAR1rsq
1s7klueLWDks4MrFPlze-8Y2-ctX-3_J6GZmEg5wIbd1FsCHpuCcc&app=desktop

Podcasts

Students can listen to podcasts:

- as they travel around
- when performing mundane tasks
- when falling asleep

Podcasts are great for utilising time that would otherwise be wasted. Students often wear headphones so to their peers it looks like they're listening to music – a great way to learn while still looking cool!

9.12 Audiopi

Audiopi are engaging and highly informative GCSE and A Level Audio Tutorials. This is a reasonably priced paid service that offers a free trial. There is a video on this web page that explains their offering.
https://www.audiopi.co.uk/

Here is a list of the subjects covered: https://www.audiopi.co.uk/subjects

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9.13 **Mr Hunt's Geography Podcasts**

Created by a teacher for his students but available to all.
https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/pshunt
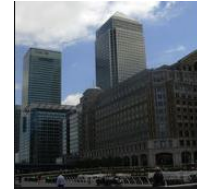
9.14 **GCSE & IGCSE History Revision Podcasts**

Modern World IGCSE and GCSE History Revision Podcasts
https://www.mrallsophistory.com/revision/revision.html

9.15 **GCSE History Revision Podcasts**

https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-gcse-history-revision-podcast/id1157414818?mt=2

9.16 **GCSE Science Podcasts**

https://player.fm/series/2481434

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9.16.1   Mind Mapping - XMind

Mind mapping can help improve understanding in two distinct ways:

- When creating a piece of written work
    - it can help students organise their thoughts
    - mind maps can create an outline in Microsoft Word thus kick starting the writing process
    - it is great for helping students to get started

- When revising
    - students need to summarise information
    - distilling important information and removing the superfluous is a skill that needs to be learned
    - converting notes into mind maps is an effective means of summarising information. It helps students to concentrate on essential information

There are many reasonably priced mind mapping options, but we've only found one free option - XMind.

9.16.1.1   XMind for a desktop

https://www.xmind.net/download/

9.16.1.2   XMind for IOS (iPad or iPhone)

https://www.xmind.net/blog/en/category/xmind-for-ios/

9.16.1.3   XMind for Android

https://www.xmind.net/blog/en/category/xmind-for-android/

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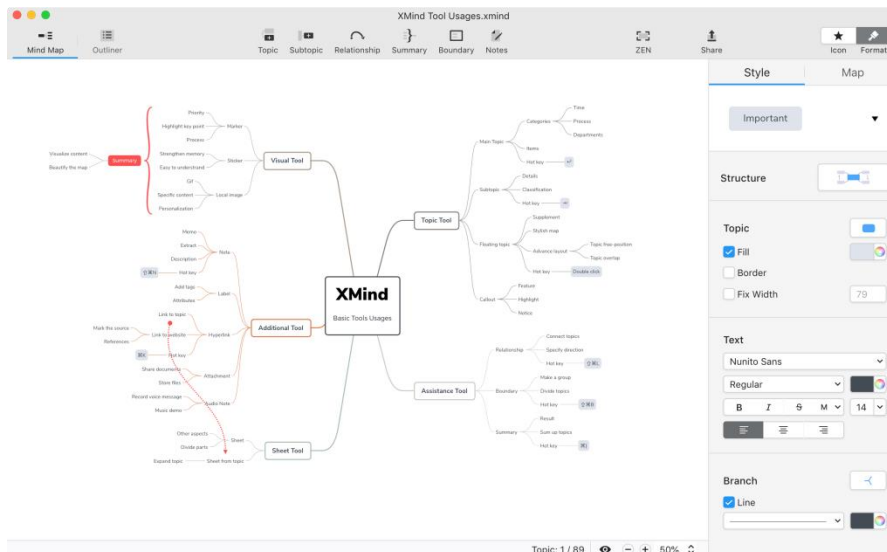
10 Get organised!

Students can use reminder apps and calendars on phones. Every phone has a free reminders app. Trackers can be used to find keys/phones, etc.

Click here to see a video explaining how technology can be used to help get organised

10.1 iPhone/iPad Reminders App

This App is a component of iOS, macOS and watchOS. It allows users to set notifications that can result in receiving reminders or prompts when tasks need to be performed.
A reminder can be:
- time based
- at a specific date, hour or minute
- location based
- when one leaves or arrives at a specific place

It can be an individual reminder or a reminder set to repeat, for example, pack hockey stick every Wednesday at 8pm.

10.2 Android Reminders App

There are numerous reminder apps that can be downloaded to Android phones or tablets.

This article will give you a list of some of the options available.
https://www.androidauthority.com/best-reminder-apps-for-android-654628/

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11 Producing Written Work

To be assessed, students normally need to produce written work. This can take the form of homework, course work or formal examinations.

When producing work to be handed in, whether homework or a formal examination, there are numerous advantages in using technology.

Click here to see a video explaining how using technology can improve the quality of written work

11.1 Touch Typing

This vital life skill is useful in school and throughout life. I am convinced that this is the single most useful skill I teach dyslexic students.

Even though typing academic work can significantly improve grades for dyslexic students, frighteningly, few dyslexic teenagers can type proficiently.

This is particularly shocking given that:
- Almost all professionals who diagnose dyslexia recommend that children learn to type.
- Free comprehensive learn to type packages are available online for anyone to teach themselves to type.

I recognise that freely available software that teaches touch typing is not enough to acquire this skill.

I will therefore not only list the free packages available; I will also attempt to summarise what, in my experience, works best to help students become proficient touch typists.

11.1.1 Why so few dyslexic students touch type?

Given the many advantages, it blows my mind how few students who could benefit can type proficiently. The reasons why are numerous, and while this isn't an exhaustive list it will give you some insights.
- Nobody can type proficiently without a great deal of practice. This practice is boring, and tedious. No student would willingly volunteer to do so without strong motivation to do so.
- Today's students have been using keyboards from an early age and have learned to type at a reasonable speed so they assume they can already touch type.

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- Few schools actively teach the skill. Some schools make devices and online teach yourself solutions available, without training and supervising to ensure the skill is learned properly.
- Most schools are spread so thin chasing results and league tables places, teaching touch typing is a luxury they simply don't have time for.

Learn to Touch Type Tips & Tricks

11.1.2   Student's Motivation

It is very hard to motivate a young person to learn to touch type because it is a tedious, laborious task. In my experience getting students motivated to learn to type in the key to success.

it is essential that students understand the many benefits that are derived from acquiring this skill.

Without this knowledge it is hard to motivate students to complete necessary practice. Even with this knowledge some external motivation, otherwise known as a bribe is often required!

> ## Click here to see a video explaining how touch typing can be used improve grades

11.1.3   Benefits of Touch Typing

There are many benefits of typing academic work. In summary:

- Typed work is always more legible and easier to read than written work.
- It is potentially much quicker than writing by hand.
  After attending one of my courses, students can type two, three or even four times faster than they can write. This means they can complete their homework quicker. Formal exams are a test of speed as well as knowledge, therefore being able to produce work quicker increases the number of potential marks.
- Students benefit from standard word processing functionality, these include:
  - spell check
  - grammar check
  - suggestions for improvements in sentence structure
  - help with vocabulary including synonyms and thesaurus
  - having work read aloud, students who struggle to see mistakes can hear them and correct their work accordingly. Having work read aloud uses Text to Speech functionality this is covered in detail in **Section 7 - Reading to Learn**

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- being able to correct, edit and amend work easily
- Many students have a poor pencil grip which results in hand pain when writing in a finite period.

11.1.4   The best age to learn to type?

Experience has taught me that students of 13years old and older find learning to type easier and can master the skill quicker. Older students might find learning to touch type easy but it can be harder for them to unlearn bad typing habits that they might have picked up.

For this reason, I recommend that all students learn to touch type before entering secondary school, i.e. before 12 years of age. One advantage of learning to touch type in primary school is that if a student enters secondary school with typing as their 'normal way of working', it increases their chances of being able to use a laptop in formal exams. Even when a laptop cannot be used in formal exams, touch typing can still dramatically improve a student's grades

I have successfully taught students as young as 7 years old to touch type. Occasionally, but only very rarely, I might come across an 11 year old who is too immature to learn to touch type because they do not think the benefits outweigh the pain of practising.

Personally, **I never teach touch typing in isolation. I** believe it is essential that students understand the benefits of typing their work as only then will they have **the motivation** to do the necessary practice.

11.1.5   What if a student believes they can already touch type?

Many teenagers honestly believe themselves to be proficient typists. Sometimes, but not often, they are correct. When I come across students who believe they don't need to learn to touch type, I ask them to complete a one minute time test **where they are not able to see the keyboard**.

This is an example of one such test. https://www.typing.com/student/tests

You do not require a user account to take the test, however I would recommend creating one, as doing so is free and enables you to track progress over time.

If a student is consistently achieving in excess of 35 words per minute with an accuracy of over 90% then they are correct, they can type.

When I challenged my eldest daughter to take this test, she achieved over 45 words per minute consistently with over 95% accuracy via 'sight' typing, I did not make her learn to touch type. She had learnt to touch type when she was much younger but had developed bad habits over the years. Nonetheless she could type twice as fast she could write, so I saw no benefit in burdening her with learning to touch type.

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Some students know the keyboard well in that their accuracy scores are high but their words per minute are low. In these instances, they simply need to improve their speed and not start at the very beginning of any typing course.

11.1.5.1   Cover the keyboard

I often get huge resistance when I try to cover the keyboard for students. I am often asked '**What's the harm in peeking?'** While it's a commonly known fact that speed and accuracy are hampered in the long run if students 'sight' type rather than touch type, this alone is not a strong enough argument to cover the keyboard for some.

Many students type quickly and accurately while peeking. If their typing speed is sufficiently faster than their writing speed there is still value in 'sight' typing.

I normally ask students '**How good is your spelling?'** Then I demonstrate how much slower one types if there is the need to check spelling AND look at your fingers. Most of the students I teach do struggle with spelling and therefore benefit greatly from learning without looking at their fingers/the keyboard.

A demonstration of this can be found on my YouTube channel

11.1.6   How long does it take to learn?

The factors that impact on how long it takes students to become proficient touch typist are:
- age of student (easier as they get older)
- dexterity of student
- the student's understanding of the benefits of touch typing which aids motivation
- the amount of practice that is done which is impacted by:
    - parental support
    - accountability
    - direction given
    - rewards promised

I always warn all my students at the beginning of the course that touch typing will come more easily to some students than others. For this reason, all the competitions I use to motivate students are against their previous speed and accuracy.

I make it clear to students that this is one area where no one else can practice for them. They can only acquire the skill by doing it themselves.

I explain that the more time they devote over a finite period the more effective the practice will be. For example, a student that practises for 10 hours over a seven-day period will be a far better typist then if

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they practised for 10 hours over a one-month period. I therefore recommend a 'short, sharp, shock' approach to complete the task with minimal practice hours.

If the practice is carried out within a finite time of say one month, most students can learn to touch type within 10 to 15 hours practice.

11.1.7 Initially practice must be supervised

It is **vital that practice is supervised** in the early stages to ensure that the correct fingers are used. Otherwise students waste precious time practising incorrectly which will ultimately hinder their progress.

11.1.8 When to type work?

Typing is excellent when completing homework or when writing in exams if students have the necessary accommodations. These accommodations have to be applied for long before the date of the examination.

I rarely recommend students to type notes in class. Numerous studies have shown that typing isn't necessarily the most effective way of taking notes whilst listening and trying to understand new information. Personally, I am a competent touch typist (50 words per minute/95% accuracy), nonetheless, when attending lectures, I choose to use a smart pen with intelligent audio recording. Unfortunately, these pens are not available free of charge.

11.2 Free solutions that teach touch typing

There are several good, free learn to type packages available.

When I teach touch typing I use multiple packages both paid and free as I'm very aware that learning to type can be a painfully tedious experience, so I try to make it as much fun as possible. Each solution has different strengths and weaknesses; I find using multiple solutions when teaching makes it less boring.

I would not necessarily recommend everybody using multiple packages. Over the years I have become very familiar with all the solutions and therefore able to take advantage of the strengths of each. Without this knowledge it could be confusing and consequently demotivating.

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11.2.1   **Typingclub.com**

This is designed for younger children. It has fun graphics, helpful videos and some ingenious and novel ways of keeping children engaged.

11.2.2   **Typing.com**

This solution is designed for older children, but it does have skins that younger children can apply.

The feature I like best in Typing.com is the excellent reporting functionality. You can easily see exactly how much students have practised and how they are progressing.

Also, the 1 minute testis helpful for measuring progress in speed and accuracy. Timed tests should only be attempted once students know the whole keyboard without looking at their fingers, otherwise it is too tempting to cheat, which is counterproductive.

While these free solutions exist, this is an area where it might be worth investing a small amount of money in buying a typing package. These normally cost approximately £30.

11.3 **Typing Games**

Typing games differ from typing lessons in that they are hopefully more fun. They tend to have more user-friendly graphics and gamify the process of learning to type.

Students need lessons and should not attempt to learn to type by simply playing games. Games should be used as a reward for completing lessons successfully.

Many free typing games exist.

11.3.1   Nitrotype.com

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https://www.typing.com/student/games

This is a great game to build up speed once the full keyboard is known. Typists can play against each other by racing cars. The faster and more accurate they type, the quicker their cars race.

> This playlist of videos shows how to: create a Nitro Type account; race against friends & strangers

11.3.2 Typing.com Games

https://www.typing.com/student/games

Typing.com have a good selection of games.

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12 Dictation - Speech to Text

Dictation is the way of the future!

Just speak (punctuation included) and your device will convert what you say to text. It enables work to be completed much quicker than writing or typing.

While it is efficient and excellent for overcoming 'blank page syndrome', care should be taken that students don't become reliant on it if they are not entitled to a scribe in formal exams. If a student isn't entitled to a scribe in exams, it is highly advisable that they learn to touch type. See Section 11.1 Touch Typing of this eBook for more information.

Click here to see a video explaining how dictation can be used improve the quality of written work

12.1 Dictation Tips and Tricks

12.1.1 Microphone Quality & Settings

Dictation accuracy is impacted by the quality of the input. Speaking clearly when dictating is important. This can be difficult for children but is a good life skill that they will learn by dictating.

Accuracy is also impacted by the quality of the microphone used. Typically, an inbuilt microphone on a laptop is not as good quality as an external microphone.
There is no need to spend a lot of money on this. Here are some of the cheaper options on Amazon that have worked for me.

Plantronics Mono headset

Stereo headset

If you experience problems, check your computers microphone is switched on.

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12.1.2   **Punctuation**

When dictating it is normal to have to speak punctuation. Not all free dictation solutions punctuate text in the same way. I prefer the one where you must explicitly speak punctuation rather than letting the solution try to figure out what you were trying to say.

Speaking punctuation takes a bit of getting used to. Dictation is a skill that needs to be practised. Users improve the more they dictate.

These punctuation commands should work with any of the dictation solutions listed here.

Punctuation: Period, full top (.), comma (,), question mark (?), exclamation or exclamation point (!)

Line spacing: Enter or new line, new paragraph

12.1.3   **Proof reading is ESSENTIAL!**

Sometimes dictation can misinterpret your words. It is therefore important, when using dictation technology, to proofread your work before submitting it.

You can have the device read back your dictated text to you by utilising Text to Speech functionality. This is covered in Section 7 of this eBook: Reading to Learn - Text to Speech.

FREE Dictation Solutions

12.2 **Dictation on iPad/iPhone**

Touchscreen keyboards can be slow, especially on phones with small screens. To use dictation in any app, select the microphone on the keyboard under the return button.

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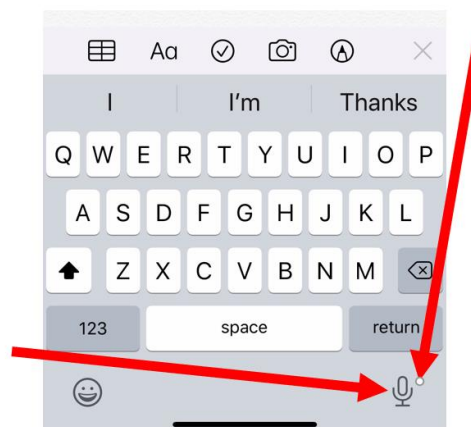
Apple provide great quality dictation that improves every time the operating system is upgraded. I am VERY impressed with both the accuracy and the length of time a user can dictate for.

You can get Microsoft Word on an iPad for free. Thus enabling high quality dictation when producing a Word document.

12.3 Android Dictation

To use voice dictation on Android, open any app and bring up a keyboard by tapping in a text field you want to type in. Tap the microphone icon at the bottom left corner of your keyboard.
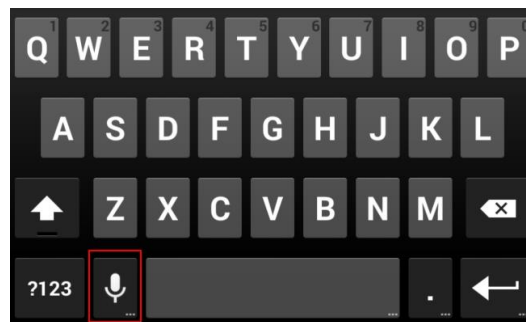
Android's list of voice dictation commands is very limited compared to the comprehensive set available on iPhone and iPad.

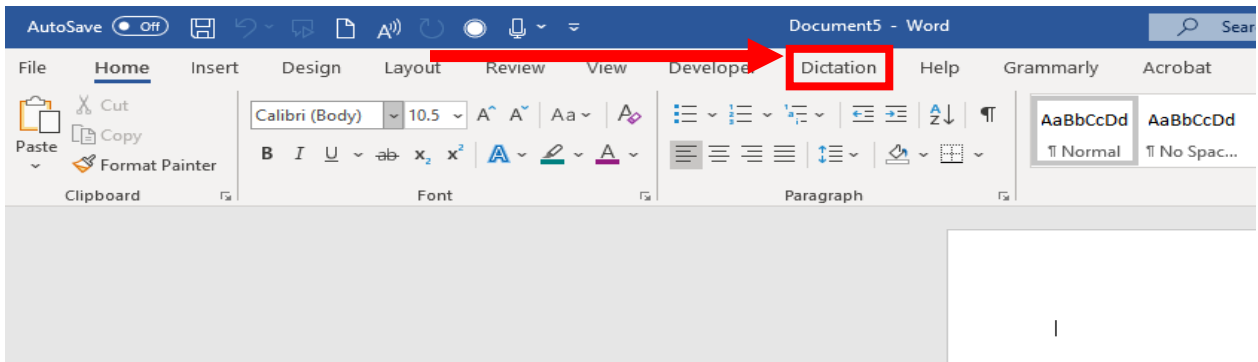## 12.4 Microsoft Word Dictation

Dictation functionality in Word has improved lots recently, so it is worth giving it a try.
This is how it appears in Office 365
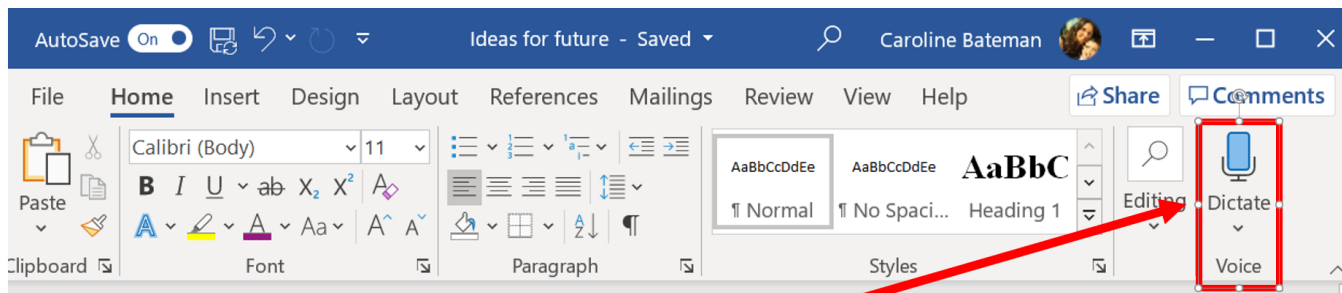
Select the **Dictate** button to turn your spoken words into text.

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Select it again to switch it off and stop dictating.
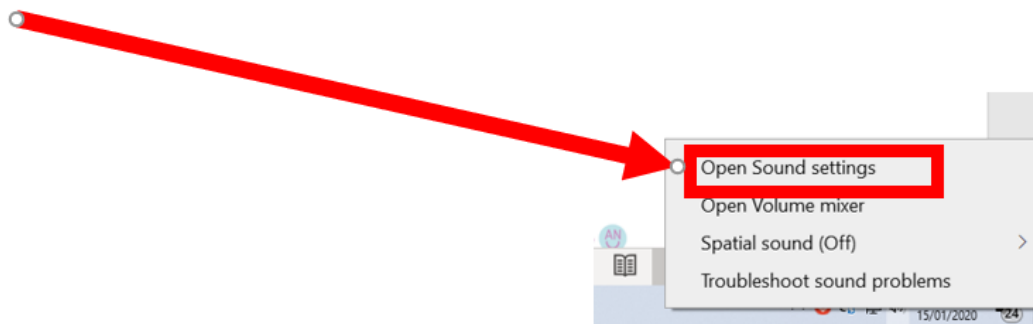
This is how it appears in Office 2016

If you have problems, check the Sound Settings.

To open them, click on the Speaker at the bottom of your monitor.

Then select Open Sound Settings.

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Check your INPUT device is working. These settings look like this.

Input

Choose your input device

Microphone (Blue Snowb...   ∨

Certain apps may be set up to use different sound devices than the one selected here. Customise app volumes and devices in advanced sound options.

Device properties

Test your microphone
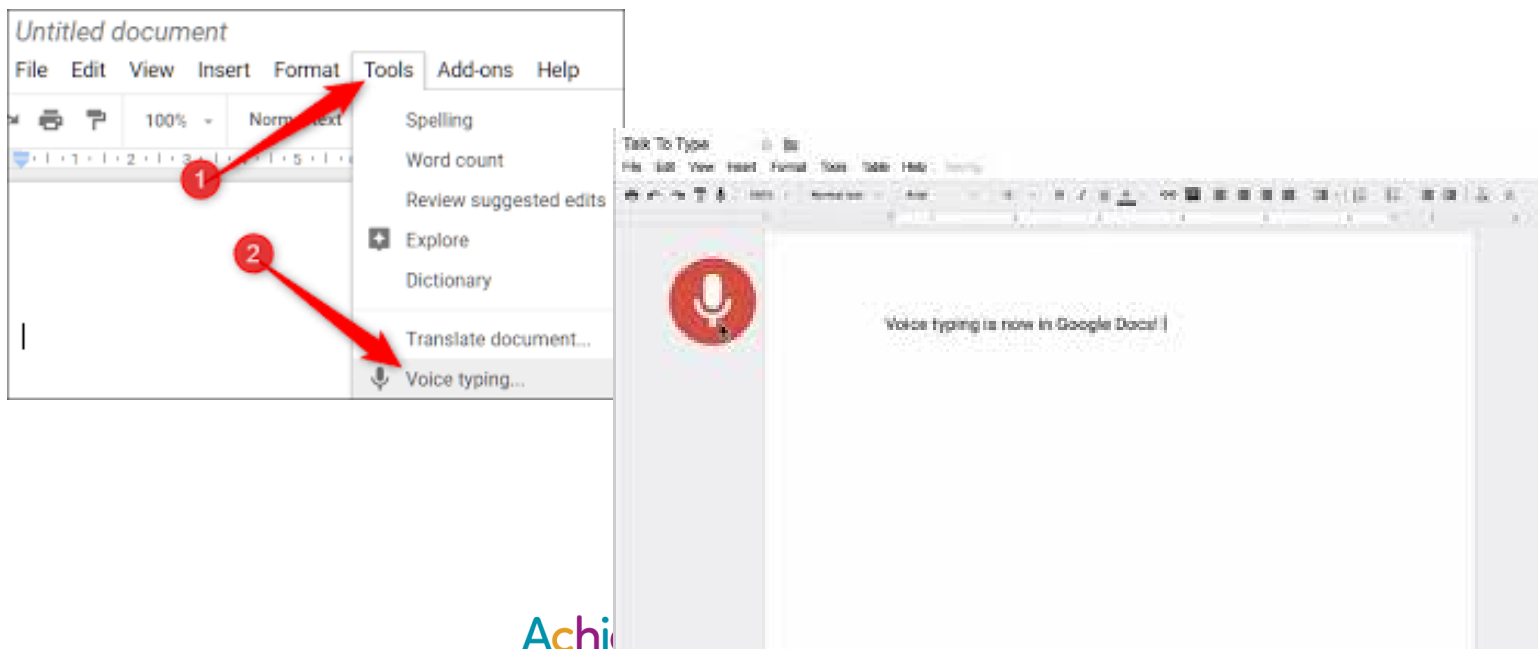
You can test if your microphone is working.

12.5 Google Voice Type

This is a good quality, FREE dictation product. It only works on Google documents. Students do NOT

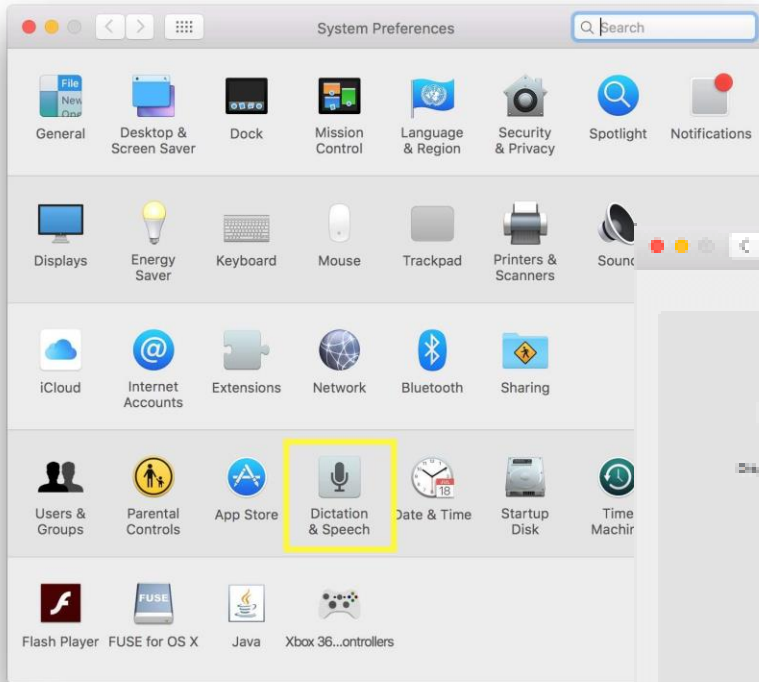have to have a Chrome book to use Google Voice Type, it works on any machine.

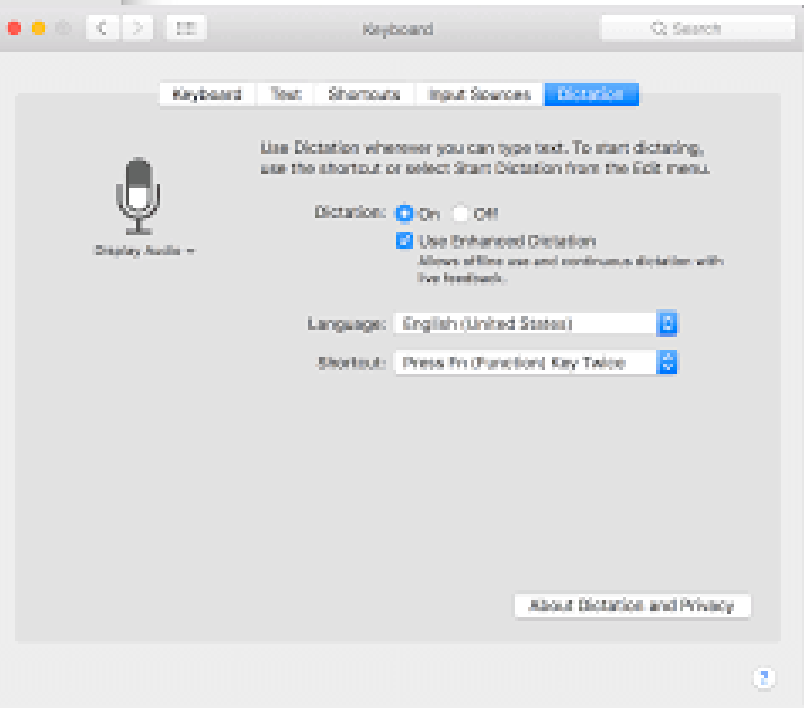To access this functionality, select these options in Google Docs.

12.5.1 **Apple Mac Dictation**

Apple provides excellent dictation functionality on their machines.

It is switch on dictation functionality. Go to System Preferences then Dictation & Speech

Here you can decide the Shortcut keys to switch on dictation

Then you can dictate in any application.

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