

Let's talk about Assistive Technology

Our 'Let's talk about...' series has been designed to support parents having conversations with their children. Suspecting or finding out that your child has dyslexia is a difficult and emotive situation to navigate as a parent but technology can help. This sheet and accompanying narrated presentation have been designed to help you understand what free technology is available to help support your children in the classroom and at home.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology describes products or systems that support students with disabilities or impairments to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

Assistive technology is a game-changer for students with dyslexia as it allows them to access and create content that they might not otherwise be able to.

What technology is available to help with reading?

The most important tool that is available on school devices is Immersive Reader which turns text into speech.

Audio books are also available from the library or online which can be a wonderful way for students to dive into fiction and non-fiction books without having to actually read themselves.

What is Immersive Reader?

Microsoft Immersive Reader is a free, interactive tool that helps students with reading and comprehension by reading to them and highlighting specific words.

You can access it through Word, PowerPoint, OneNote and Outlook. In Word, click on View then Immersive Reader and it will come up. [Click here for further tips:](#)

<https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/what-is-microsoft-immersive-reader-and-how-does-it-work-best-tips-and-tricks-for-educators>

What is Microsoft Lens?

Microsoft Lens is a free app that enables Immersive Reader to be used on phones. It also allows students to take a photo of a piece of text and then imports it into Immersive Reader to allow sheets and handouts to be read aloud as well as Word files and PDFs.

What technology is available to help with writing?

Software that is available on school devices includes Dictate and Quick Starter. Dictate allows students to use their voice to quickly create documents, notes and presentations. Quick Starter pre-populates presentations with relevant ideas to help students structure their work. These are both extremely easy to use and can help support students who find writing tricky.

Grammarly is a free online tool to help students check their spelling, punctuation and grammar easily and which can also check the sense of a sentence and give hints and tips for how to improve writing.

For those who struggle organising ideas or remembering content, mind maps are brilliant. There are a multitude of free apps and online tools to help create mind maps quickly and easily. One example is mindmapmaker.org which is free and extremely easy to use.

So how do tools help students with dyslexia?

Assistive technology helps ensure content is accessible for everyone. It is generally available free to all students and it provides instant access. Ultimately it empowers students by enabling them to become independent learners.

Where can you go for more help and information?

More information about Microsoft Learning Tools can be found here:

https://edudownloads.azureedge.net/msdownloads/Learning_Tools_research_study_BSD.pdf

In addition for specific guidance on Immersive Reader, please follow this link:

<https://www.windowscentral.com/how-microsofts-immersive-reader-tackles-dyslexia-head-and-wins>

In addition there are a number of organisations that offer support and guidance to both parents and children about dyslexia which are listed below.

- Made by Dyslexia - <https://www.madebydyslexia.org/>
- The International Dyslexia Association - <https://dyslexiaida.org/>
- Understood.org - <https://www.understood.org>