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Games Controllers

This factsheet is for anyone with an interest in computer gaming, in particular consoles, and disability. It is intended to raise awareness of the adaptations that exist to help people with a disability use games consoles.

What are Games Consoles?

A games console is a computer designed and optimised for playing games on. They are accessed via dedicated controllers. Controllers often take the form of a hand held device which contains all the buttons and directional controls needed for game playing. Games are supplied on DVD, CD or cartridge and can be run without the need for any installation – just pop the disk/cartridge in and off you go. The main games consoles available today are: Sony's Playstation 1 and 2, the Xbox from Microsoft and the Gamecube from Nintendo. Older consoles that are also covered are: Nintendo 64, Sega Saturn.

How Can a Games Console Help?

Playing games can help improve dexterity and hand-eye coordination, provide mental stimulation and promote social interaction (in multiplayer games for example). Competition, when playing against friends for example, is a useful motivator and can help users exceed their own expectations of their abilities.

Making Games Consoles Accessible

There are a range of alternative controllers available for most consoles. These are mainly specific to certain types of games i.e. steering wheels and pedals for driving games, light guns for shoot-'em-up games etc, although often they can be used on more than just the game they were intended. There are also specialist adaptive controllers that will allow people of differing ability access to games playing. Both of these types are included here.

Alternative Specialist Controllers

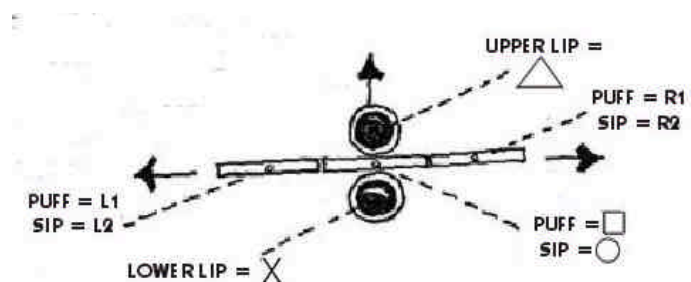
Name	Adaptive Playstation Controllers
For	Sony Playstation 2.
From	www.quadcontrol.com
Price Guide	From US\$225 (approx. £120)

The standard Playstation® 2 controller includes two joysticks: one is directional-the "d" or digital joystick; the other is proportional-the analog joystick. The KYE mouth controller has one mouthpiece, which operates as a joystick. The KYE mouth controller has 3 holes for "sip/puff" (6 switches) and two lip buttons. You have access to all 8 buttons on the Playstation® 2 controller. The "start/select" is done using a sip/puff switch mounted on the side of the mouthpiece. The mouthpiece comes with a stand to allow you to mount it to a table or lapboard. This version includes a switch on the mouthpiece to allow the player to select either the digital or analog configuration for the mouth-joystick.

Adaptor cables are available for the X Box®, Game Cube® and personal computers for the analogue joystick.



Using the controller



Controller schematic

Commercially Available Controllers

There are some commercially available controllers that may help gain someone access to their console. Often there are multiple varieties of these controllers. Although particular models are listed here, they are purely for illustration and should not be taken as an endorsement of these products.

Name	Ascii Grip V2 Controller
For	Playstation 1 & 2
From	www.consolesandgadgets.com
Price Guide	£20

This one handed DualShock controller manages to make all the buttons available for a one handed user. It's symmetrical as well so it's suitable for either right or left handed use.



V2 Controller

Name	Full Analog Joystick
For	Playstation 1 & 2
From	www.consoleplus.co.uk
Price Guide	£20

An alternative for the standard Playstation controller, the joystick has all the same buttons, and a joystick instead of the D-pad. This should make it easier for people who have limited hand movement/dexterity.



Analog Joystick

Name	Dance Mat
For	Playstation 1 & 2
From	www.whitedog.co.uk
Price Guide	£15

Amongst the stranger input devices, the Dance Mat is a mat about 1m². It has all the buttons a standard Playstation controller has. Designed to be placed on the floor and used with your feet, the dance mat can be used to control any game, but really comes into its own with the various dancing games available.



Dance Mat

Name	EyeToy
For	Playstation 2
From	www.amazon.co.uk
Price Guide	£35

This is Sony's latest offering. A digital camera that will allow you, using your body movements, to interact with your Playstation.



The EyeToy



In action!

You're limited to playing games that are supported by the EyeToy. No controller is required – you, moving in front of the camera is the interface.

Name	GameCube control pad converter
For	GameCube
From	www.game.net
Price Guide	£10

This adaptor can allow you to use a Playstation controller on your Nintendo GameCube. No information on which controllers are compatible was available, but most likely the Ascii Grip and the Joystick, as well as standard Playstation controllers.

Name	Magic Box Joypad Converter
For	Xbox
From	www.consoleplus.co.uk
Price Guide	£20

This adapter allows you to use controllers from the Playstation 1 & 2, and the Sega Dreamcast and Saturn consoles on your Xbox. Especially with the range of Playstation controllers available, this could be very useful.

Name	Logic 3 Arcade Stick
For	Xbox
From	www.gameseek.co.uk
Price Guide	£25

Standard joystick for the Xbox. Analogue joystick grip is larger than on a standard Xbox controller and larger buttons also make this more suitable for somebody who finds the standard controller too small.



Arcade Stick

Useful Organisations

It seems that solutions for access to games consoles are few and far between for disabled users. Those mentioned in this factsheet are some of the few commercially available solutions.

OneSwitch

An organisation which has a number of adaptations available for different computer gaming devices. They also provide an adaptation service. Their website has some useful information about customising games controllers and links to other gaming sites.
www.oneswitch.org.uk

REMAP

Another alternative is to make or adapt your own controller. REMAP specialise in producing one-off items to help people with a disability.
Tel: 0845 1300 456 www.remap.org.uk org

Home Made Controllers

www.hollandhaven.f9.co.uk/markbb/control.htm

Game Console Suppliers

www.nintendo.com
www.sony.com
www.sega.com

Articles about Disability and Computer Games Playing:

Information on modifying console controls into larger boxes, using different joysticks etc.

<http://wrongcrowd.com/arcade/controllers.shtml>

www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/closeup/gaming.shtml

www.levelgames.net/ Accessible games for download

Games links for vision impaired users

www.bcab.org.uk/links/computing.shtml

www.espssoftworks.com/Products/products.htm

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