Dyslexia and Voice Recognition

If you have dyslexia and find it hard to use a keyboard you may find it useful to use your voice to control your computer and dictate your work.

This factsheet is part of AbilityNet’s free Expert Resources.

If you have questions about anything in this Factsheet, or any other aspect of assistive technology, please contact us.

Helpline: 0800 269545
Email: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk
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AbilityNet Factsheet: Keyboard and mouse alternatives and adaptations, November 2015. www.abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets
What Makes Voice Recognition Good for People With Dyslexia?

The user speaks and the software recognises what was said and types it into the computer.

This means that:

- Words are correctly spelled.
- The user’s flow is not interrupted by having to stop and worry about spelling.
- The needs to type or hand write is removed: this is helpful if the user is also dyspraxic.

2 What Can Make It Difficult?

Dyslexia affects different people in different ways. Some people with dyslexia will be able to use voice recognition software without any problems. Others may have difficulty with enrolment, dictation or correction.

Enrolment

Before starting to use a voice recognition program you have to read out a document that is presented on the screen. This enrolment process can be an issue for people who are not fluent readers.

Ideas to get around this include:

- Choose a suitable enrolment text: the voice recognition programs offer a choice of texts - some are easier to read than others. It is also possible to create new enrolment texts for Dragon Naturally Speaking.

- Work with a helper: the helper reads the text on the screen in small sections and the user repeats it a section at a time.

- Use an additional package like Keystone: this provides alternative enrolment texts and text to speech support during enrolment.

Note: The latest versions of Naturally Speaking no longer require enrolment, script reading or initial training.
Dictation

To gain good recognition, speech needs to be delivered clearly and confidently without hesitation. Some dyslexic users will benefit from organising and planning their “writing” before starting to dictate. Planning tools may be helpful. See the AbilityNet ‘Computers and Dyslexia’ factsheet for further information.

Younger people and adults who are not confident speakers may need some coaching on how to compose by voice before they start using a computer. Working with a scribe, or using tape can be a helpful stepping stone for some.

Corrections

People with dyslexia should find that a wide range of common words are correctly spelled by the software, but there are times when errors which will be difficult to spot:

- They may not be picked up by a spellchecker because they could be the wrong word but correctly spelled, eg “from” written as “form”
- The words will often have the same “shape”: e.g. “modern” and “modem”.
- Misrecognised words need to be corrected and this process involves choosing the right word from a list of suggestions. If the “right” word is not listed you need to type it in.
- Dyslexic users may struggle to identify the correct word in the list.
- Some will be unable to spell out the words during the correction process.
- For some users, text-to-speech software can help get round some of the difficulties of identifying and making corrections.

3 Using Text-to-Speech with Voice Recognition Software

NaturallySpeaking Premium has speech output facilities that will help many users. Once text has been recognised the user can:

- Listen to it using text-to-speech: you select the paragraph or sentences that have been recognised and click on the text-to-speech feature.
text is read back using a synthetic voice. Then you can follow the text on
the screen as it is spoken out.

• Listen to what was said: hear a recording of your own voice – this can
be helpful if they are not sure what they said.

The text-to-speech programs provided with Dragon NaturallySpeaking and
ViaVoice will not read out the correction lists and provide no support during
enrolment.

4 Support and Training

Many dyslexic people work successfully with voice recognition software. In the
early stages of use it is important to have realistic expectations of what can be
achieved and to plan suitable levels of support and training.

5 Useful AbilityNet Factsheets

The Dyslexia and Computing factsheet covers more advanced topics.

Using your voice to control a computer Factsheet gives much more detail about
voice control.
6 How can AbilityNet help?

AbilityNet is a leading authority on accessibility and assistive technologies. We can assist individuals, charities and employers by providing:

- advice and information
- workplace assessments
- consultancy services.

My Computer My Way

*My Computer My Way* is a free, interactive tool developed by AbilityNet that makes any computer, tablet and smartphone easier to use.

It can help you ensure that your equipment is set up the best way possible to suit your particular needs. It covers all the accessibility features built into your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone, and all the main operating systems – Windows, Mac OS X, iOS and Android.

*My Computer My Way* shows you how to adjust your computer to assist with:

- vision impairment – help seeing your screen
- hearing difficulties – help with sounds and audio
- motor issues – help with your keyboard and mouse
- cognitive problems – help with reading, spelling and understanding.

You can use it for free at [www.mycomputermyway.com](http://www.mycomputermyway.com)

AbilityNet factsheets

AbilityNet’s factsheets provide an extensive range of practical advice about specific conditions and the hardware and software adaptations that can help people of any age use computers to fulfil their potential.

Relevant topics covered include:

- Controlling the computer with your voice
- Vision impairment and computing
- Workstation ergonomics
- Repetitive strain injury (RSI) in the workplace.

All these resources are free to download from [www.abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets)

Workplace Assessments

When it comes to computing solutions, one size does not fit all. We believe that each case is unique and that individual attention is vital. Our Workplace Assessment Service integrates personal, technical and organisational considerations to arrive at sound and realistic suggestions, documented in a report.

To find out more about AbilityNet’s Workplace Assessment Service, please visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/workplace or call 01926 465 247.

Consultancy services

Our expert consultants are also available to assist employers who wish to take a broad, longer-term view in designing computer systems and associated work processes. Our experience and expertise can help you to achieve safe, healthy and productive working procedures.

To find out more about AbilityNet’s consultancy services, call 01962 465 247 or email sales@abilitynet.org.uk

DSA / Student assessments

If you have a disability and are in higher or further education, you may qualify for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). If you are eligible you will receive a free assessment and may qualify for a grant towards any adjustments that you might require. This could help with the costs of buying a new computer or any other specialist equipment you might need.

For information, please visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/dsa or call 01926 464 095.
7 About AbilityNet

AbilityNet is the national charity that supports people with any disability, of any age. Our specialist services help disabled people to use computers and the internet to improve their lives, whether at work, at home or in education. We offer:

- free advice and information
- accessibility services
- DSA/student assessments
- workplace assessments
- IT help at home
- IT volunteers.

8 Support us

Visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/donate to learn how you can support our work.

Contact us

- Telephone   0800 269 545
- Email        enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk
- Web:         www.abilitynet.org.uk

We are always keen to help share knowledge about accessibility and assistive technology. If you have any questions about how you may use the contents of this factsheet, please contact us at AbilityNet and we will do all we can to help.

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