

Tablet Computers

Increasingly AbilityNet is being asked to recommend which tablet computers would be most effective for people with disabilities to use.

The answer unfortunately is not straight forward so we have written a factsheet to help people understand the differences.

This factsheet is part of AbilityNet's free Advice and Information service.

If you have any questions at all 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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All tablet devices are touch screens, so users *need to have* some good finger movement. We are aware of clients who have missing fingers who are able to use touch screen devices. However if you have shaky hands due to your disability it may be difficult for you to use.

Some tablet computers actually use handwriting recognition by using a stylus. Of course if you have hand/arm issues then these may not be the easiest pieces of equipment to use. A few tablet computers do also have a physical keyboard too. However these keyboards tend to be very small and therefore might not be suitable for people with hand/arm difficulties.

It is always very important to try before you buy, or in the case of mobile phones sign a contract!

Types of Tablet computer

There are three main types of tablet computer. They all run on different operating systems. They are:

- Windows based tablet computers
- Apple based tablet computers
- Android tablet computers

They all have their advantages and disadvantages. All tablets will connect to a wifi system.

Windows Tablet pc

There are a wide range of tablet pc's which run on the latest version of Windows (8)
These are produced by companies such as:

Samsung (www.samsung.com)

Dell (www.dell.co.uk)

Asus (<http://uk.asus.com/>)

Now rather confusingly all of the above companies also produce **Android tablet computers**.

Of course you can still get tablets which use Windows 7. The average price of a Windows tablet computer is £350. However if you shop around you should be able to find a cheaper one.

Android Tablet computers

There are a lot of different manufacturers out there and a lot of different computers. Some companies such as HTC (www.htc.com) only make tablet mobile phones (often called Smartphones whereas other companies as Motorola (www.motorola.com.) Most if not all of them will have wireless access. This is really useful if you are downloading "apps". See below. The average price of an Android Tablet device is £75, although if you shop around you can pick up an Android Tablet for as little as £25.

There is a very wide range of software packages (commonly called "apps" available for Android devices for people who have disabilities these software packages may be useful.

Tap to Talk (www.taptotalk.com). This is AAC software to help people with communication difficulties

Model me going places this is an application to help young children and adults who have autism prepare for visits to the doctor, dentists etc. (Available from <http://www.modelmekids.com/>)

Learn Fruit

https://market.android.com/details?id=com.textdoodad.learnfruit&feature=also_installed

Useful app for children with disabilities to recognise pieces of fruit

There are lots of Android download sites including:

<https://market.android.com/>

<http://www.androidapps.com/>

<http://androidapplications.com/>

Apps normally cost £2-£5 but there are some really good free applications.

Apple Tablets

Apple (www.apple.com) produces three tablet devices. (iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad) They will all run on OS X.

All three devices will run applications ('apps') which are downloaded from the iTunes store.

Average prices of Apple products vary. For an iPod Touch with 8GB of memory you can expect to pay around £100 but this rises for iPods with bigger storage. Prices of iPad and iPhones do vary depending on what contract you go on, or which version of the iPad you buy.

It is possible for you to buy a separate Bluetooth keyboard to use with the iPad. However the iPad will not support using a mouse. You can get limited switch access with this device and you can find some useful packages at:

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/hardware/ipad>

There are a number of "apps" that might be useful for someone with a disability.

Autism

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/autism-apps>

Find me (<http://www.interface3.com/findme/>)

Dyslexia

Various iPhone apps to help people with dyslexia

<http://dyslexicadvantage.com/profiles/blogs/top-5-iphone-ipod-touch-apps>

For people with communication difficulties, there are some really good apps.

Proloquo2go. AACA communication package <http://www.proloquo2go.com/>

Tap to Talk. AACA communications package. <http://www.taptotalk.com/>

SmallTalk Aphasia- helps people with aphasia

<http://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/smalltalk-aphasia-male/id403064267?mt=8>

This is not an exhaustive list as apps are being written all of the time.

Switch and keyboard access for Apple Ipad

You can attach a switch to an Ipad. This might be useful if you've got poor hand/arm control. You can find more information from <http://www.tboxapps.com/default.aspx>.

We are also aware that you can connect an Apple Bluetooth Keyboard to an Ipad. However this keyboard is not suitable for anyone who cannot use a standard keyboard. (<http://www.apple.com/uk/keyboard/>).

Mounting options/Cases etc

Depending on how mobile you are, or not you might want to think about the best way of mounting your tablet computer/and or keeping them secure.

http://www.ram-mount.co.uk/device-mounts-apple-ipad-mounts-c-360_673.html

<http://www.batteryinc.co.uk/iPad-Mount.htm>

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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.

AbilityNet Adapting Technology. Changing Lives.

Our specialist services help disabled people to use computers and the internet to improve their lives, whether at work, at home or in education.

Accessibility Services

Our expert consultants help make websites, intranets, office documents and mobile technologies accessible to all.

Assessment Services

Our professional assessors identify the technologies and adaptations needed to enable people with disabilities to be more productive at work, at home and in education.

IT Volunteers

Our network of over 8,000 IT volunteers provide high quality specialist IT support to charities and people with disabilities.

Information and Advice Services

AbilityNet has is a leading authority on accessibility and assistive technologies. Our Factsheets and other free tools help people use IT to address their needs.

We charge for our services to businesses and others who can pay for our expertise. We use charitable income to deliver services to people who cannot afford to pay, including disabled people and charities.

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Telephone: 0800 269545

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