ICT SUPPORT

Access technology

Many learners have a physical, sensory or cognitive impairment that means that they need assistive technology to access the curriculum. This can include switch access to replace keyboard and mouse, onscreen grids, voice recognition so they can control a computer entirely by speech, or a whole host of specialised devices. This leaflet lists sources of information on how ICT can help learners to access a computer, and how to use specific items of software and hardware.

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communication aids project

WHERE TO START

If you are not familiar with the different ways that learners can access a computer, you can find introductory information on these sites:

Inclusive Technology has a wide range of information sheets on ICT support.
http://www.inclusive.co.uk/severe_complex_special_needs/infosite/index.shtml

The CALL Centre has a number of useful information sheets, including ones on switches, keyboard adaptations and alternatives, overlay keyboards and on-screen keyboards. There are also information sheets on assessing learners' keyboard skills, support for writing, and guidance on posture.
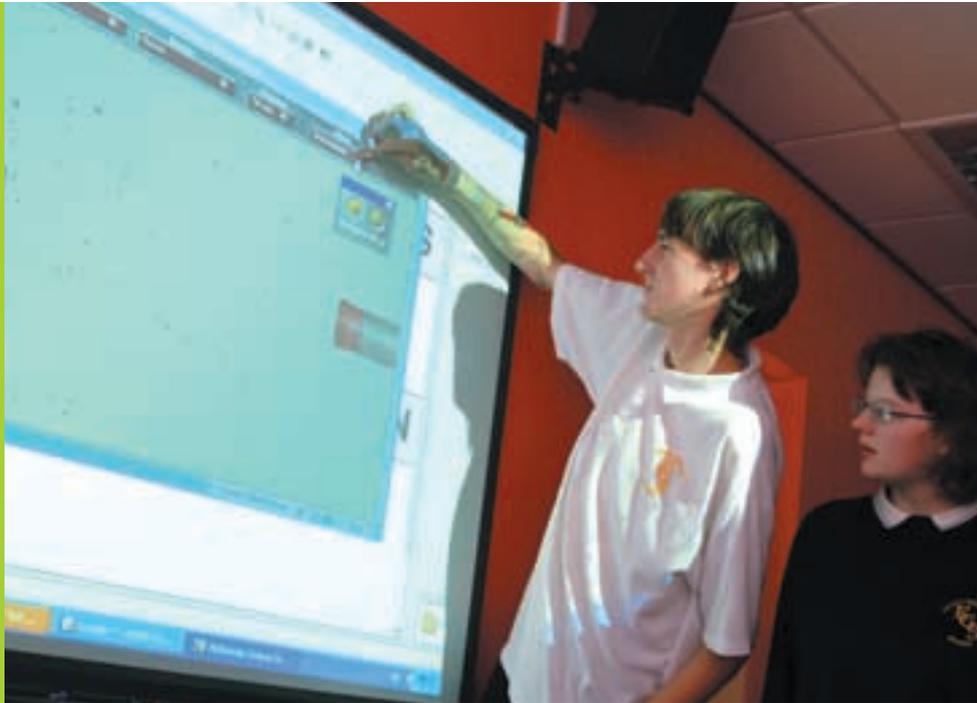**http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk**

AbilityNet has factsheets on ergonomic workstations, keyboard and mouse alternatives and single-handed use of keyboards amongst others.
http://www.abilitynet.co.uk

The Oxford ACE Centre provides information, support, and training for parents and professionals in the use of technology to support communication difficulties.
http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/

ACE Centre North offers services and information to support communication and learning through the use of Assistive Technology (AT) and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems.
http://ace-north.org.uk/

Scope has a wide-ranging pack of materials on 'Supporting communication through AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication)' in which 'Module 5: Accessing Equipment, Books and Charts' has sections on seating and positioning and accessing technology.
http://www.scope.org.uk/education/aac.shtml

TechDis is an advisory service on accessibility and inclusion for disabled students and staff in higher, further and specialist education and adult and community learning.
http://www.techdis.ac.uk

SOFTWARE

Standard accessibility tools
All PCs have accessibility options that can help, from changing the size of the cursor, altering the size of text and background colour, or making a mouse left-handed. There are also options such as Sticky Keys and Filter Keys.

AbilityNet's 'My Computer My Way' looks at how you can make your keyboard and mouse, Windows, the internet and your favourite applications suit a learner's needs.
http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/myway/

The Apple site has an introduction to the accessibility options for Mac users.
http://www.apple.com/accessibility/

http://www.becta.org.uk/cap

Keyboard shortcuts
Keyboard shortcuts can reduce the number of keystrokes needed.

The ACE Centre has a guide to shortcuts in Windows 95/98.
http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/html/resources/usingkeys/usingkeys.html

Microsoft has listings of shortcuts for its products and resources.
http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/keyboard.aspx
For Windows XP shortcuts see the Microsoft Support pages.
http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q301583
There are also tutorials on the use of keyboard shortcuts within applications such as Word and Outlook.
http://search.microsoft.com/search/results.aspx?st=b&View=en-us&s=9&c=0&qu=keyboard%20shortcuts

Keyboard shortcuts are also important for internet browsers. There are accessibility options, such as Mozilla Firefox in addition to shortcuts.
http://www.mozilla.org/access/features
http://www.mozilla.org/docs/end-user/moz_shortcuts.html

Opera provides accessibility features along with tutorials including operating Opera by voice and operating without a mouse.
http://www.opera.com/features/access/
http://www.opera.com/support/tutorials/

Mouse alternatives
Some users will struggle with a mouse of any sort, but be able to use a computer from the keyboard alone.

The ACE Centre has information on using a keyboard to access Windows, in the Resources section.
http://www.ace-centre.org.uk

AbilityNet has a factsheet on navigating Windows using the keyboard.
http://www.abilitynet.co.uk

SWITCHES

For users who are unable to control either a mouse or keyboard, the ability to make selections by using one or more switches can open up a wide range of possibilities for communication.

The ACE Centre has information on using a headpointer in its Resources section. There is also a sheet on 'Adapting battery operated toys for switch use'.
http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/

Inclusive Technology has a series of training units on supporting individual needs, including Unit 7, 'Accessing technology' and Unit 8, 'The development of switching skills'; they can be accessed online.
http://www.inclusive.net/resources/resources.shtml

The CALL Centre has an information sheet on 'Switch Access using Scanning and Encoding'.
http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk – go to Publications > Information Sheets.

ACE Centre North has information on 'Switch Resources', 'Assessment Issues', 'Switch Software', 'Using a switch to control battery operated devices' and 'Using a switch to control mains operated devices'.
http://www.ace-north.org.uk/ – go to Downloads > Switch resources.

SEMERC has information on 'Switch adapting the easy way'.
http://www.semerc.com

ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Online discussion groups can be a useful source of support, information and advice.

Assistech mailing list
http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/assistech.html

Closing the Gap Forums
http://www.closingthegap.com

SENIT mailing list
http://lists.becta.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/senit

Becta
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency

Millburn Hill Road, Science Park, Coventry CV4 7JJ
Tel: 024 7641 6994   Fax: 024 7641 1418
Email: becta@becta.org.uk   Web: http://www.becta.org.uk/cap

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