Minimum Technology Skills Needed by a Person with Dyslexia

(Handout accompanying presentation by Allan Wilson, CALL Scotland at Dyslexia Scotland's Dyslexifest, Stirling on March 7th, 2020, based on a CALL blog, Leaving School with Dyslexia.)

A person with dyslexia should be to able use technology to:

1. Read Digital Text (e.g. from a computer screen)
2. Read Printed Text (e.g. a set of instructions on a sheet of paper, or a book)
3. Produce written text (e.g. fill in an online form, or write a short letter)
4. Meet any other individual needs arising from their personal experience of dyslexia

Read Digital Text – Windows PC / Laptop

Lots of programs for reading text have been around for ages, for example:

- Wordtalk, for reading text in a Word document
- NaturalReader, free version for PC or Mac can read any text you can select with a mouse, e.g. a PDF document, or a web page
- Ivona MiniReader, also for reading any text you can select with a mouse, e.g. a PDF document, or a web site.

Get information on these and others from the Information page on Text to Speech on the CALL Scotland web site. If you are in Scotland, you may qualify to get the Scottish Voices free for your computer.

Increasingly, facilities for reading text (and other useful tools) have been built into everyday programs and apps, e.g.

- Learning Tools / Immersive Reader in Microsoft Office
- Reader View / Mode in most web browsers, see CALL blog on Making Online Articles Easier to Read.

Read Digital Text – iPad

The iPad (and iPhone) have features built into the Operating System (iOS) to do this:

- Speak Screen, Speak Selection, Speech Controller to read any text you can highlight. Note that these features are usually turned off by default, but can be turned on via Settings.
- Reader View for web sites.

Read Digital Text – Android

- Use the built-in Select to Speak feature to read text you can select. Note that Select to Speak was only added to the Android operating system in Version 4.1 (Jelly Bean) in 2012 and that it is not available for earlier versions. The exact process for setting up Select to Speak has changed with different versions of the operating system – try Googling something like "Select to Speak Android 6.0", for e.g. version 6.0 of the operating system.
- A good point about Android devices is that they can use Cereproc voices, including the Scottish Voices, available from the Play Store for £0.59 each – don't buy them all as they take up space. Listen to samples of the voices on the Cereproc web site, then buy the one you like on the Play Store.

Read Digital Text – Chromebook

- Select to Speak to read text you can select.

Read Printed Text

Option 1 – Can you get a digital copy or audio book?

- Books for All
- RNIB Bookshare
- Calibre
- Amazon Kindle / Audible
- Apple Books
- Play Books
- If it was a photocopied worksheet created in school, try to find the original digital file.

Option 2 – Use a Scanning Pen

- C-Pen – Reader

Option 3 – Use a Scanning App

- Claro ScanPen (for iPad and Android) -
- Office Lens (for multiple platforms)
- Seeing AI – iPad

Produce Written Text

There are various things that can help, including learning to touch type; word prediction; spellcheckers and other writing support tools; using text-to-speech to read back your work; speech recognition.

Touch Typing

Touch typing is a valuable skill to have and can help people with dyslexia as you soon get used to the patterns made by common words. See the CALL Scotland blog on Touch Typing and Dyslexia.

Word Prediction

Word prediction can help with spelling long words as it will try to guess the word you want after you type just a couple of letters. Most phones have it built-in. Programs / apps with word prediction include:

- Clicker
- Penfriend
- Read&Write
- WordQ

Spellcheckers and other Support Tools

Most word processors now have built in tools to help correct spelling / typing mistakes and some grammar mistakes. Make sure you know how to use them. There are other tools that you may want to try:

- Ginger
- Grammarly

Speech Recognition

Ultimately, this is the option that will probably be best for most people with dyslexia. There are various options, including: Dragon (PC), Google Voice Typing (multi-platform), Dictate (Microsoft Word), Siri (iPad). For more information, go to CALL Scotland's Information page on Speech Recognition.

(This document is available electronically from CALL's DyslexiFest blog.)