Technology to support your reading
…a guide for learners and their families

What will you find in this guide?
- Technologies that are available to help you read.
- Information to help you ask for help with confidence.

Why could you need technology to help you read?
You may have to deal with one of the following:
- dyslexia: you would understand the text if only you could figure out the words;
- visual impairment or blindness: print size may be too small or you may be unable to see the text;
- physical difficulty: handling books and turning pages is difficult.
- language background: you may struggle to access written information because of the unfamiliar lettering. Or signing may be your first language;
- Concentration difficulties may make it easier to read by listening.

Why should you ask for help?
You may be one of many people (as many as one in ten) who cannot get the information you need for study or work simply because you have difficulty reading standard text. This can make reading a chore and prevent you from progressing to the best of your ability. People with print disabilities (eg visual impairment, dyslexia and others) have a right to information in alternative formats.

Help is available and technology is a part of it. You may need to ask for support. But you can also take matters into your own hands.

How will this guide help you?
We will give you some pointers to help you start exploring:
1. What your school, college, or university could provide and why it is reasonable to expect it;
2. What you can do for yourself;
3. Where you can go for additional information and support.

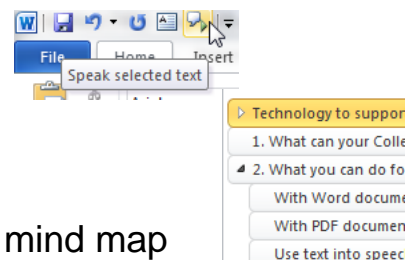# 1. What can your College/University provide?

Here are some of the things you can ask for...

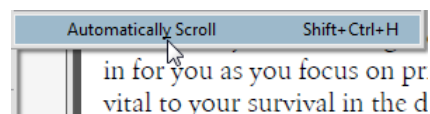| What should I ask?	Why is it a reasonable expectation?
Do recommended reading lists include podcasts, video clips or websites / blogs?	Textbooks are only one source of information. Print disabled people may find other resources more accessible.
Are course materials and notes available online?	Getting information outside the teaching session helps slower notetakers to understand the points.
Have learning materials been produced to meet accessibility guidelines?	This is basic good practice, can be taught to tutors in minutes and makes documents easier to read.
Can I personalise the online learning environment – e.g.change colours or fonts?	Web standards should allow you to personalise your view of a webpage in order to meet your needs.
Do you have e-book collections available and if so, where can I find out about the options for changing colours/fonts or using text-to-speech?	E-books are textbooks in electronic format. These may have options to make them easier to read built in or they may work alongside other tools like text-to-speech or colour changers.
Can I listen to information on web pages, documents and e-books using text-to-speech tools?	Post 16 education in England, Scotland and Wales has free high quality synthetic voices in regional accents. These can be used with free text-to-speech tools and be downloaded for use at home.
Can you provide textbooks in alternative formats for print disabled learners?	JISC TechDis has guidance on this. Many textbooks are available digitally from Load2Learn. Scottish textbooks are available from Books for All.
What sort of support technologies are available across the network?	A wide range of tools – from mind mapping to word prediction; dictionaries to colour changing – are available for free. These, or their commercial equivalents, should be installed across the network.

2. What you can do for yourself

With Word documents you can
- Select text and make it speak out to you.
- Magnify text without having to scroll left / right to read.
- Quickly change font sizes or colours in the document.
- Use Synonyms tool with unfamiliar words.
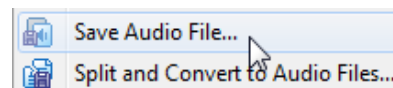- View all the section headings together and export to a mind map

With PDF documents you can
- Select text and make it speak out to you
- Get the document to autoscroll to speed your reading
- Change font colours throughout the document
- Magnify text without having to scroll left and right to read it
- Gain an instant overview of document content and organisation

Use text into speech
- Get webpages to speak.
- Install free high quality voices on your own laptop.
- Use text-to-speech on your tablet or phone (incl. iPod and iPad)
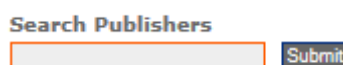- Turn text into an MP3 for listening to on the move with free software.

Use free services
- Use Robobraille to convert simple documents to a preferred format.
- Use Azzapt to get personalised formats on your devices.
- Use assistive technology toolbars like https://www.atbar.org/

Get hold of digital alternatives
- Search for podcasts or videos.
- Subscribe to free online teaching resources.
- Use an e-book reader for downloading and reading books.
- Use e-book apps on a tablet or phone.
- Borrow e-books from your library.
- Try audio books from RNIB, Calibre, Sound Listening or your library.
- Point your tutor / librarian to Publisher Lookup website to get digital versions of your textbooks.

3. Where to go for more information or support

The following organisations offer useful guidance materials, training resources, courses or links to reputable suppliers.

Load2Learn – www.Load2Learn.org.uk
Load2Learn is more than just downloadable books. Point your teachers to free training in technologies for reading. Or explore them yourself at http://tinyurl.com/rexpt1.

Dyslexia Action- www.DyslexiaAction.org.uk
Provides services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties, specialising in assessments, teaching, and teacher training. It has 25 centres and 97 teaching locations around the UK.

JISC TechDis – www.jisctechdis.ac.uk
Explore JISC TechDis voices, http://tinyurl.com/rexpt2. Teach yourself new skills with our Toolbox http://tinyurl.com/rexpt3 and point your tutors to our reasonable adjustment guidance http://tinyurl.com/rexpt3a.

RNIB – www.rnib.org.uk
RNIB provides specialist advice and support for blind and partially sighted individuals, their families and the professionals who work with them. For further guidance on accessible resources go to http://tinyurl.com/rexpt4a.

British Dyslexia Association - http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/
Campaigning for long lasting and sustainable change for the benefit of dyslexic people. Providing impartial and objective advice. See http://tinyurl.com/rexpt5a for technology guidance and http://tinyurl.com/rexpt6 for dyslexia friendly text.

CALL Scotland - www.callscotland.org.uk
CALL Scotland is the Scottish national centre for technology and disability in schools. CALL's Books for All web site has resources and advice on finding, using and making accessible books – see www.Books4All.org.uk.

PATOSS – www.patoss-dyslexia.org
Creating and maintaining standards of professional practice around both assessment and teaching.
This leaflet has been a collaborative effort. Thank you to the RNIB, CALL Scotland, the NUS, the British Dyslexia Association and Dyslexia Action for their valuable input.