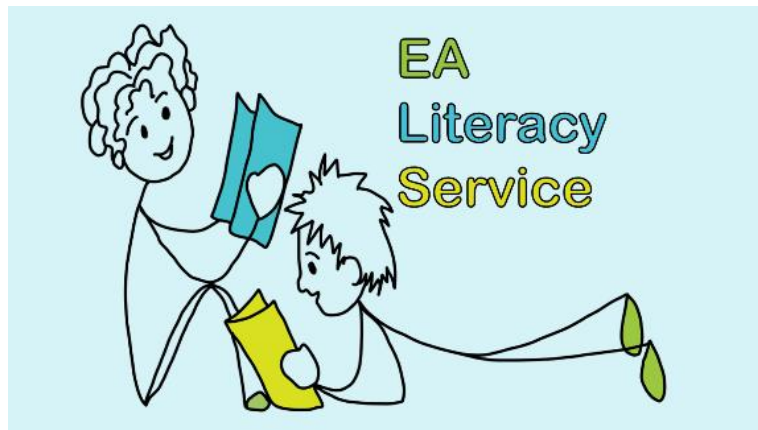


EA Literacy Service

Supporting pupils using assistive technology



This document has been developed by the EA Literacy Service (Northern Ireland). It is intended for parents/carers who may be supporting a child or young person with literacy difficulties at home. Parents/carers may find some of these ideas/resources useful. The Service is not recommending a specific resource to be followed. This document contains a range of resources and ideas you may decide to use based on the needs of the child. We hope you and your child find at least some of the content helpful and enjoyable.

Please note, parents/carers should use the links referenced in this document at their own discretion. Individual websites may contain pop-ups and marketing materials from the organisations providing these services and resources. The inclusion of these links does not imply endorsement of any material on these websites, or any association with their operators. The EA Literacy Service cannot guarantee the security of these sites, the operation of the links or that they will be virus-free.

The EA Literacy Service Team,

November 2022

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Assistive Technology

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology (AT) is the umbrella term used when referring to tools, which are often ICT based, that can support learners with literacy difficulties (and other difficulties). Word processing activities with enhanced supportive features can significantly improve writing and spelling skills. Where possible at home, give your child the opportunity to apply and develop their ICT skills through the use of AT to support their learning.

You may wish also to refer to our guidance document, [‘Accessibility features to support literacy difficulties’](#). This can assist you to become familiar with helpful features in-built in many common IT devices.

Assistive Technology features that are most commonly used include:

- ❖ Speech/voice recognition applications
- ❖ Text-to-speech applications
- ❖ Audio books and digital TTS (Text to Speech) books
- ❖ Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
- ❖ Graphic organisers/mind mapping
- ❖ Annotation tools
- ❖ Display controls
- ❖ Dictionaries and thesauri
- ❖ Touch-typing
- ❖ Smartphones/tablets
- ❖ Apps
- ❖ Other handheld devices, such as dictaphones, etc.

If you would like to find out more about any of these terms, you can use Google to do a search online.

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How does Assistive Technology help people?

Assistive Technology can help people with:

- ✓ Reading, writing & spelling
- ✓ Mathematics & numeracy tasks
- ✓ Note taking & memory
- ✓ Learning & study skills
- ✓ Organisation & time management

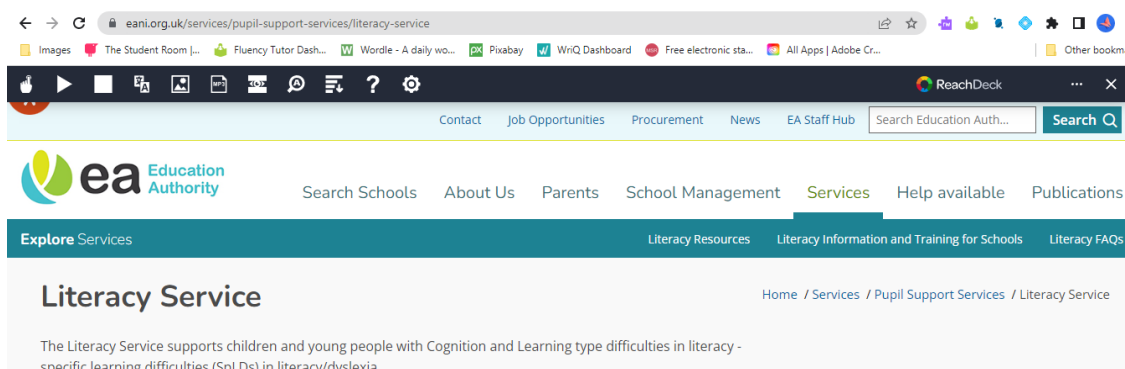


Assistive technology resources you may find useful

ReachDeck – This is the accessibility tool used on the EA Website to assist site visitors to navigate pages, including the Literacy Service landing page.

When visiting the [Literacy Service Homepage](#), you will see an icon in the top left hand corner of the screen. You can click on this icon to access the ReachDeck features.

When you click on the icon, the tool bar at the top of this screenshot will appear.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/literacy-service. The browser's address bar and tabs are visible. The website's navigation menu includes links for Contact, Job Opportunities, Procurement, News, EA Staff Hub, and a search bar. The main content area features the EA logo and a navigation bar with links for Search Schools, About Us, Parents, School Management, Services, Help available, and Publications. Below this, there is a section titled 'Explore Services' with sub-links for Literacy Resources, Literacy Information and Training for Schools, and Literacy FAQs. The main heading is 'Literacy Service', and the breadcrumb trail is 'Home / Services / Pupil Support Services / Literacy Service'. A short description follows: 'The Literacy Service supports children and young people with Cognition and Learning type difficulties in literacy - specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) in literacy/dyslexia.'

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Texthelp

Texthelp Read&Write - Available for free in school and at home (on up to five devices) for all students and teachers in NI using a C2K account. Visit the [Bespoke Texthelp website for NI](#) to learn how to access and download the software.

This software is designed to promote independence and inclusion. Read&Write can support a learner in their reading and writing and in expressing themselves more confidently and independently.

Texthelp Read&Write reading and writing features include:

- ❖ Speech-to-text (converts spoken word into text)
- ❖ Text-to-speech (converts text to sound from documents including PDFs)
- ❖ Enhanced spell and similar word checker and word prediction
- ❖ Dictionary and picture dictionary
- ❖ Create vocabulary lists
- ❖ Screen masking (to ease visual stress and remove distractions)
- ❖ Research folders to store information for research and revision
- ❖ Translator

Further information and support can be accessed via www.texthelp.com.

Texthelp Fluency Tutor is available for educators and students in Northern Ireland until the end of December 2022. It is an easy-to-use google extension app that lets pupils record themselves reading aloud on their PC/Mac or Chromebook from home. Teachers can assign reading passages or pupils can select their own reading tasks from any webpage or browse a library of over 500 passages. Pupils can rehearse and record their reading with extra help provided by a dictionary, picture dictionary and translation tools.

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Visit the [TextHelp Fluency Tutor landing page](#) to install Fluency Tutor on your chosen device. You can also view the [getting started with fluency tutor guide](#) for additional support.

Texthelp Snapverter - Snapverter is an easy to use add-on Texthelp tool for [Google Chrome](#). By taking a picture in the Google Drive app on an Apple or Android phone/tablet, students and teachers can convert classroom papers and files, PDFs and posters into accessible documents that can be read out loud. For more information you can visit: [How to Use Snapverter With Google Drive's Mobile App](#).

N.B. Premium subscriptions for Fluency Tutor and Snapverter are currently free (until December 2022) for those with a C2K account. You may wish to contact Texthelp for information on a continued licence after this date.

Microsoft

Microsoft Office 365 (O365) - The online Microsoft suite of apps (Word, PowerPoint, etc.) is available to pupils in Northern Ireland for free. Households can access up to five downloads of the software per pupil at home. O365 can be used to help support pupils to develop their word processing skills and develop materials to support their learning. The following steps enable free downloading of O365 at home in Northern Ireland:

1. Visit <http://portal.office.com>
2. Enter your C2K Username in the format **ouser123@c2ken.net**
3. At the next box re-enter your C2K username and your password
4. Click Install Office to download the version of MS Office you require

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Please note, you will need the pupil's school C2K username and password to download O365.

You can also use a C2K username and password to sign into Office apps on tablets or smartphones.

Microsoft Lens - is a scanner app for [Apple](#) and [Android](#) devices. It allows you to scan and share classroom handouts and notes into OneNote and OneDrive. For example, you can scan handouts or notes and annotate them in Word and OneNote. You can take a picture of work or notes to reference later, even if you are offline. Students can also import the contents of their picture into the built in Immersive Reader to hear text read aloud, break words into syllables, change the background page colour and much more.

Google

G Suite for Education* - A suite of tools designed to empower educators and students as they learn and innovate together. In Northern Ireland, some schools have set up their own Google Classrooms and have contacted parents/carers directly if they are involved. Parents/carers can [set up their own account](#) to use with their child if they wish to explore this software further and they cannot access it any other way.

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*Disclaimer – you will **not** be able to access G Suite apps using a school C2K username and password (as above with Microsoft Office 365) **unless** the student’s school has opted into this with their school account on the network.

Developing touch-typing

Doorway online – Text Type 3

This is a free touch-typing programme. The colourful, engaging and accessible touch-typing tutor takes students from learning the home keys (a s d f g – h j k l ;) to familiarity with the whole keyboard. Get started today by visiting [Doorway Online Text Type 3](#). In addition Call Scotland has created [The Doorway Online Text Type 3 Practice Book](#) which links nicely with the online lessons , providing daily and weekly activities.

Dance Mat typing – BBC Bitesize

This is another fun and engaging free programme that introduces touch typing for children aged 7 - 11 years. There are four levels to play, each divided into three stages. Select which level and stage you want to play at [Dance Mat Typing](#).

Using an iPad/Android tablet to support home learning:

Each new update of the iPad’s operating system (IOS) includes support for literacy difficulties without needing to buy additional apps.

Using the accessibility features on an iPad, mobile phone and/or tablet can include using the lower-case keys and undocking an on-screen keyboard to help track writing. They also have

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the facility to add external dyslexia-friendly Bluetooth keyboards to aid writing and a newly designed Notes app with text formatting options.

Call Scotland - Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning – an excellent website that provides further information in relation to accessibility features and use of devices to support pupils with literacy difficulties. In the Communication, Literacy and Learning unit of the website there are suggested strategies and assistive technology ideas that can help support reading and writing.

By visiting the [posters and leaflets](#) section of the Call Scotland website, you will also find guidance on how to use an iPad to support students with literacy difficulties and many more. You will also find the 'App Wheels' for both IOS and Android devices, suggesting apps which may assist pupils with literacy difficulties.

Websites to support literacy development

Reading

Libraries NI - The [Northern Ireland Library Service](#) provides a range of fun and enjoyable activities for children right up to teens. There are recommended reads, find a story, find a reading group, e-books, e-magazines, audiobooks, rhythm and rhyme sessions, etc.

Parents/carers will need to download the free **Libby app** to download books using their NI Libraries member's number to access NI Libraries online. This can be downloaded to all common platforms including Apple and Android.

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C2K NewsDesk - Parents/carers can use the C2K NewsDesk, which is available to all C2K users (i.e. via their child's C2K account). Visit the CCEA website for [further guidance on using C2K NewsDesk](#) or watch the [Literacy Service Videos](#) (find them in the Assistive Technology section) demonstrating how to sign in and access your child's C2K My-School login and use the C2K NewsDesk.

Oxford Owls – The [Oxford Owl Website](#) can be used by parents/carers to support children's learning at home. It has advice, tips and activity ideas to help with reading & phonics. After registering for a free account, you have access to over 250 children's e-books/audiobooks, online games/activities and printable worksheets.

Storynory – Available for use by parents/carers the [Storynory website](#) provides hundreds of free audio stories of every genre for all age groups.

Teach Your Monster to Read – This is completely free to play on desktop and laptop computers. Visit the [Teach Your Monster to Read website](#) to register an account and start playing. You can also purchase and download The Teach Your Monster to Read app from the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#).

Storyline - [Storyline Online](#) features well-known actors reading some of their favourite children's books which can be views on YouTube or SchoolTube. Each story comes with a free Activity Guide for suggested activities for both home and school. You can also get the app for Apple and Android devices.

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Horrid Henry – Visit the [‘bad children’s room’](#) tab to hear a free Horrid Henry audiobook. A new recording is uploaded every month.

International Children’s Digital Library – The [Children’s Library](#) site contains hundreds of digital books. It does not read the books aloud, but students can read them independently.

Literactive - This US site contains a multitude of interactive storybooks and materials that can be used at home or in the classroom. Register on [Literactive](#) to download the stories and activities for free.

Starfall (U.S.A.) – Starfall’s [parent and teacher centre](#) gives access to a range of free eBooks, worksheets and activities with emphasis on phonemic awareness, systematic sequential phonics, and common sight words in conjunction with audiovisual interactivity.

Khan Academy Kids - This site covers a range of areas including reading and literacy. The Khan Academy Kids website has created a quick start guide which provides you with information on how to [create and account and download the Khan Kids app](#).

BBC - The [BBC Teach website](#) is home for thousands of free curriculum-mapped videos, arranged by age group and subject. [BBC Bitesize](#) provides online resources sorted by Key Stage specific to each nation, with free videos, step-by-step guides, activities and quizzes by level and subject. This site is for children and parents.

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BBC Accessibility Features (for BBC websites) - The BBC has created an [accessibility tool](#) to assist users in navigating its webpages. You may find this resource useful.

Nessy - this programme offers a 7-day free trial. Pupils work through reading and spelling games related to sounds assigned by the placement test. Worksheets and card games are also available to be printed from <https://www.nessy.com/en-gb>.

There are some accompanying apps available in the apple app and google play stores that can help reinforce and teach children their sounds and syllables. There is a fee for these apps, but some will become free for download at different times throughout the year.

ABCya! - Visit www.abcya.com for a mix of fun free educational games including letter or word recognition, phonics, reading and spelling. Games are organised by level and subject categories.

PhonicsPlay - [PhonicsPlay](#) presents decodable comics featuring their characters along with some new friends. They aim to provide opportunities for children to rehearse the precise knowledge and skills that they learn in school each week.

Pobble365 – You can subscribe to a free or paid subscription with [Pobble 365](#). A free subscription provides a picture a day with writing and sentence prompts to inspire children to write creatively.