

Assistive software on school computers in East Lothian

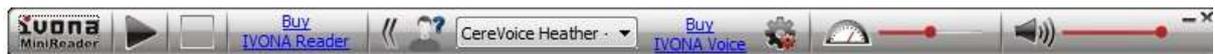
The access to technology for students with additional support needs can be essential to support their learning. School computers have the following assistive software on them which will help students in a variety of ways. If they themselves can become familiar with what is available and how to use it they will be able to work independently which will boost self confidence and reduce stress.

You will find these pieces of software in the Applications Folder on the desktop of the computer. The descriptions of each are brief and are intended to give everyone the confidence to give them a go. If you have any questions about any assistive software, please get in touch with Shirley Lawson (slawson@eastlothian.gov.uk)

Please feel free to share this information. It also appears on the Edubuzz Support for All blog so the link can be emailed.



Ivona Mini reader provides text to speech functionality and is ideal for anyone who has difficulty reading. When you click on the Ivona icon a toolbar appears like this:



In the drop down box you can change the voice (Scottish male or female voices, 'Stuart' or 'Heather' are available) and on the right you can adjust the speed of speaking and the volume. I would then recommend you shorten the toolbar by clicking on the 2 arrows to the left of the person's head.



Avoid clicking on the blue 'Buy' options, they will take you to the Ivona website. You can move the toolbar around the screen, dragging it to a place that's convenient. The student can highlight text and listen to it. (ideally with headphones). This will work for text in a Word document, a Google Doc, a PDF, a web page, email or text box. One student may require to listen to a whole page of text; another student may just require to use it for the odd word.

It's free to download and should be recommended for home use too.



Audacity is open source, free software which allows the recording of a student's voice and for the file to be saved in MP3 format. It does look a bit complex but all you need to do is plug in a USB microphone, open the software, click on the red circle to record, the yellow square to stop, green arrow to play back. File / Export and the file will be saved in MP3 format. This can be accessed as easily as opening a text document – File / Open / browse to where the MP3 file has been saved and the work can be used for revision, submitted for assessment or kept as evidence of learning.

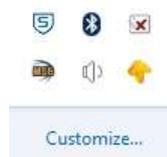




My Study Bar is a toolbar of support for learners with literacy related problems. The toolbar can sit anywhere (like Ivona Mini reader) and can be used in many ways.



For dyslexic learners who require a coloured overlay when reading printed text they can click on Reading / ssOverlay and choose a colour of overlay and level of transparency. When you click on ssOverlay at first it looks as if nothing has been happened but down in the bottom right hand corner of the screen if you click on the little up arrow  you will see the ss Overlay yellow arrow. Right click on this to find Settings.



Right click on the yellow arrow to Exit.

The T-Bar screen masking blocks out text allowing the student to focus on one paragraph at a time. They can then slide the block down as needed to read more.

Reminders / checklists can be created under the **Planning** section – Hott Notes.

Touch typing practice can be done in the **Writing** section – Rapid Typing.

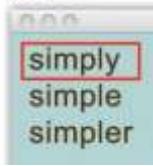
The **Text Reader** (Orato) option works with text that has been copied to the Windows Clipboard. I recommend that students stick to using Ivona Minireader to avoid confusion over which tool to use for which piece of text.

You can find out more information at <http://mystudybar.blogspot.co.uk/>



Penfriend XL software offers text prediction. This can be very helpful for students with English as an Additional Language as well as those with additional support needs. The Penfriend text box sits next to the cursor and as you start to type the word it offers suggestions for the word.

One smp__



You can set it to offer up to 10 words and all these words can be read out loud. This is a huge advantage for those with spelling difficulties. In Microsoft Word a misspelt word will appear with a red squiggly line underneath it. When you right click on that word you are then given a choice of words to correct it but without speech feedback it can be very difficult / impossible for some students to know which is the word they want.

We now have an authority licence for Penfriend XL which means it can be installed (remotely) on all school computers. If you don't see it in the Applications Folder, please email ITServiceDesk@eastlothian.gov.uk

Open Dyslexic Font in Microsoft Word



OpenDyslexic is a new open sourced font created to increase readability for readers with dyslexia. The typeface includes regular, bold, italic, and bold-italic styles.

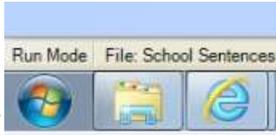
OpenDyslexic is created to help with some of the symptoms of dyslexia. Letters have heavy weighted bottoms to indicate direction. You are able to quickly figure out which part of the letter is down which aids in recognising the correct letter, and sometimes helps to keep your brain from rotating them around. Consistently weighted bottoms can also help reinforce the line of text. The unique shapes of each letter can help prevent confusion through flipping and swapping.

This font has been installed remotely on all school computers. It should appear in the long list of fonts offered in Word.

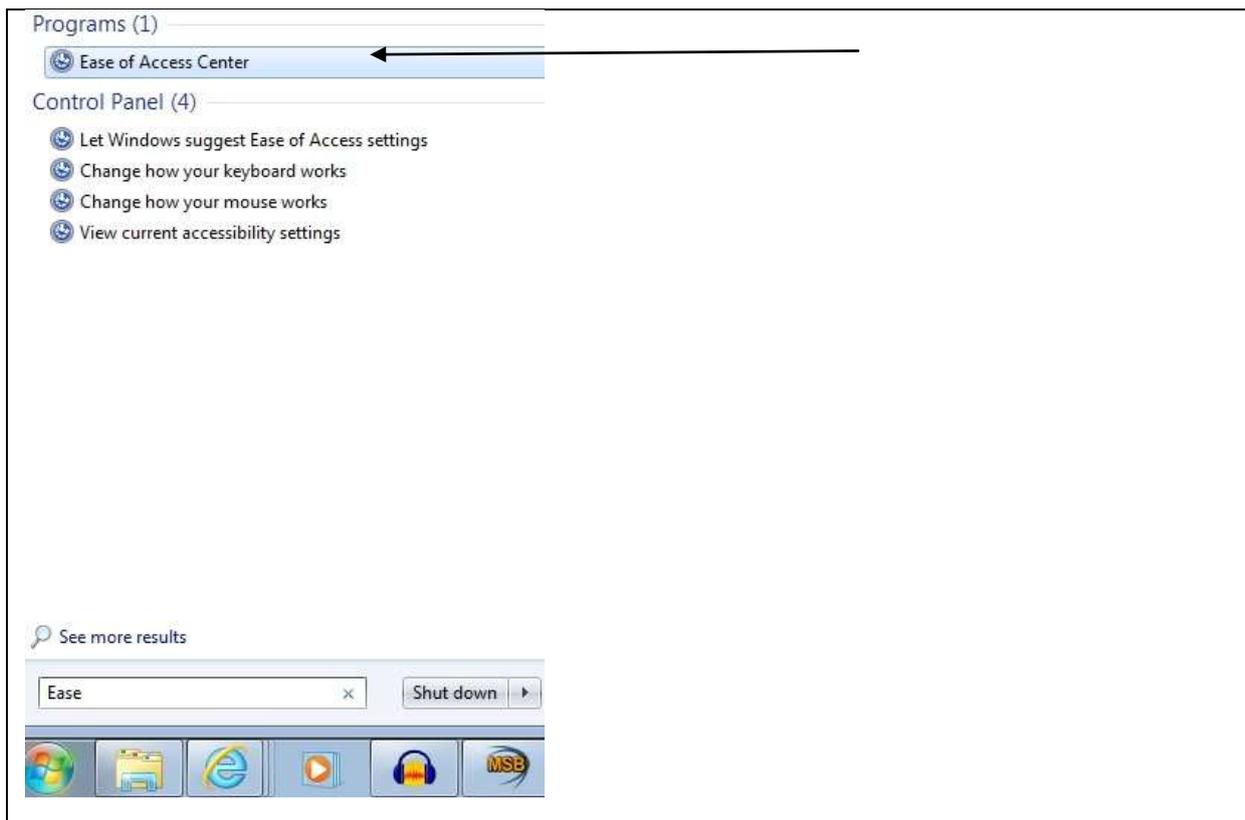
The heavy based letters are more spaced out and both factors help the dyslexic learner decode the text more easily.

Accessibility settings

On Windows 7 computers the Accessibility settings can be found in the 'Ease of Access Center'. There are a number of adjustments that can be made at user level. To access this click on the Start

icon in the bottom left hand corner of your screen  and type in 'Ease of Access' in the search box.

Here you can optimise the visual display, make the keyboard easier to use, make the mouse easier to see and adjust settings for reading and typing.



Speech to text software

For students who find it difficult to get words down on paper the idea of them being able to speak into a microphone and have the words appear as text on the screen would seem like the ideal solution. This speech to text technology does exist and to some extent, for some people, is very successful. The offering on mobile phones currently still relies on an internet connection and the voice files are transferred to the Cloud to be processed and returned as text. This causes frustrating delays and often mistakes.

Windows 7 computers have in built speech recognition functionality. This can be found in the Ease of Access Center under 'Use the computer without a mouse or keyboard'. There have been varying levels of success with this and it's always a battle to know how much time to invest supporting a student to learn how to use the software when the end result may not really help them with their literacy issues and only cause more frustration.



For all voice recognition software the use of a high quality headset (preferably a USB Andrea model) is essential.

The top of the range product is [Dragon Naturally Speaking](#) software. It can be purchased as a single licence (through IT) and installed on a school computer. Multiple profiles can be set up so more than one student can use the software. For the best results the user will have the cognitive ability to recognise the text that appears on the screen is what they have said so they are then able to make corrections with or without speech commands. Each high school Support for Learning Department has been provided with a laptop with this software on it to trial it.

If you are interested to find out more, please contact Shirley Lawson (slawson@eastlothian.gov.uk)



Clicker 5 is award winning reading and writing assistive software for learners of all ages and abilities. It offers extensive support to emergent, developing and struggling learners. The words or phrases (with pictures if required) in the 'grid' can be inserted into the 'document' by left clicking on the cell. If you are not sure what the words are you can right click to hear the options. Students can use the cells – and the word banks – for support as they use the document part for word processing. Speech reinforcement helps them self correct independently. Spell check highlights words that need corrected and again the choice of words given can be listened to.

In East Lothian we are not moving to Clicker 6 due to the prohibitive cost of the authority licence upgrade. There are still plenty of useful features in Clicker 5 and it's easy and quick to create some simple grids to support struggling learners. It can help build the skills and language of EAL students.

If you click on the HELP tab within Clicker 5 you will be able to get a full range of support on how to use the software. If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Lawson (slawson@eastlothian.gov.uk)

