



# Choosing a keyboard and mouse



This factsheet tells you about different types of keyboard and mouse.

# How to use this factsheet



We are **AbilityNet**.

We help disabled people to use technology.  
Like computers and tablets.



This is an easy read factsheet.  
You may still need help to read it.  
Ask someone you know to help you.



For more information you can phone or email us.



Phone **0800 048 7642**



Email **[enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)**

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# 1 What this factsheet is about



A keyboard and a mouse can help you to use your computer and tablets.

But if you are disabled you might find them difficult to use.



This factsheet tells you about keyboards, mice and other equipment that can help you.



This factsheet also tells you about how to make a keyboard or mouse easier to use.



If you have questions you can contact us for advice.

## 2. Get comfortable



The right keyboard and mouse can make it easier to use a computer or tablet.

But it is also important to be comfortable.



**Posture** is how you hold your body. Like when you are sitting, standing or working.

Good posture is when you are sitting properly and feel comfortable.



**Good posture** is important for everyone.

If you sit badly or need to stretch to use your computer or tablet it can cause pain or injury.



If you need help on good posture you can contact us.

# 3. Connecting your devices



A keyboard and a mouse connect to computers and tablets in different ways.

Some connect to the computer or tablet using a wire or cable.



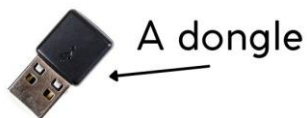
You can get a **wireless** keyboard or mouse. They do not have a cable.

Most connect to the computer or tablet using **Bluetooth**.

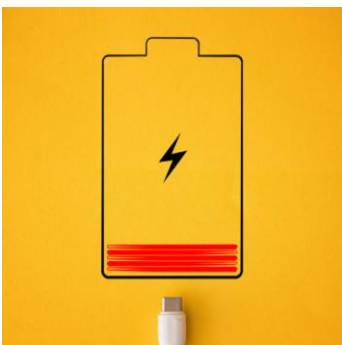


Bluetooth is a technology that connects computers to other devices without a cable.

Some Bluetooth keyboards and mice need a **dongle**.



The dongle plugs in the side of the computer.



Wireless keyboards and mice use batteries.

You will see a warning when they need new batteries or recharging.

# 4. Choosing a keyboard



Standard computer keyboards are designed to be used with two hands.

Number pad



Standard keyboards also have a number pad on the right hand side.

Which makes it easier for right handed people to use.



There are lots of **accessible** keyboards to help people use their computers and tablets.

We will look at them now.

## Comfortable keyboards



**Ergonomic** keyboards make it more comfortable to type.

Ergonomic means equipment is more comfortable to use.



When you type on an ergonomic keyboard you do not need to move your hands very far.



This can help stop pain and injury to your hands and wrists.



Some ergonomic keyboards have two pieces.

You can move the pieces so it is more comfortable to use.



You can also get ergonomic keyboards for people who use one hand to type.



## Compact keyboards



Compact keyboards are smaller than standard keyboards.

They normally do not have a number pad on the side.



Compact keyboards take up less space.

They can stop you stretching too far to reach things. Like your mouse.



Compact keyboards are easier to use for people in wheelchairs.

Compact keyboards are better for people who use one hand to type.

## Number pads



A separate number pad is good if you use a compact keyboard.

You can move the number pad out of the way when you are not using it.

You can also put the number pad on the left or right side of your keyboard.

## Keyboards with larger keys



You can get keyboards with larger keys.

The big keys are easier to see.

Big keys are easier to press.

## Keyboards with colours



Keyboards with different colours can make letters and numbers easier to see.



You can choose from lots of colours. For example, black and yellow.

## Changing how keyboards look



You can buy coloured stickers for your keyboard.

The coloured stickers are easier to see.

You stick them to the keys on your keyboard.

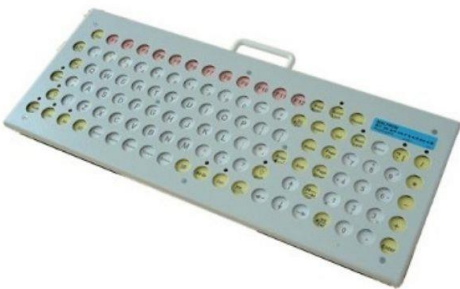
## Other keyboards

You can get special keyboard for people with **learning and motor difficulties**.



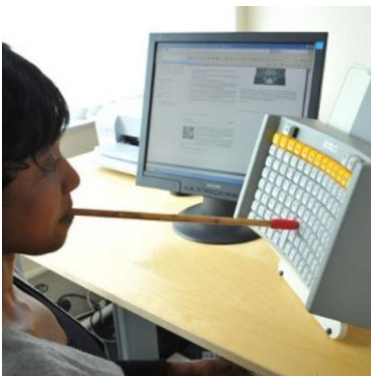
They can also help you if you cannot see very well.

You can change the keyboard to suit your needs.



You can get special keyboards for people with **cerebral palsy and other disabilities**.

A metal cover helps to stop you from pressing the wrong keys by accident.



You can get head keyboards for people who **cannot use their hands**.

You put a special stick in your mouth. You press the keyboard with the stick to type.



Chording keyboards have a small number of keys.

They are good for people who **use one hand to type**.

You press different keys together to type letters, numbers and other keys.



Braille displays let you type text and control your computer.

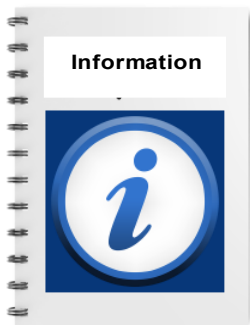
You can also use it to read emails and web pages.



## Key guards

Keyguards are made of plastic or metal. They fit over your keyboard.

They stop you pressing the wrong keys by accident.



For more information see **Making your keyboard easier to use.**

This tells you how to make your keyboard easier to use.



You do not have to use a keyboard to control or type on your computer, tablet or smartphone.



You can use

- on screen keyboards
- your voice
- a switch button

We will look at them now.

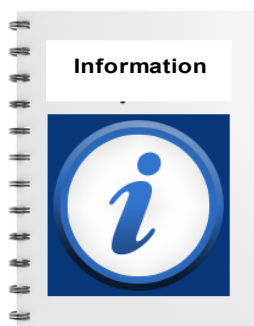
## On screen keyboards



Most computers tablets and smartphones have on screen keyboards.

You can touch the screen to type.

You can also choose letters using a mouse, a switch or a joystick.



For more information see **Using on screen keyboards.**

This tells you how to use on screen keyboards to make your life easier.

## Using your voice



Special software lets you control your computer or tablet with your voice.

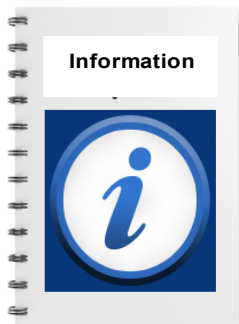
It also types what you say on your computer.

We call this voice recognition software.



Voice recognition software can help you to spell hard words.

It is useful for people with learning differences like dyslexia.



We have a factsheet called **Voice recognition – an overview.**

This tells you how to use voice recognition to make your life easier.

## Switch button



A switch is a button that you press to control a computer or tablet.

You can use the switch to type with an on screen keyboard, a word list or picture list.

# 6. Touch typing



**Touch typing** is when you can type without looking at the keyboard.

It is a good skill.  
You can type much faster.



You can learn to touch type with training.

We think these websites are good for learning to touch type.

## For adults



- English Type  
[www.englishtype.com](http://www.englishtype.com)



- KAZ  
[www.kaz-type.com](http://www.kaz-type.com)

## For children



- Nessy Fingers  
[www.nessy.com](http://www.nessy.com)



DANCE MAT TYPING

- Dance Mat Typing  
[www.dancemattypingguide.com](http://www.dancemattypingguide.com)

# 7. Choosing a mouse



It is important to choose a mouse that feels comfortable and is easy to use.

A new mouse can take a while to get used to.



You can get lots of different mice to help you use your computer and tablet.

We will look at them now.

## Ergonomic mouse

An **ergonomic** mouse fits the shape of your hand.

It can be more comfortable to use.

You can get them for your right or left hand.'



## Vertical mouse

You hold a **vertical** mouse upright.

Like you are shaking hands with someone.

This mouse can be more comfortable to use.







## Bar mouse

A bar mouse sits in front of the keyboard.

You use it with your thumbs or fingers while you type.

This mouse can help stop pain in your wrist.



## Trackball mouse

A trackball mouse stays still on the desk.

You rest your hand on it and roll the ball with your thumb or fingers or hand.

Trackballs can help stop pain in your wrist.



You can get a large trackball mouse.

They are easy to use.  
They have big buttons.

You can even use your elbows or feet.



## Touchpad or trackpad

You control a touchpad by moving your fingers across the screen.

You can press the buttons or tap on the screen.

## Pen mouse



You hold a pen mouse in your hand like a pen.

You move the pen mouse across the desk to control your computer.

## Joysticks



Joysticks work like the controls on an electric wheelchair.

You control the computer by moving the joystick. And pressing the buttons.



## Touch screens

Most tablets and smartphones have touchscreens. And some computers.



You touch the screen with your fingers to type or choose things.

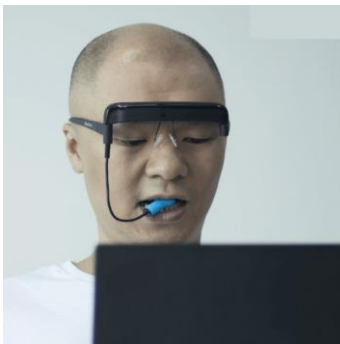
It is an easy way to work a computer or tablet or smartphone.

## Using your head



Head movement equipment lets you control a computer by moving your head.

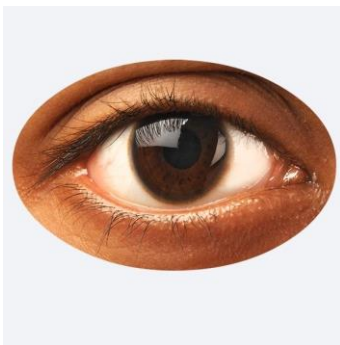
You wear it on your head.  
Like wearing glasses



You control the computer by moving your head up, down, left and right.

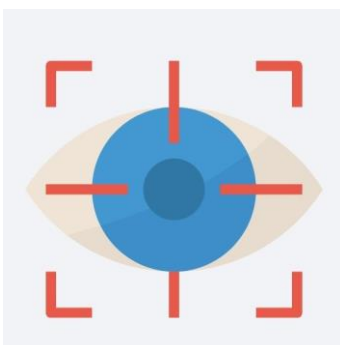
You can select things by blowing or biting the blue bulb in the picture.

## Using your eyes



Eye movement equipment follows the movement of your eyes.

You can type and control the computer using an on screen keyboard.



Eye movement equipment is faster to use than head movement equipment.

It is good for people who cannot move their head or body or arms.

## Foot mouse



A foot mouse lets you control a computer or tablet using your feet.

One foot moves the cursor on the screen.

The other foot presses the buttons.

## Gaming controls



You can get accessible gaming controllers.

Like the Microsoft Xbox adaptive controller.

Disabled and non-disabled gamers can play and compete together.



You can also connect it to different types switches and buttons and controllers.

This makes it easier to use for different people to use.

## 8. Other equipment



It is important to set up your computer safely.

If you have to twist your body or head too much it can cause pain or injury.



Make sure your computer screen is directly in front of you.

Make sure the top of the screen is level with your eyes.



Other equipment can help you set up your computer or tablet safely.

This will help stop pain and injuries.

We will look at them now.

## Lap trays



A lap tray lets you use a tablet or computer comfortably on your lap.

It has a flat surface on the top and a beanbag on the bottom.

## Wrist supports



Wrist supports attach to your desk.

They support the weight of your arms.

## Desks



You can get desks that you can make higher or lower.

This means you can work sitting or standing.

They are good for wheelchair users.



Hands Free Computing help make computers accessible for everyone.

Visit [www.hands-free.co.uk](http://www.hands-free.co.uk)



Posturite help make happier, healthier workspaces at office and home.

Visit [www.posturite.co.uk](http://www.posturite.co.uk)



Contour Design makes ergonomic computer devices.

Like ergonomic and bar mouse.

Visit [contour-design.co.uk](http://contour-design.co.uk)



Evoluent make ergonomic mice.

Like the vertical mouse.

Visit [evoluent.com](http://evoluent.com)



Tobii make eye movement equipment.

Visit [www.tobbi.com](http://www.tobbi.com)



Glassouse make head movement equipment.

Visit [www.glassouse.com](http://www.glassouse.com)



Microsoft Xbox make accessible gaming controls. Like the Xbox adaptive controller.

Visit [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com)



## My Computer My Way

### My Computer My Way

The **My Computer My Way** website explains how to make your computer, tablet and smartphone accessible.

- Website [mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk](http://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk)



### Advice and information

If you have any questions you can contact us at AbilityNet. We are here to help you.

Phone **0800 048 7642**

Email [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)



### IT support at Home

AbilityNet volunteers can help you with your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.



If you need support at home, you can book an AbilityNet volunteer to visit you.

[www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)