

AbilityNet Factsheet – April 2019

Single Handed Keyboard Use

Some people can only use the keyboard with one hand. This factsheet gives you some advice on the most effective ways of doing this.

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1. Typing options

‘Sticky Keys’ feature

Many software programs require you to press two or three keys at one time. For single handed users this may be difficult. Software built in to computers called ‘StickyKeys’ allows you to press one key at a time which modifies the response as if the keys had been pressed simultaneously. AbilityNet’s [‘My Computer My Way’](#) shows you how to use [‘StickyKeys’](#) on different platforms.

Smaller Keyboards

Single handed users may benefit from using smaller keyboards which present keys in a more compact area than a standard keyboard, and therefore require less movement. These are similar in size to those found on laptop computers.

It is important that the keyboard is placed in a comfortable position for easy operation.



Image: Cherry G84 keyboard

Number Pad

The numeric pad on a standard keyboard is located on the right-hand side of the keyboard - this can present left handed users with a considerable stretch. A separate number pad can therefore be placed in a natural position to reduce awkward postures.



Image: Cherry number pad

Touch Typing with One Hand

It is possible to learn to touch type using one hand and there are software-based typing tutors such as [Five Finger Typist](#), from [Inclusive Technology](#) that provide tutorials in this.

Dvorak Layout

The standard QWERTY layout is not optimised for single handed use. Dvorak layouts for right- and left-handed use attempt to correct this. Alphabetic keys are relocated to one side of the keyboard, using all four rows, with numbers being positioned to the side.

Single Handed Keyboards

A keyboard which has been specifically designed for single handed use. Matching natural hand movement through adapted key arrangement minimises finger movement. It requires good dexterity and has been designed for touch typing using 4 fingers and thumb. Both Left- and Right-hand models are designed for 'Touch Typing'.

Windows keys are included, and 'push-on/off' keys control essential for single hand use for Shift, Control and Alt functions.



Image: Maltron right handed keyboard

Chord Keyboard

Chord keyboards have only a few keys and rely on keys being pressed in combination to generate letters. They therefore work well for single handed users with independent movement in each of their fingers.



Image: Cykey

Reduce Key Strikes with Predictive Text

After typing the first few letters of a word, predictive software gives a number of words starting with those letters. To complete the word the user simply selects one of the words offered. For longer words this can offer speed improvements.

Mobile technology commonly incorporates this strategy to speed up text entry.

Assistive Technology Software that incorporates predictive text: Co-Writer, TextHelp Read & Write, Penfriend, Claro Read.

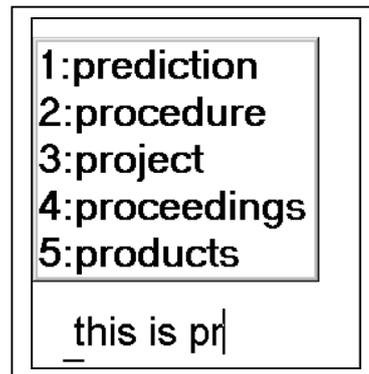


Image: Prediction

Auto-text Entry

Most word processing packages have facilities to store blocks of text against a particular word or keystroke. These are often called macros, but also go by other names: glossary, Auto-text, Quickparts etc. Once a macro is defined it can be entered anywhere in the current document by using a short keystroke or word.

In situations where there are no built-in macro facilities, there are a number of add-on packages giving the same facilities. You can create macros within Microsoft office products.

2. Useful contacts and links

Inclusive Technology: www.inclusive.co.uk/
Dvorak Keyboard: www.dvorak-keyboard.com/
Maltron Keyboard: www.maltron.com/
Cykey Chord: www.cykey.co.uk/
Cherry Keyboard: www.cherry.co.uk/products/keyboards.html
Co-Writer: cowriter.com/
TextHelp Read & Write: www.texthelp.com/en-gb/
Penfriend: www.penfriend.biz/
Claro Read: www.clarosoftware.com/
HemiHelp: www.hemihelp.org.uk/home

3. How can AbilityNet help you?

AbilityNet is a leading authority on accessibility and assistive technologies. We can assist individuals, charities and employers by providing:

- advice and information
- workplace assessments
- consultancy services.

My Computer My Way

My Computer My Way is a free, interactive tool developed by AbilityNet that makes any computer, tablet and smartphone easier to use. It can help you ensure that your equipment is set up the best way possible to suit your particular needs. It covers all the accessibility features built into your computer, laptop, Chromebook, tablet or smartphone, and all the major operating systems – Windows, MacOS, iOS, Chrome OS and Android.

My Computer My Way shows you how to adjust your computer to assist with:

- vision – help seeing your screen
- hearing – help with sounds and audio
- motor – help with your keyboard and mouse
- cognitive – help with reading, spelling and understanding

You can use it for free at www.mycomputermyway.com

Workplace Assessment Service

When it comes to computing solutions, one size does not fit all. We believe that each case is unique and that individual attention is vital. Our Workplace Assessment Service integrates personal, technical and organisational considerations to arrive at sound and realistic suggestions, documented in a report.

To find out more about AbilityNet's Workplace Assessment Service, please visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/workplace or call 01926 465 247.

Consultancy services

Our expert consultants are also available to assist employers who wish to take a broad, longer-term view in designing computer systems and associated work processes. Our experience and expertise can help you to achieve safe, healthy and productive working procedures.

To find out more about AbilityNet's consultancy services, call 01962 465 247 or email sales@abilitynet.org.uk

DSA / Student assessments

If you have a disability and are in higher or further education, you may qualify for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). If you are eligible you will receive a free assessment and may qualify for a grant towards any adjustments that you might require. This could help with the costs of buying a new computer or any other specialist equipment you might need.

For information, please visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/dsa or call 01926 464 095.

4. About AbilityNet

AbilityNet is the national charity that supports people with any disability, of any age. Our specialist services help disabled people to use computers and the internet to improve their lives, whether at work, at home or in education. We offer:

- free advice and information
- accessibility services
- DSA/student assessments
- workplace assessments
- IT help at home
- IT volunteers.

Support us

Visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/donate to learn how you can support our work.

Contact us

- Telephone 0800 269 545
- Email enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk
- Web: www.abilitynet.org.uk

We are always keen to help share knowledge about accessibility and assistive technology. If you have any questions about how you may use the contents of this factsheet, please contact us at AbilityNet and we will do all we can to help.

5. Copyright information

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