

In recent years the computer has become a very versatile tool. The ability to capture images, record and play sounds, attach an assortment of keyboards and mice has enabled the computer to adapt to meet a multitude of needs. An area where this adaptability can add real value is in supporting people with learning difficulties.

Learning difficulties covers a very wide and diverse group of people. We use the term to include those people with a learning disability from birth, as well as people with an acquired learning difficulty, e.g. as a result of a head injury. Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, is covered on a separate factsheet called 'A Dyslexia Toolkit'.

A number of people with learning difficulties find the standard keyboard and mouse difficult to use. Alternatives to these devices are listed on our factsheet, 'Getting Round – Difficulties with the Keyboard and Mouse'.

This factsheet gives examples of software that is, or can be made, more suitable for an older age group. For convenience, the software is grouped into the following four areas:

1. Motivation
2. Life Skills
3. Literacy
4. Memory & Cognition

## 1. MOTIVATION

### **Music Factory**

This program is about listening and creating musical compositions from pre-defined sound clips

Price £39

Supplier: Widgit

### **Switch Connection**

Six games for switch training.

Supplier: Sensory Software, Inclusive Technology

Price: £60

Demonstration disk: Available from supplier

### **Gamz Jigsaw**

A jigsaw program.

Supplier: Gamz

Price: £21

Demonstration: Available from website

### **SwitchIt! Patterns**

Patterns is designed for those who need visual stimulation and the development of visual skills associated with location, fixing and following.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology

Price: £30

### **Doodle plus**

A paint program (with sound effects).

Supplier: Semerc

Price: £39

### **Drumkit**

The program allows learners to augment music with their own input, e.g. a switch could be used to trigger a simple beat of a drum.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology

Price: £30

### **Textease 2000**

A powerful word processing and desktop publishing program.

Supplier: Semerc, REM

Price: £85

Demonstration: Available from website: [www.textease.com](http://www.textease.com)

### **Additional Software to Consider:**

**BrainsBreaker** : This is another jigsaw program. Supplier: BrainsBreaker.

Price: Free (although there is a charge for some puzzles). Download from website.

**Disco**: Disco is a basic cause and effect piece of software. Supplier:

Inclusive Technology. Price: £40

**Project Presenter**: This program can be used to create a 'storybook' by combining pictures, sounds and video. Microsoft PowerPoint is similar but more powerful. Supplier: Semerc. Price: £40

**K-1**: Is a musical kaleidoscope. The colours and shapes can be pre-set or the program can constantly change them.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology. Price: £25

## **2. LIFE SKILLS**

### **About Out and About level 1 - The Living Community**

A series of life skill tasks including Shopping, Banking, Home, Travel.

Supplier: Semerc

Price: £60

### **Lifeskills: Smart Spender**

A series of life skill tasks relating to money,

Supplier: Semerc

Price: £60

### **Lifeskills: 24 Hours A Day**

Users are presented with different everyday scenarios within which they make decisions over the course of the day.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology

Price: £50

### **Streetwise – Smart Moves**

Streetwise aims to support learning in the area of lifeskills, addressing issues such as healthy eating, safety in the home, formal interview techniques.

Supplier: Learning & Teaching Scotland

Price: £40

### **SwitchIt! Maker**

Is a program for creating sequential learning activities. It is appropriate for developing the concepts of cause-and-effect, sequencing and building.

Pictures/images can be imported to create appropriate learning and lifeskill activities.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology

Price: £40

### **Traveller's Cheque**

Traveller's Cheque supports learning in the areas of financial education and personal and social education. Activities include using a bank account, saving money, selecting a holiday and obtaining foreign currency.

Supplier: Learning & Teaching Scotland

Price: £40

### **Additional software to consider:**

**Lifeskills: Smart Spender' & Lifeskills: Time & Money'**. A way to learn about handling money and telling the time.

Supplier: Learning & Teaching Scotland, Semerc. Price: £40

### **3. LITERACY**

#### **Clicker**

Is a writing program that enables you to write with pictures as well as words.

Supplier: Crick, Semerc, Inclusive Technology

Price: £90

#### **Writing with Symbols 2000**

This is an integrated word and graphics processor for those who have difficulty using text.

Supplier: Widgit

Price: £160

#### **ScreenReader**

ScreenReader is a program which allows your computer to 'speak out' the text in any windows based application.

Supplier: Texthelp

Price: £30 or £20 (via Website)

Demonstration: Available from Website

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#### **Penfriend**

Penfriend is a (talking) prediction package. It works alongside your word processor. It tries to predict the word you are about to type.

Supplier: Inclusive Technology, Crick

Price: £60

Demonstration: Available from website: [www.penfriend.biz](http://www.penfriend.biz)

#### **ClozePro**

ClozePro is based on the 'Cloze Procedure' i.e. a test for diagnosing reading ability; words are deleted from a prose passage and the reader is required to fill in the blanks.

Supplier: Crick

Price: £90

#### **Inter\_Comm**

This software allows independent, text-free, access to email for symbol users. It is an add on to "Writing with Symbols 2000".

Supplier: Widgit

Price: £40

#### **Additional software to consider:**

**A1 Hangword:** A computer version of the famous Hangman game. Free, available from [www.caltrox.com/products/hangword.htm](http://www.caltrox.com/products/hangword.htm)

**Wordbar:** Offers writing support when using a word processor. It provides instant access to banks of words and phrases. Supplier: Crick, Semerc. Price: £60

**Scrabble (by Ubisoft):** The software version of the board game. Supplier: High Street Computer Shop or Software Paradise. Price: £16

**Swap/Fix Card Games:** This software is based on an actual card game of the same name. 'Swap and Fix' are essentially reading games aimed at introducing and reinforcing a spelling family/rule. Supplier: Gamz. Price: £50. 'Swap and Fix' is part of the Gamz Player CD. The CD also includes Word Search, Pelman and Slider Puzzle exercises. Demonstration: Available from Website. Price: £50.

**ReadPlease:** ReadPlease is a program which allows your computer to 'speak out' the text. Price: Free, available from website: [www.readplease.com](http://www.readplease.com)

## 4. MEMORY AND COGNITION

### React

React is a program of interactive tasks designed to augment the speech and language therapist's repertoire of therapy materials.

Supplier: Propeller Multimedia Ltd.

Price: £60 (individual modules) to £425 (complete system)

Demonstration disk: Available from supplier

### Signs and Symbols

Real-life sign and symbol recognition activities, incorporating visual memory, auditory memory, auditory discrimination and visual perception/discrimination.

Supplier: Semerc

Price: £50

### Mastering Memory

A program designed by a speech and language therapist as a tool to improve memory skills. Sequences of pictures and/or words are presented for a set period of time. Clients are then asked to create the same arrangement.

Supplier: CALSC

Price: £180

Demonstration: Available from website, [www.masteringmemory.co.uk](http://www.masteringmemory.co.uk)

### Intact

A program designed specifically for dysphasic people. It is generally sold to speech and language therapy departments.

Supplier: Aphasia Computer Team

Price: £300

## **ColorCards**

ColorCards contains activities to reinforce key skill areas such as visual discrimination, problem solving, numeracy and concentration.

Supplier: Inclusive

Price: £50

## **Timely reminders**

A memory program to help users to remember facts and procedures.

Supplier: REM, CALSC

Price: £35

Demonstration: Available from website, [www.timelyreminders.co.uk](http://www.timelyreminders.co.uk)

## **Additional software to consider:**

**Bungalow** : Bungalow Software provides extra therapy practice to help with speech, reading and writing skills. Supplier: Propeller Multimedia Ltd. Prices: range from £50-£140. Demonstration: Available from website: [www.bungalowsoftware.com](http://www.bungalowsoftware.com)

**Parrot**: Parrot software provides extra therapy to assist people that have had a stroke and other head injuries. Supplier: Parrot Software. Prices and demonstrations are available from website: [www.parrotsoftware.com](http://www.parrotsoftware.com)

**B-Puzzle**: B-Puzzle is the electronic version of the sliding puzzle game. Supplier: ADC-Soft. Price: US\$10. Demonstration: Available from website.

**Strategy Games**: (Chess, Bridge, Backgammon)  
Supplier: GSP Ltd. Price: £15

**Family Games**: (incl. Draughts, Connect 4)  
Games of logic where the user can challenge the computer. Supplier: GSP Ltd. Price: £15

**Solitaire**: This is the card game that comes with Microsoft Windows.

## **Notes**

1. *Prices are approximate and exclude Vat.*
2. *The following suppliers produce catalogues which include a wide range of software: Crick, Inclusive Technology, REM, Learning & Teaching Scotland, Semerc, AVP and Special Needs Computing.*
3. *Some of the suppliers operate a 21-day software approval service.*

## Suppliers List

### **ADC-Soft**

Web: [www.adcsoft.com](http://www.adcsoft.com)

### **Aphasia Computing Team**

Frenchay Hospital, Bristol

Tel: 0117 918 6529

Web: [www.speech-therapy.org.uk](http://www.speech-therapy.org.uk)

### **AVP**

Chepstow

Tel: 01291 625 439

Web: [www.avp.co.uk](http://www.avp.co.uk)

### **BrainsBreaker**

Web: [www.brainsbreaker.com](http://www.brainsbreaker.com)

### **CALSC**

Sutton, Surrey

Tel: 020 8642 4663

Web: [www.calsc.co.uk](http://www.calsc.co.uk)

### **Crick Software Ltd.**

Northampton

Tel: 01604 671 691

Web: [www.cricksoft.com](http://www.cricksoft.com)

### **Gamz**

Malvern

Tel: 01684 562 158

Web: [www.gamzuk.com](http://www.gamzuk.com)

### **GSP Ltd**

St Ives

Tel: 01480 460 206

Web: [www.gspltd.co.uk](http://www.gspltd.co.uk)

### **Inclusive Technology**

Oldham

Tel: 01457 819 790

Web: [www.inclusive.co.uk](http://www.inclusive.co.uk)

### **Learning & Teaching Scotland**

Glasgow

Tel: 0141 337 5000

Web: [www.ltscotland.com](http://www.ltscotland.com)

### **Propeller Multimedia Ltd.**

Edinburgh

Tel: 01896 833 528

Web: [www.propeller.net/rehab](http://www.propeller.net/rehab)

### **REM Ltd**

Langport, Somerset

Tel: 01458 254 700

Web: [www.r-e-m.co.uk](http://www.r-e-m.co.uk)

### **SEMERC**

Manchester

Tel: 0161 827 2719

Web: [www.granada-learning.co.uk](http://www.granada-learning.co.uk)

### **Sensory Software Ltd**

Malvern

Tel: 01684 578 868

Web: [www.sensorysoftware.com](http://www.sensorysoftware.com)

### **Special Needs Computing**

Rainhill, Merseyside

Tel: 0151 426 9988

Web: [www.box42.com](http://www.box42.com)

### **Texthelp Systems**

Antrim

Tel: 0800 328 7910

Web: [www.texthelp.com](http://www.texthelp.com)

### **Widgit**

Cambridge

Tel: 01223 425558

Web: [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)

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