

I.T. takes longer!

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Dyslexic people say that they need more time for everything. 'It takes longer'. This applies even more to computers or Information Technologies. 'I.T. takes longer!' And dyslexic people have to spend time developing technological skills that other people do not need.

1. What takes the time?

One standard suggestion for dyslexic people is a text reader (text to speech, TTS). Listening takes much longer than silent, fluent reading and it is not just a case of listening once. So please keep documents as short as possible.

Fiona has to listen to a whole document to find out which parts she wants to hear. She uses a text reader with synchronised highlighting, because simultaneous seeing and hearing helps her to comprehend the content.

Harry can now listen at increased speed and then run important parts at a slower rate.

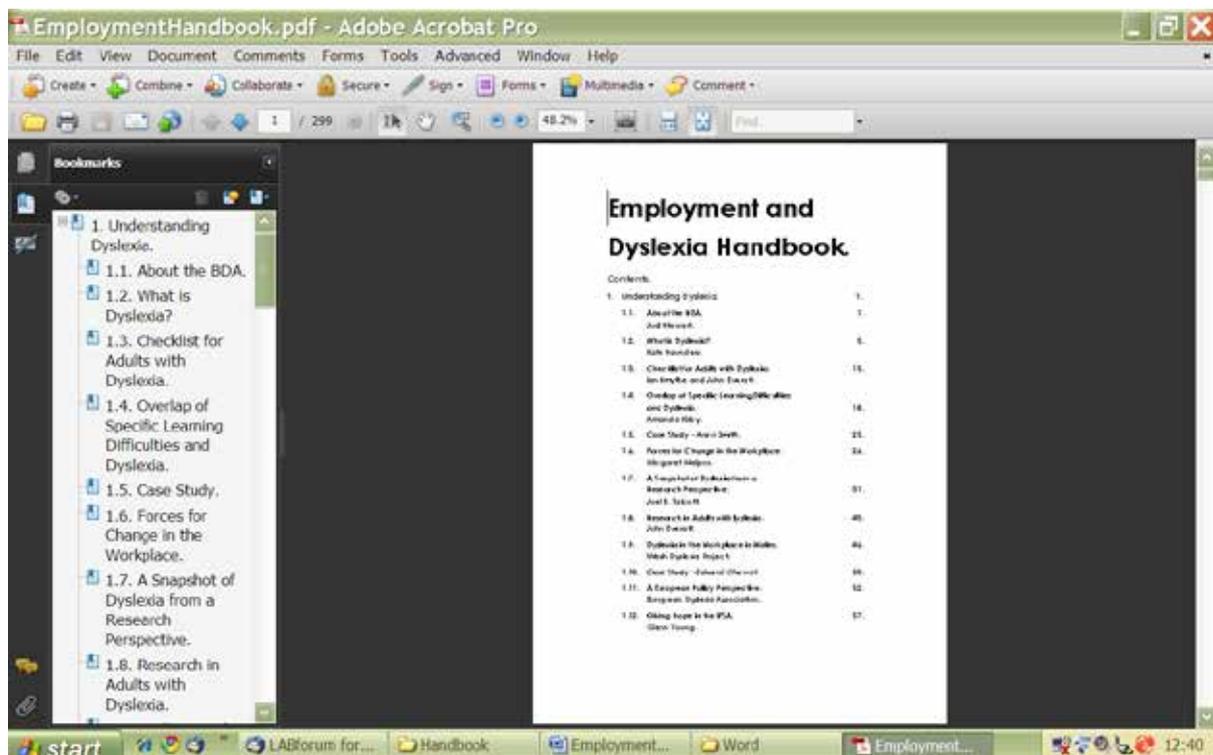
2. What do dyslexic users want?

William wants a linked menu or contents list, preferably in MS Word. that he can listen to and then click on a link for the section that he wants to study, jump to it and hear it,

Many documents are in PDF file format. They are not so easy for listening. There are so many free and purchasable programs for conversion to Word that William is obviously not the only one wanting Word documents.

Please use Styles for headings and subheadings in Word. Then you can create automated linked contents lists. After following a link, users can click on Alt/Left arrow to go back to the link source or put a Back icon on the toolbar.

If you save those files to PDF format with Open Office, you can set the formatted headings to show as linked bookmarks on opening. MS Word 2007 saves the bookmarks, but they do not show automatically on opening, and some people do not know they are there. *N.B. This is a shot of the first Employment Handbook, not the one you are reading!* (



3. Trying out applications.

Reading pens, from **Scanning Pens** and **WizCom**, have a mixed reception. They need to be held upright, moved steadily and slowly across text, on a very firm surface. The screen is necessarily very small. Some dyslexic users are very enthusiastic about them. Some people cannot get on with them.

Dave was getting into trouble for missing meetings and other things asked of the staff because he couldn't read the notices on the board. Dave used the reading pen to read notices, letters etc. at work and at home. For him it was like a 'magic pen'. He was so pleased and feels much more independent now.

Mary could not get on with a reading pen herself, but has had several clients who have loved it and found it perfect for reading the occasional difficult word in a text when they need help.

Jerry thought he was going to be able to read books for the first time, with a Reading Pen. He was disappointed to hear that it is not suitable for that.



If enough money is available, (£1000), Jerry might like **Intel Reader**, launched in January 2010. That is intended for scanning and reading aloud whole documents, even books. It is portable (and rather heavy to hold and focus above a document 1lb 7oz, 650gms) or it can be used with a stand.

George was very keen to see this, until he realised how small the screen was. So not for him, though it will suit other people.

It is easier to hold it above pages like this handbook than for focusing on one newspaper item or on A4 pages. It converts to continuous text without formatting, so a numbered agenda without stops, for example, would show and read as one sentence.



4. The aids are good for all.

The **Assistive Technology Innovation Award in the Work Place** was given to Claire Jennings of the BBC in 2008. All BBC computers can access a text-reader, a concept mapper, and a zoomer. Dyslexic employees can ask for other applications as well. This is good because the software is useful for non-dyslexics too. Listening to a document while following in the text is time-consuming but it is an excellent method of proof-reading. Concept maps and presentations suit many visual thinkers better than linear layouts.

5. Find out and remember all the options and facilities.

A lot of people just want to click and go. How much they miss out on!

David used **Inspiration** mindmapper for several years before someone told him about its well-hidden speech facility.

Pam increases website font sizes by clicking on Control/Plus. That is quicker than looking for icons or using a menu.

Everyone forgets procedures and skills if they do not keep them in good practice. Allow time for this, or users will have to spend ages finding out all over again.

6. Not on the network.

Companies and organisations rightly say that employees may not install any software because it may not be compatible with the network. Perhaps they could make a standalone computer available for trying out free software. If it is suitable, the company could install it on the network or buy more sophisticated versions for the employee.

Eduapps offers **MyStudyBar**, with 7 freeware applications. It is well worth spending time seeing and hearing the Tutorials for these applications. And allow even longer to try them out, exploring all the options.



7. Get to grips with the changes in updates.

John cursed the new Word 2007 ribbon for many months. Soon he may be cursing again!

WordTips (ribbon) for 30 January 2010.

"Everyone knows, by now, that the move to the ribbon interface (Word 2007) involved a huge learning curve for those who were familiar and comfortable with the older menu-based interface. Well, the learning curve isn't quite done yet. There are some very interesting changes (again) in Word 2010."

8. What do those initials mean?

Len cannot remember what capitalised initials stand for. It takes too long to look back at the first example, (which publishers conventionally give in full), or use a glossary and then find his place again. So please give them in full.

8. Give permission for scanning.

We look forward to the time when publishers announce availability of accessible formats for every book. Some dyslexic users may not want the whole book or document in electronic formats. So please put a notice giving print-disabled readers permission to scan extracts for personal use.

More information on using technology can be found on N.T.C. web:

www.bdatech.org

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