Assistive Technology

Removing Barriers at Work

A practical guide to matching technology to work tasks, checking compatibility and planning a useful trial.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive and accessible technology can include software, equipment, adaptations and everyday device features. It can make work tasks more accessible when reading, writing, communicating, planning, navigating a computer or taking part in meetings creates a barrier.

Examples by work task

TASK AREA	OPTIONS TO EXPLORE	A QUESTION TO ASK
Reading and writing	Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, magnification, accessible files, proofreading tools.	Does this help me read, draft or check information more comfortably?
Computer access	Screen reader, voice control, alternative keyboard or mouse, zoom and display settings.	Does it work with the device and applications I use?
Planning and memory	Digital task lists, calendar prompts, reminders, timers and structured steps.	Does it reduce missed steps without adding distracting alerts?
Meetings and communication	Live captions, transcripts, accessible agendas, communication software or hearing support.	Can I follow, contribute and review the information afterwards?

Start with the barrier, not the product

One tool may help one task and create friction in another. Describe what happens, what part is difficult and what you would like to be able to do. Then compare possible technology with other changes such as clearer instructions, training, adjusted workflows or reasonable adjustments.

A few useful questions

- What task do I want to make easier?
- What have I tried already, and what helped or did not help?
- What would a successful change look like for me?
- Would I need a trial, training, setup or ongoing technical support?

Choosing a tool that fits

Use a real work task to compare options. The most useful tool is one that fits your work, preferences and technical environment, not simply the one with the longest feature list.

Map the task from start to finish

- What information do I need to read, hear or remember?
- What do I need to do with it: write, speak, type, organise, compare or decide?
- How do I record, share or finish the work?
- At what point does a barrier appear, and what would make that step more accessible?

Example: if long documents are tiring to read, you might compare text-to-speech, larger text, different spacing or a structured reading workflow. If typing is the barrier, you might explore dictation, keyboard shortcuts, predictive text or another input method.

Compare options with a small trial

CHECK	WHAT TO NOTICE
Task fit	Can I complete the real task more easily, accurately or consistently?
Compatibility	Does it work with my device, operating system, apps, shared files and meetings?
Effort	Does setup, switching tools or correcting output add fatigue or extra steps?
Privacy	What data, audio or documents are stored, and who can access them?
Support	Do I need training, IT approval, setup or a contact for troubleshooting?

My trial notes

Tool or feature: _____ Task: _____

What I will look for: _____

Trial length or review date: _____

Privacy, IT and funding

Before using new software, extensions, transcription or cloud services at work, check employer IT and information-security requirements. Some tools process audio, documents or other sensitive information outside your device. Ask where data is stored and who can access it.

Set up a safe and useful trial

- Check whether the tool is approved for your device and work applications.
- Ask whether licences, administrator access or technical setup are needed.
- Understand how it handles work documents, recordings, transcripts or personal information.
- Agree who will arrange purchase or trial access, and whether any cost can be claimed.
- Decide what success looks like and when you will review the trial.

Employer adjustments and Access to Work

EMPLOYER ADJUSTMENTS	ACCESS TO WORK
Employers must consider reasonable adjustments where a disabled applicant or worker would otherwise face substantial disadvantage. Technology may be one option alongside changes to processes or working arrangements.	Eligible people may be able to get a grant towards practical support such as specialist equipment or assistive software. Access to Work does not pay for reasonable adjustments that the employer is legally responsible for making.

A grant, product or recommendation is not guaranteed. Check current eligibility, application steps and employer responsibilities before making a purchase or relying on reimbursement.

Questions for your employer, IT team or adviser

- Can we test this with the actual work task before deciding?
- Will it work with our security settings and approved software?
- Who will arrange the licence, setup, training and support?
- What other changes could make this task easier?
- When will we review the outcome?

My assistive technology plan

Use this worksheet to prepare for a conversation about technology or other workplace changes. Complete only the sections that are useful to you.

My role or work setting

_____

_____

The task I want to make easier

_____

_____

The barrier I experience

_____

_____

Tools or adjustments I want to explore

_____

_____

Compatibility, privacy, setup or training questions

_____

_____

Who I will speak to and my next step

Person or service: _____ Next step: _____

Review date: _____ What success will look like: _____

Official information

GOV.UK · Access to Work: https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

GOV.UK · Reasonable adjustments: https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers

GOV.UK · Using assistive and accessible technology: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-assistive-and-accessible-technology-atech/using-assistive-and-accessible-technology-atech

General information only. Check current official guidance and workplace IT requirements.