Specialist Equipment

When the Right Tool Removes a Barrier

A practical guide to matching equipment and assistive tools to work tasks. Start with the barrier, check what fits and plan a useful trial before making a decision.

Start with the work task

Equipment is only helpful when it improves access to a real task. Describe what is difficult, when it happens and what outcome would make work easier. A process change or a combination of adjustments may work better than a single product.

Examples to explore

TASK AREA	POSSIBLE OPTIONS	A QUESTION TO ASK
Computer access	Alternative keyboard or pointing device, switch, voice input, screen reader or magnification.	Does it work with my device and applications?
Reading and writing	Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, scanning, accessible files or proofreading tools.	Does it help with the task I do most?
Hearing and meetings	Suitable headset or microphone, captions, alerting tools or hearing equipment.	Can I follow and take part?
Comfort and movement	Chair, foot support, desk changes, mount or adapted workstation.	Can I use it safely and comfortably?
Planning and memory	Digital task lists, timers, calendar prompts, visual prompts or accessible software.	Will it reduce missed steps without extra friction?

Consider the whole setup

Check where the task takes place, what equipment is already available, whether a simple setting change could help, and if training or a different workflow would reduce the barrier. The person using the equipment should help choose and review it.

> Keep expectations individual. These examples are starting points, not prescriptions. A tool that works for one person or task may not suit another.

A useful first question

“What task would you like to make easier, and what happens when you try to do it now?”

Then agree what a helpful result would look like before comparing products.

Choose for fit, not features

Compare options in a real work setting

A long list of features cannot tell you whether equipment will work for a particular person. Consider the whole experience: setting up, using it through a workday, maintaining it and getting help if something goes wrong.

A practical comparison checklist

- Task fit: Does it support the specific work activity and improve access, comfort, accuracy or independence?
- Personal fit: Can the person reach, see, hear, position and operate it comfortably? Is it adjustable?
- Compatibility: Does it work with workplace devices, software, security settings, files and meeting systems?
- Environment: Can it be used at home, in the office, in shared spaces or while travelling as needed?
- Training and setup: Who will install, configure or teach the person and colleagues to use it?
- Privacy and security: Does it record, store or transmit personal or work information? Is it approved?
- Ongoing support: Who handles repairs, replacement, updates, batteries, licensing and technical help?

Plan a trial

Where possible, test the equipment with the actual task and approved workplace systems. Agree the trial period, the person to contact, what will be measured and how the arrangement can be changed if it creates discomfort or does not help.

TRIAL STEP	WHAT TO AGREE
Before	Task to test, equipment and setup, approval, support contact, privacy and success criteria.
During	What is easier? What remains difficult? Is the tool comfortable, reliable and safe to use?
Review	Keep, adjust, replace or stop the trial. Record why and agree the next step.

Measure what matters

Possible signs of benefit include completing a task with less effort, fewer errors, improved comfort, more reliable access or greater participation. Choose measures that are meaningful to the person and relevant to the task.

> If it does not help, that is useful information. The right next step may be a different model, setup, training, process change or another adjustment.

Workplace adjustments and funding

Agree responsibilities before costs

In Great Britain, employers must consider reasonable adjustments where a disabled worker would otherwise face substantial disadvantage. Providing or adapting equipment can be one possible adjustment. The appropriate change depends on the person's circumstances and the work task.

Where Access to Work may fit

Access to Work can help eligible people with practical support for paid work, including specialist equipment, assistive software or adaptations. It complements the employer's legal duty; it does not pay for reasonable adjustments the employer is legally responsible for making.

Questions to settle before ordering

- Who will check the equipment and confirm that it meets the person's work needs?
- Who will obtain quotes, place the order and pay the cost upfront if needed?
- Has the relevant Access to Work support been agreed before the purchase or claim?
- Who owns, insures, maintains, repairs and updates the equipment?
- Can it move between home and office or follow the person if their role changes?
- What training, IT approval, privacy checks or backup arrangements are required?

> Funding is not guaranteed. Check current eligibility, application rules and decision requirements before committing to costs or relying on reimbursement. Responsibility for employer reasonable adjustments remains with the employer.

A conversation starter

"I want to make [work task] easier. At the moment [barrier] happens. Could we discuss [equipment or adjustment], check whether it fits our systems and agree how to trial and review it?"

Questions for your employer or adviser

- What other changes might reduce the barrier alongside equipment?
- Can I trial it in the place and conditions where I will use it?
- Who should I contact if it does not fit or stops working?
- When will we review whether it is helping?

Official information

GOV.UK — Reasonable adjustments for workers: gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers
GOV.UK — Access to Work: gov.uk/access-to-work
GOV.UK — Access to Work factsheet for employers: gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers

My equipment trial plan

A printable worksheet for a workplace conversation

Complete only the sections that are useful. Keep a copy and share only information needed to arrange or review support.

My role or work setting

_____

The work task I want to make easier

_____

_____

What creates a barrier? When does it happen?

_____

_____

Equipment or adjustment I want to explore

_____

_____

How will it fit the task, my needs and work systems?

_____

_____

Questions about setup, training, privacy, cost or funding

_____

_____

Who I will speak to and the next step

Person or service: _____ Next step: _____

Trial or review date: _____ What will show it is helping? _____

General information only. Equipment and funding decisions depend on individual circumstances. Check current official guidance and workplace requirements before purchasing.