

NEURODIVERSITY TOOLKIT

# Tools and Techniques



This section is designed to complement both the Self-help guide and Line Manager's guide. It provides information about some of the tools, equipment and techniques referred to in those guides.



# Contents

## Introduction

Aims of the Neurodiversity Toolkit	4
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## Guide sections

Reading	6
Writing	8
Office Equipment	10
Posture / Sitting	16
Sensory	18
Assistive software and technology	22
Time management / Organisation	28
Other	31
Mind mapping	32



# Introduction

## Aims of the Neurodiversity Toolkit

The Neurodiversity Toolkit as a whole is designed to provide information to enable neurodivergent individuals to work to their full potential for the benefit of the whole organisation. The tips, advice and suggested workplace adjustments can also be used by individuals and their managers to help resolve challenges at work that result from neurological differences.

This section is designed to complement both the Self-help guide and Line Manager's guide. It provides information about some of the tools, equipment and techniques referred to in those guides.



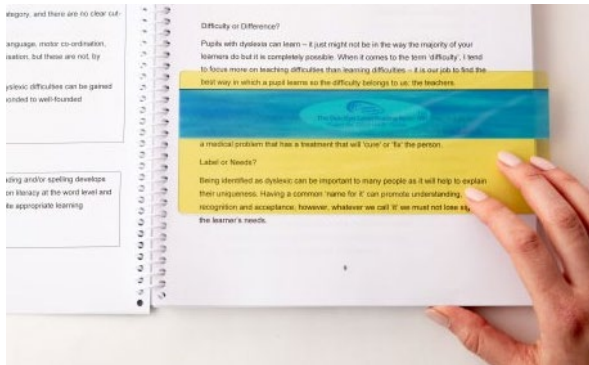
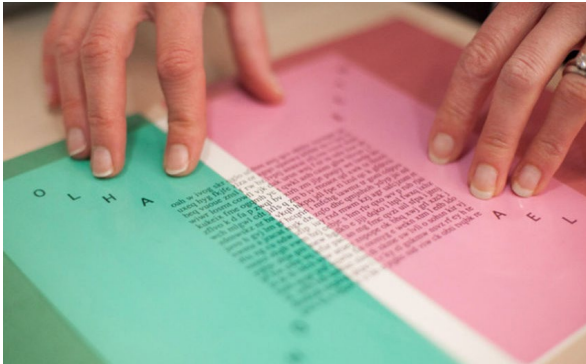
## Reading

### Overlays and pastel paper

If you experience visual stress or have a diagnosis of Irlen's Syndrome or Dyslexia you may find it useful to use colour to reduce the glare of black text on a white background. This can be done by using pastel coloured paper or coloured overlays for paper documents or a coloured screen filter for a computer monitor.

### Reading rulers

If you find it hard to focus on text or track where you are in a document you could use a reading window which shows a single line of text. You then move this down the page as you read each line. This can be combined with a coloured insert to help with visual stress.





## Writing

### Pens or pen grips

If you experience difficulty with fine motor skills, dexterity and grip you could use a special pen or add a pen grip to the pens you usually use. This will give you more control over the movement of the pen, avoid slipping and also make holding a pen more comfortable. All of which should make writing easier.

### Writing slopes

A sloped writing desk will give you a better working posture and wrist position, which helps to improve handwriting. The slope brings the line of vision higher than a flat surface, which promotes an upright posture instead of a slumped body position. This prevents strain on neck, shoulders and back and can improve motor control.





## Office Equipment

### Partitions / screens

If you find that you can be easily distracted or interrupted when doing your work, adding a partition or screen can help. This is particularly useful if you work in a large or open-plan room.



## Adapted office equipment

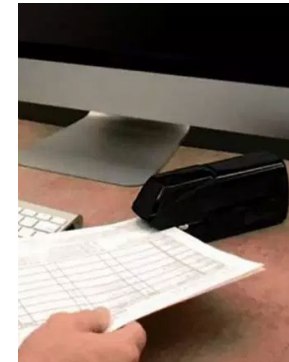
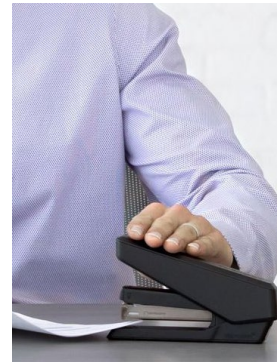
If you find regular office equipment difficult to manipulate, then there are a few adapted versions you could consider.



Talking calculator



Scissors



Easy use / electric staplers

## Office Equipment

### Trolleys and trays

If you find it difficult to carry items due to difficulties with grip or are unsteady on your feet, then you could use trolleys or trays.



## Desk organisation, colour coding and/or labelling

If you are disorganised, find that you misplace items or cannot easily find what you are looking for, it can help to have ways of organising your workspace.

Colour coding of filing systems or labelling can make it much easier to organise documents.



## Office Equipment

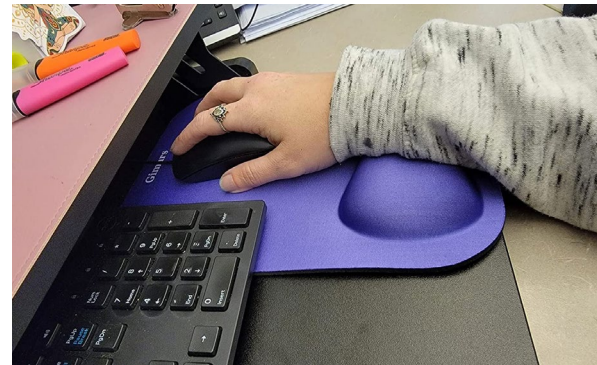
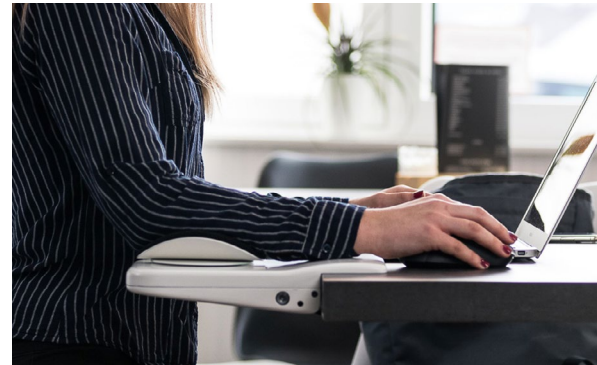
### Ergonomic keyboard and upright mouse

If you experience postural issues and associated pain then you can use ergonomic versions of both a keyboard and mouse. They encourage a neutral wrist position, making it easier for you to avoid straining yourself whilst using a computer all day. They also prevent repetitive strain injuries and reduce muscle fatigue and other disorders caused by muscle strains.



## Arm rests and supports

Arms rests and support can be helpful to aid posture and support, but it is better to do a DSE Assessment first to ensure your desk set-up is suitable first.



## Posture / Sitting

### Wobble cushion and/or lumbar support pillow

A portable cushion can be beneficial if you experience pain or have poor posture.

A seat wedge relieves the back in a natural way by pushing the pelvis forward and automatically causing your knees to be lower than your hips. This position encourages your back to an upright posture and your spine to assume its natural shape.

A wobble cushion promotes good posture and can avoid being slumped over your desk for long periods of the day which can cause long-term back problems so using a wobble cushion to sit on can prevent this. Active sitting can also be achieved as it's great for working your core.

A lumbar support pillow can help improve your posture and relieve back pain. The curved shape of the pillow should rest along the inner curve at the base of the spine to offer constant support while cradling the lower back. This helps take the pressure off of the spine and keep the back muscles relaxed.





## Adjustable height desk, ergonomic chair and/or footrest

Following a DSE Assessment (or other formal assessment), there may be a need for you to have an adjustable chair, desk or a footrest.

A standing desk or a desk which is height adjustable can help back and neck pain and improve posture - but should be gradually introduced into your working day.



## Sensory

### Seamless or sensory clothing

If you struggle with textures of clothing and are required to wear formal office wear, a uniform or even Personal Protective Equipment you may find it helpful to wear seamless or sensory clothing or have a silk lining added to the clothing.



## Weighted lap pad

Weighted Lap Pads to apply calming deep pressure to the lap / upper legs when sitting which helps attention span and reduces excessive fidgeting. Some people find that weighted blankets at home to help relaxation and sleep.



## Noise cancelling headphones

If you have sensory hypersensitivity issues or are easily distracted then cutting out or reducing background noise can be very important in improving concentration and focus and reducing anxiety.



## Sensory

### Anti-glare filters and coloured monitor overlays

Sensitivity to light can be helped with an anti-glare filter which fits over a computer monitor or laptop screen.





## Assistive software and technology

This section gives examples of software; there are many more available. We would recommend a workplace assessment to identify what software would be most suitable for each person.



### Dragon Naturally Speaking

Dragon speech recognition software is better than ever. Speak and your words appear on the screen. Say commands and your computer obeys. Dragon is 3x faster than typing and it's 99% accurate.



### Live Scribe Pen

Designed to work and write like a premium ballpoint pen, the Livescribe 3 smart pen uses Bluetooth Smart to send everything you write to your smartphone or tablet.



## Virtual Reading Ruler

The Virtual Reading Ruler works just like an ordinary reading ruler, removing the screen glare and stabilising the print on any area of the page. At the same time it can mark the specific line or paragraph being read.

It can be used with any application - including the internet - and moves with the mouse. With millions of colours to choose from, and many configurations of shape, size, line width and line position, all accessible at the click of a button, the Virtual Reading Ruler can benefit computer users everywhere - whether in the home, school, college, library or office.



## Text Help

Read&Write literacy software makes the web, documents and files more accessible - any time, any place, and on any platform or device. It's great for people with dyslexia and other learning difficulties, or anyone whose first language isn't English.

From reading on-screen text aloud to researching and checking written work, Read&Write makes lots of everyday tasks easier. It's a big confidence booster for anyone who needs a little extra help with their reading and writing, at school or in the workplace.

## Assistive software and technology

# Inspiration®

### Inspiration 9

For visual mapping, outlining, writing and making presentations, use Inspiration 9, the ultimate thinking and learning tool. Brainstorm ideas, structure your thoughts and visually communicate concepts to strengthen understanding with the Diagram and Map Views. To take notes, organize information, and structure writing for plans, papers and reports, use the integrated Outline View to focus on main and supporting ideas and to clarify thinking in written form. With Inspiration's Presentation Manager, transform your diagrams, mind maps and outlines into polished presentations that communicate ideas clearly and demonstrate understanding and knowledge.

# MindManager™

### Mind Manager

MindManager's flexible mind maps promote free-form thinking and quick organization of ideas, so creativity and productivity can live in harmony. Capture ideas. Manage meetings. Create strategic plans. Organize anything.





## FreeMind

FreeMind is free mind-mapping software. It allows you to create a graphical representation of relationships between ideas or concepts. The map you create is searchable and you can export it in various formats. Boxes can contain text, images and links to local folders, online resources and executables. You can use different colours and fonts and connect the boxes in various ways.

## Assistive software and technology

### Dictaphone

Pocket-sized and portable, they record sound digitally, to MP3 format. Clear and simple to navigate LCD screens give you ease of control, make it easy to pinpoint specific scenes and recordings. Stop, play, rewind, fast forward, record, erase and T-mark at the touch of a button. Internal memory lets you store many hours of recordings.



### Reading Pen

Gives someone the independence to read on their own. Scan over a typed word & instantly hear it aloud with built-in speaker (headphones also included). The portable pen is especially designed for people with reading difficulties such as Dyslexia.

It features the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, containing over 240,000 words and definitions, hundreds of new words and phrases. The Pen has a British digital voice which can turn any text into speech.







## Time management / Organisation

### Clocks, timers and alarms

If you find keeping track of your time difficult, you could use a range of clocks, timers and alarms. Some people will use them to remind them to do certain tasks and to attend meetings but they can also be useful if you get over-absorbed in tasks; they prompt you to finish a task and move onto something else. Don't forget your email and calendar software can be used for this too, as well as your mobile phone.



## Visual planners / checklists

You may still prefer a paper prompt to keep track of your day or your workload, and a visual version may be your preference.

There is also specific software you can use to keep track of tasks (see right).



## Time management / Organisation

### Object finders

If you are prone to misplacing items, then an object finder could help you find lost items.



### Drawer organisers

If you have a disorganised workspace, then you could benefit from a drawer organiser.

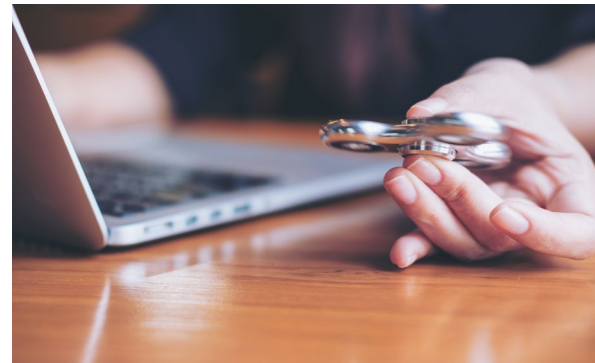


## Other

### Fidget toys

If you find it hard to sit still and are restless and fidgety, or you struggle with concentration and focus, then fidget toys can help.

We would also recommend incorporating some other movement; this could include note taking, doodling or walking around.



## Mind mapping

Mind mapping can be a useful tool for those people who find it difficult to plan a project, express their ideas in writing or struggle with sequences and lists.

They can be used to:

- Record information and take notes
- Structure written work
- Plan projects and break down / chunk tasks
- Organise workload
- Explore ideas as they allow more free association

### Technology

There are many different apps and software packages you can use to mind map.

Here are a few examples:





### To do this manually:

- Take a blank piece of paper, A4 or larger and use it in landscape
- Make a central image that represents the topic about which you are writing/ thinking
  - » This should be big enough to show it is the main topic but leave room for the rest of your map
- The main themes (or Basic Ordering Ideas BOIs) around the central image are like the chapter headings of a book:
  - » Print these words in CAPITALS or use an image on a line of the same length
  - » The central lines are thick, curved like the branch of a tree to the trunk.
- Start to add a second level of thought. These words or images are linked to the main branch that triggered them.
  - » Connecting lines are thinner and words are still printed but may be lower case.
  - » Connected lines create relationships and a structure.
- Add a third or fourth level of data as thoughts come to you
- Allow your thoughts to come freely
- Move around the map randomly as thoughts and associations come to you
- Use at least three colours
- Vary the size and style of writing to reflect differences
- Use images as much as you can
- You might choose to box some parts off or encircle some areas
- Be as creative and artistic as you can – use your imagination







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