

A Digital Champion's guide to helping a person with a learning disability decide if they want to use technology

"There is no point in asking people with learning disabilities if they want to use technology if they don't know what technology there is and what it can do" Creating Connections Project

If you are helping someone decide if they want to use technology, it is important that you take a person-centred approach. This will involve:

1. Finding out about your learner's experience of technology.
2. Finding out why your learner does not want to use technology.
3. Inspiring your learner with examples of the different things they can do with technology.

Finding out about your learner's experience of technology

Some learners may not have the experience they need to make an informed decision about whether they want to use technology. Typical reasons for this lack of experience are:

- the home where the person lives does not have any technology.
- their parents, carers or support workers don't allow or enable the person with a learning disability to use technology.

It could be useful for you to find out more about your learner's prior experience with technology.

Suggested strategy

Life history sharing through photographs: Sometimes it can be easier to tell stories about our memories or life experiences if we have visual reminders such as a photograph. It may be helpful to ask your learner if they have any photographs of them at home, school, work or college which they can bring in to share with you. Photographs can help to start conversations about whether someone was introduced to technology earlier in their life and how enjoyable or successful that was.

Useful Resources

- **People with learning disabilities sharing their memories and experiences during the pandemic:** <https://www.survivingthroughstory.com/read-stories/categories/your-stories>
- **Rix: Using photos in a wiki to communicate a life history:** <https://rixwiki.org/Default/home/ajay-advice-3>

Finding out why your learner doesn't want to use technology

"There are lots of reasons why people with learning disabilities are afraid of using the internet and it's important to look into those and see what are the barriers that people are facing and how they can be safe. We have been doing things like 'Top Tips for staying safe online'. You can also learn from other people with learning disabilities who are already using the internet- what are they doing to stay safe and how do they feel about it."

Some learners may tell you they don't want to use technology. It is their right to make this decision. But before you accept this decision it would be appropriate for you to find out why they don't want to use technology. In some cases, there may be reasons that you can help to address. For example:

- Fears about being safe online.
- Concerns about cost of being online.
- Being afraid of doing something wrong on the device or app.
- Lacking confidence to use technology because parents, carers or support workers have dissuaded them in some way.

Suggested strategy

The 'Good Things and Bad Things' exercise: Once you have chatted with your learner about their home environment, their circle of support and their prior experiences of using technology, you may be able to identify some reasons why your learner does not want to use technology. We have a Session Plan that can help you with this exercise. You can use this 'bad things' list in two ways:

- To see if they would be willing for you to show them some 'good things' that you can do with technology. This can be the start of a conversation about creating a 'good things' list that your learner can compare to the bad things. They can use it to help decide if they do want to learn more about using technology.
- To talk about how you can help them deal with the 'bad things'. So, for example, if they have fears over online safety that means they don't want to try getting online, you can talk to them about how you can help them develop online safety skills.

Useful Resources

- *Example of a 'Good Thing':* In this video from NHS England, Ashley talks about the new skills he has developed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtoxxxdIGy4>

- Example of helping to deal with 'Bad Things': **CHANGE Guide to Keeping Safe Online:**
<https://www.changepeople.org/Change/media/Change-Media-Library/Blog%20Media/Keeping-Safe-Online-Easy-Read-Guide-Small-File-Size.pdf>

Inspiring your learner with examples of the different things they can do with technology

"We work with an artist who has learning disabilities. We were always trying to persuade him to use a tablet. But he just had a mind-set where he thought it was too complicated, he was going to do something wrong. About two weeks ago he started to talk about the fact that he might quite like to use a tablet. He is beginning to appreciate that it would be extremely helpful to him."

It is possible that the person you are supporting has never thought about what they could use technology for, so you may need to find some ways to get them excited about being online.

Suggested strategies

1. **Introduce your learner to role models:** You may know or support other people with learning disabilities that are using technologies. Your learner may have friends or housemates that are using technologies. You might be able to arrange a meeting or a group session where these role models talk to your learner about their technology use.
2. **Introduce your learner to online role models:** There are quite a few online videos where people with learning disabilities talk about what technology they use, what they use it for and what they have gained through using technology.
3. **Show them how you use technology yourself!**

Useful Resources

- A short video from Ace Anglia where people with learning disabilities talk about how they use technology: <https://youtu.be/YePmNfkx82U>
- A short video where members of the self-advocacy group, Sheffield Voices, talk about the benefits of being online:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2oyo76uN44&list=PLv6hpU-BERg9Kiy3xceMIqswmiDcnxIWl&index=5>
- Digital Unite's guide: How being online can help you:
<https://www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides/easy-read-technology-guides/how-being-online-can-help-you>

Further Resources

- **A framework for thinking about the practice of supporting people with learning disabilities to use technology** (Pages 12-13 explains the importance of being able to make informed decisions about technology use.) <https://tinyurl.com/mmm98txe>
- **Supporting people with learning disabilities to use technology: A toolkit for supporters** (See page 15 for a case study where a social care provider talks about what they do when a person with a learning disability says they don't want to use the internet.) <https://tinyurl.com/38x8dh78>
- **Supporting people with learning disabilities to use technology: A toolkit for people with learning disabilities** (Page 15 for a case study of a day service provider talking about how they managed to persuade someone they support to use a tablet even though it took a long time.) <https://tinyurl.com/9jsywawb>