

Digital tools and settings for people with cognitive impairments, including neurodivergent conditions

There are tools and settings that can make phones, tablets, laptops and browsers easier to use for people with cognitive impairments such as dementia, autism, ADHD or learning disabilities. Some settings or tools may not be available or work on older phones, tablets or laptops.

You can find settings for Android, iOS/iPadOS, Microsoft Windows and Apple macOS in the tables below. These include simplifying layouts, reducing distractions and using voice commands to control your device. Look for the cog icon . This is usually on your home screen, in your app list on phones and tablets, or in the Start menu on Windows.

[My Computer My Way](#) from AbilityNet also offers step-by-step instructions to change settings to meet your needs.

You can set up shortcuts on your smartphone for quick access to settings you find useful.

Contact Alice Holland, Digital Inclusion Worker, with any questions or if you would like support to change your settings.

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Display

- Large touch targets – increase the size of buttons
- Display size – change how big everything is on-screen e.g. icons, buttons
- Text size – make text bigger
- Dark mode – switch white backgrounds to dark colours which is easier on the eyes and the screen feels calmer and less overwhelming
- Display contrast – makes text and icons stand out more clearly against the background
- Wallpaper / Background – Use a plain background to reduce visual clutter
- Transparency – replace see-through or blurred backgrounds with a solid colour behind menus and panels, making text easier to read
- Animation effects – reduce moving effects on screen such as when opening apps
- Brightness – automatically dim the display

Reading, writing and speaking

- Screen readers TalkBack, VoiceOver, Narrator – reads everything on-screen aloud
- Select to Speak – reads selected text aloud
- Voice Access, Voice Control – control device using your voice e.g. open apps, tap buttons, scroll
- Grammar and spelling, spell check – highlight mistakes and suggest corrections
- Word suggestion, predictive text, text suggestions – show suggestions for next word
- Voice typing, dictation – replaces typing with speaking

Focus

Here are some settings you can try to reduce distraction. You can also see our full guide of digital tools and settings to minimise distractions for more ideas

- Immersive reader, reader mode – remove ads, pop-ups and navigation menus so you are left with only the text you want to read (see [Reduce screen clutter](#) below)
- Focus / Do not disturb mode – silence all incoming alerts, notifications and calls
- Turn off notifications per-app – stop individual apps interrupting you, or only the notifications you want
- Notification sounds – Use distinct sounds to alert you to specific notifications or actions
- Digital wellbeing (Android) / Screen Time (iOS/macOS) – how long you spend on your device and individual apps, and lets you set limits
- App timers – set a daily limit for time spent on specific apps and receive an alert when you reach it
- Kiosk / pinning mode (Android) / Guided Access (iOS) – keep a single app in view until you choose to exit
- Timer / stopwatch – track time spent on activities

Memory and organisation

These are apps and features on your device rather than settings

- Reminders / alerts – set up reminders for tasks, appointments and breaks
- Calendar – set events with alerts
- Password manager – save your passwords to your device so you don't have to remember or type them
- Notes / Voice recorder – quickly capture thoughts without having to type
- Home screen / Desktop - Pin important apps so they are only one tap away, reducing the need to search or remember where they are

Navigation and interaction

- Accessibility menu / AssistiveTouch – a large on-screen menu of your most-used controls such as screenshot and pinch to zoom, available as single tap buttons rather than complex gestures
- Touch Accommodation – change how the screen responds to taps, swipes and other gestures
- One-handed mode, Reachability – slides the top half of the screen down so you can reach everything without stretching your hand

Reduce screen clutter on websites and documents

- remove distracting parts of websites such as ads and navigation menus
- change text size, style and spacing
- change background colour
- read webpage text aloud

Options vary depending on browser or programme used. Not all websites are supported.

Browser	How to access
Microsoft Edge	F9 or More  > Immersive Reader icon in the address bar
Microsoft Office Word, OneNote, Outlook, Excel, Teams	View > Immersive Reader Teams: Hover over or tap message > More icon  > More actions > Immersive Reader
Google Chrome	More icon  > More tools > Reading mode Highlight text > right click > Open in reading mode
Mozilla Firefox	Reader view icon  in address bar
Apple Safari	Reader icon in address bar  > Show Reader To return: page icon in address bar  > Hide Reader

Android settings

Feature	How to access	Shortcut
Accessibility menu	Accessibility > Interaction controls	
Display size	Accessibility > Display size and text	
Text size	Accessibility > Display size and text	
Dark mode	Accessibility > Display > Colour and motion	
Display contrast	Display and touch	
Wallpaper	Wallpaper and style	
Transparency	Accessibility > Display > Colour and motion >Blur effects	
Remove animation	Accessibility > Display > Colour and motion	
Brightness	Display and touch	
TalkBack	Accessibility > TalkBack	
Select to speak	Accessibility > Select to Speak	
Voice Access	Accessibility > Voice Access	
Spell check	System > Languages & input/region	
Word suggestions	System > Keyboard > On screen keyboard > Corrections and suggestions	
Voice typing	System > Keyboard > On-screen keyboard or System > Languages and input > On-screen keyboard	Tap microphone on keyboard 
Focus	Digital Wellbeing	
Do not disturb	Modes	
Turn off notifications per app	Notifications > App notifications	
Notification sounds	Notifications > App notifications	
Digital Wellbeing	Digital Wellbeing	
App timers	Digital Wellbeing	
One-handed mode	Accessibility > System controls	

Apple iOS / iPadOS settings

Feature	How to access	Shortcut
AssistiveTouch	Accessibility > Touch	Triple click side or home button (once configured)
Display size	Accessibility > Zoom	
Text size	Accessibility > Display & Text Size	
Dark mode	Display & Brightness > Appearance	
Increase contrast	Accessibility > Display & Text Size	
Wallpaper	Wallpaper	
Transparency	Accessibility > Display & Text Size	
Reduce motion	Accessibility > Motion	
Brightness	Accessibility > Display & Text Size	
VoiceOver	Accessibility > VoiceOver	
Select to speak	Accessibility > Spoken Content > Speak Selection	
Voice Control	Accessibility > Voice Control	
Spell check	General > Keyboard	
Predictive text	General > Keyboard	
Voice typing	General > Keyboard > Enable Dictation	Tap microphone on keyboard 
Focus / Do not disturb	Focus	
Turn off notifications per app	Notifications > tap app > turn off	
Notification sounds	Notifications > Notification Style > Sounds	
Screen Time	Screen Time	
Hold duration	Accessibility > Touch > Touch Accommodations	
Reachability	Accessibility > Touch	Swipe down on bottom edge of screen or double tap home button

Microsoft Windows settings

Feature	How to access	Shortcut
Accessibility menu	-	Win  + A
Display size	System > Display > Scale	
Text size	Accessibility > Text size	
Dark mode	Personalisation > Colours	
Display contrast	Accessibility > Contrast themes	Left Alt + Shift + Print Screen
Background	Personalisation > Background	
Transparency	Accessibility > Visual effects	
Animation effects	Accessibility > Visual effects	
Brightness	System > Display	Network icon in taskbar
Narrator	Accessibility > Narrator	Win  + Ctrl + Enter
Voice access	Accessibility > Speech > Voice access	Win  + Ctrl + S
Grammar & spelling	Time & language > Typing	
Text suggestions	Time & language > Typing	
Voice typing	Accessibility > Speech > Voice typing	Win  + H
Focus	System > Focus	
Do not disturb	System > Notifications	
Turn off notifications per app	System > Notifications	
Notification sounds	System > Notifications	

Apple macOS settings

Feature	How to access	Shortcut
Accessibility shortcuts	Accessibility > Shortcut	Touch ID three times or Option + Command + F5
Display size	Displays > Larger Text/Default/More Space	
Text size	Accessibility > Display > Text	
Dark mode	Appearance > Auto, Dark, Light	
Contrast	Accessibility > Display > Increase contrast	
Display contrast	Accessibility > Display > slider	
Wallpaper	Wallpaper	
Reduce transparency	Accessibility > Display	
Reduce motion	Accessibility > Display	
Brightness	Displays	
VoiceOver	Accessibility > VoiceOver	 + Touch ID 3 times
Voice Control	Accessibility > Voice Control	
Grammar & spelling	Keyboard > Text Input > Input Sources > Edit	
Predictive text	Keyboard > Text input > Edit > Show inline predictive text	
Voice typing	Keyboard > Dictation	Microphone icon 
Focus	Focus	
Turn off notifications per app	Notifications	
Notification sounds	Sound	
Screen time	Screen Time	

Tools and apps

Many of these are free or offer free trials. Paid versions give you full features.

Look for apps which use icons, images and colour alongside text as they can make navigation easier.

Disable auto-play and flashing content – turn off videos and animations starting automatically in individual apps and browsers such as Facebook, YouTube and Chrome. Look in each app's settings to find this option.

[Big Launcher](#) – turns any Android into a huge-button phone

[Assistive Access](#) – simplified and bigger screen layout on iOS with easier ways to navigate and communicate using visuals rather than text

[tiimo](#) – visual daily planner designed for people with ADHD and autism

[Goblin.tools](#) - a collection of small, simple, single-task tools, mostly designed to help neurodivergent people with tasks they find overwhelming or difficult

[Dragon speech recognition](#) - voice-to-text tool to dictate and edit documents hands-free

Voice typing apps – type with your voice e.g. [WhisperTyping](#), [AquaVoice](#)

[Action blocks](#) – set up specific tasks that can be done with only one tap of a big button e.g. phone someone, open up favourite radio station

Smart home assistants e.g. Google Home, Amazon Alexa, Apple HomePod – control your home and get reminders using your voice without needing to navigate apps or remember steps

Smart devices e.g. lightbulbs, heating control, curtain openers, smart locks – automate everyday tasks to reduce the number of things to remember or manage