

Free Assistive Technology for the Classroom and Learners

A practical resource list of free or built-in tools that can support reading, writing, access, and independence.

Important note: Free access can vary by device, school set-up, and account type. Many of the tools below are built into devices or offer a free version, which makes them useful starting points for classroom support.

Suggested free-access tools

Microsoft Immersive Reader

What it is: Built-in reading support inside Microsoft tools

Helpful features: Text-to-speech, line focus, syllables, picture dictionary, spacing, translation, and simpler page display.

Best for: Reading longer text, reducing visual overload, pre-teaching vocabulary, supporting independent access to written work.

Useful note: Built into Microsoft 365 and Edge; described by Microsoft as a free tool for improving reading and writing skills.

Microsoft Edge Read Aloud

What it is: Free browser-based text-to-speech

Helpful features: Reads webpages and PDFs aloud with highlighting and adjustable voices/speed.

Best for: Accessing online articles, revision resources, worksheets saved as PDF, and reducing fatigue from on-screen reading.

Useful note: Useful when learners need content read aloud without needing extra software.

Google Docs Voice Typing

What it is: Free dictation in Google Docs

Helpful features: Lets learners speak instead of type and use voice commands in documents.

Best for: Writing first drafts, reducing the barrier of spelling while capturing ideas, and helping pupils who think faster than they type.

Useful note: Best used for idea generation, short answers, and drafting before editing.

Chromebook Select-to-Speak

What it is: Built-in Chromebook text-to-speech

Helpful features: Reads selected on-screen text aloud and can highlight words as they are spoken.

Best for: Classrooms using Chromebooks, support for worksheets, websites, and digital tasks.

Useful note: A strong no-cost option where schools already use Chromebooks.

Chromebook Dictation

What it is: Built-in speech-to-text on Chromebook

Helpful features: Allows learners to type into text fields using their voice.

Best for: Writing support across apps, quick note making, and reducing handwriting or typing load.

Useful note: Helpful for learners who need an alternative way to record ideas.

Google Read Along

What it is: Free reading practice app

Helpful features: A speech-based reading tutor that listens to children read aloud and supports them as they practise.

Best for: Early reading practice, confidence-building, and supported reading at home or in intervention time.

Useful note: Particularly helpful for younger learners who already know some letter sounds.

NaturalReader Free

What it is: Free text-to-speech option

Helpful features: Reads digital text aloud through web or app access; the free plan includes ongoing free access with some limits.

Best for: Home support, independent study, and listening back to digital text when built-in tools are not available.

Useful note: Useful as an extra option rather than the only support tool.

Apple Read & Speak / Spoken Content

What it is: Built-in Apple accessibility reading support

Helpful features: Can speak selected text, the whole screen, and typed content on Apple devices.

Best for: Learners using iPads, iPhones, or Macs for schoolwork, reading support, and proofreading by listening back.

Useful note: Good for schools or families already using Apple devices.

Simple classroom uses

- Offer text-to-speech for instructions, worksheets, and longer reading tasks.
- Allow speech-to-text for planning, brainstorming, and first drafts.
- Let learners listen back to their own writing to spot missing words or awkward sentences.
- Use built-in tools for everyone where possible, so support feels normal and inclusive.
- Start with one or two tools and teach them explicitly rather than offering too many at once.

Official sources

- **Microsoft Immersive Reader / Learning Tools:** <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/education/learning-tools>
- **Microsoft Edge Read Aloud:** <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge/features/read-aloud>
- **Google Docs Voice Typing:** <https://support.google.com/docs/answer/4492226?hl=en-GB>
- **Chromebook accessibility and Select-to-Speak:** <https://support.google.com/chromebook/answer/9032490?hl=en-GB>
- **Chromebook accessibility and Dictation:** <https://support.google.com/chromebook/answer/177893?hl=en-GB>
- **Google Read Along:** <https://readalong.google.com/>
- **NaturalReader free plan:** <https://www.naturalreaders.com/webapp.html>
- **Apple Read & Speak / Spoken Content:** <https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/hear-whats-on-the-screen-or-typed-iph96b214f0/ios>