Digital skills support for older people: guidance for volunteers



Reengage

Bringing generations together

Training and resources

Click on an image to jump to a set of slides



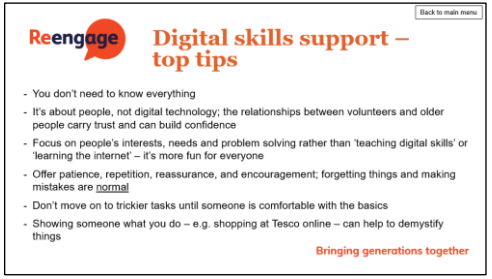
◀ Overcoming barriers and inspiring people to get online with training from Good Things Foundation



◀ Read about digital inclusion for older people with advice from Good Things Foundation



◀ Find out more about making digital learning part of your tea parties with guidance from a digital skills expert



◀ Quick read: top tips

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Digital learning at a tea party

Using Learn My Way and other resources

Delivered by Tanya Cook from A1 Community Works, a Learn My Way Ambassador

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Introduction

- A1 Community Works is a social enterprise helping people to develop their digital skills.
- Good Things Foundation is a social change charity that supports socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital.
- Learn My Way is the online learning website provided by Good Things Foundation for National Digital Inclusion Network learners, and it's designed to make getting online easy.
- It’s perfect for those without basic online skills, or for those looking to improve their existing digital knowledge - no matter what their age.
- Re-engage has joined the National Digital Inclusion Network in order to make these resources available to volunteers and older people.

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It’s about people, not digital



Everyone in this picture is using Learn My Way

The participants are using their own devices.

They are doing the subjects they want to do.

Emily, a volunteer, is there to help if someone get stuck.

We are learning coaches, not teachers.

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Delivering Learn My Way

1. This isn’t about turning a tea party into a classroom.
2. This is about offering to help solve a digital problem - maybe using Learn My Way - so participants gain some basic digital know-how.
3. Participants may need support to register and get started, but generally try to ‘let them drive’, offering help when asked.
4. Learn My Way is easy to use. If something goes wrong, it is more likely to be the platform being busy (there are thousands of users) than your mistake.
5. On average, a topic on Learn My Way takes about 5-10 minutes.
6. Once registered, participants can continue to learn at home if they wish.

Registering on Learn My Way

To enhance security, Learn My Way has implemented a two-step verification process for user registration.

When signing up, users need either an email address or a mobile phone number. Please note that each email address or mobile phone number can only be used for one account. Multiple accounts cannot be created using the same details.

You'll also need the Re-engage centre number, which is 8011228. There are instructions to help you register on the Re-engage website.

The minimum password length has been increased to **12 characters**. The National Cyber Security Council recommends using 3 random words.

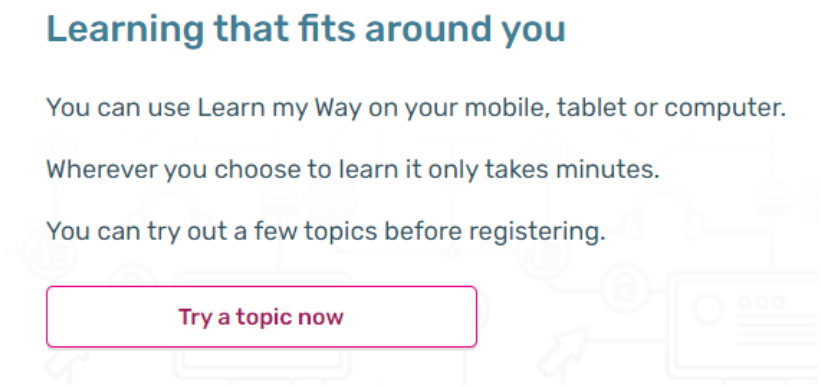
As part of the registration process, it is mandatory to agree to the privacy policy and terms and conditions. Your acceptance ensures compliance with Learn My Way's guidelines, protecting your privacy and fostering a trustworthy environment.

To complete the registration process, a validation code will be sent to the provided email address or mobile phone number. This code must be entered on the website. This process, known as two-step verification, adds an extra layer of protection.

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Learning content: pre-registration

Users can access a variety of topics on Learn My Way without having to register. These topics are specifically designed to assist users in their initial engagement with the platform.



Topics include:

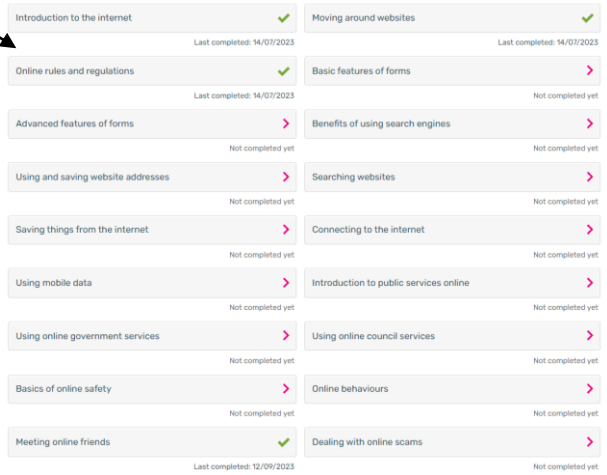
- **Basic touchscreen controls**
- **Common touchscreen features**
- **Basics of using a keyboard**
- **Basics of using a mouse**
- **Clicking with a mouse**
- **Basic features of forms**
- **Creating an email account**
- **Receiving and replying to an email**
- **Making a good password**

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Learning content: registered users

Once registered as a Re-engage centre user, you can access all topics on Learn My Way.

- Using your device
- Starting to use the internet
- Using email
- Safety and security online
- Staying in touch
- Spending money online
- Online entertainment
- Working with office programs
- Employment and work
- Managing your health online
- Managing your money online



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Why is it important to engage older people in digital inclusion?

- **Older people are more likely than the average internet user to carry out only a narrow range of online activities.** Around half of internet users over 65 are narrow users, versus a quarter of the wider internet-using population.
- **Older people are also more likely to consider themselves not confident in managing personal data and online security.** This makes a focus on online safety particularly relevant for this learner group.
- **A significant number of older people benefit from the convenience and savings of online transactions by using 'proxy access': asking a trusted person to do the transaction for them.** This can leave older people needing to rapidly adjust to independent internet use if they experience a loss of proxy help - for example through a bereavement, or relatives moving away.
- **People who are socially isolated and lonely are more vulnerable to financial scams. The average age of a scammed individual is 75.** Lonely older people with little social contact can be especially susceptible to calls and messages from apparently friendly people telling them that there's a problem with their device or bank account.

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How to generate interest:

- **Beware of talking about 'the internet' in general terms when working with older learners.** Generalist internet courses can seem both irrelevant and overwhelming to older people. Attempting to tackle everything at once can reinforce older people's feelings that they will never catch up, entrenching negative attitudes.
- **Focus instead on the specific positive changes that particular internet activities can generate in people's lives.** Individual skills (such as using Skype to stay in touch with family) can create more interest. Try putting these activities into any promotional materials you create. If you already come face-to-face with older people in your work, start by having a personal conversation about their own needs and interests, and how the internet might play a role in these.
- **Tie engagement efforts to the types of devices that older people are likely to use.** Newer internet users (of whom the over 75s make up a significant number) are more than twice as likely to only go online using devices other than a computer. Older people are often given tablets by friends and family, but the devices go unused as people don't feel confident around them. Promoting sessions encouraging people to get to know their existing devices can attract those who are currently under-using them.

Tutor-Learner Relationships:

- **The fear, mistrust and disinterest that many older learners display around the internet can be an outward reflection of what is actually a mistrust of their own abilities.** Older people can suffer from a perception that their age means they will be less successful at learning. This may be compounded by previous negative learning experiences throughout their lifetime.

- **For this reason, digital inclusion with older people should focus as much on a tutor's relationship with the individual as on hard technical skills.** Take time to build trust with a learner. This is likely to take a significant amount of one-to-one interaction, so if you are working in a classroom setting, try to enlist some volunteers to enable individual conversations.

- **Patience is paramount**. Older learners can take a long time to become confident in understanding a task. Make sure that you explain every step clearly and double check that the person understands before moving onto the next step. Be prepared to repeat things often and and give frequent reassurance.

> *"Older people can feel intimidated if the person helping them just sits and taps away at a keyboard. We have learned to consciously take time with people and explain what we are doing step by step on the computer, allowing the older person to take part in the process and reassuring them as we go along."*
> **Forth Community Resource Centre Steering Group**



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Things to Remember:

- **Age-related memory decline means that learners can forget the precise detail and order of steps involved in completing a particular task.** This can be frustrating for older learners, and compound their feelings of being incapable. Remind learners that forgetting things is a completely normal part of the learning process, and allow them to revisit topics as often as they want during supported sessions.

- **Older learners may not engage with digital learning until unfortunate life circumstances have effectively forced their hand.** Some older learners may therefore start digital learning at a time that is already unsettling and stressful. Accordingly, the relationship and bond that forms between a learner and a tutor can become even more important in building confidence and supporting independence.



Real Experiences

"I have learnt to open my emails with confidence, which is very important to me in my role as deacon at my local church. I have also learned to compose and send emails with much more confidence. I have learnt the dangers of opening emails from unknown sources and now never open an email unless I know where it has come from."
Nanette, Learner at Crewe Library

"Previously I spoke to my relatives on my landline telephone. I now speak to them for a lot longer on Facebook and WhatsApp and it doesn't cost me anything."
Learner at Pakistani Community Centre

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Digital skills support – top tips

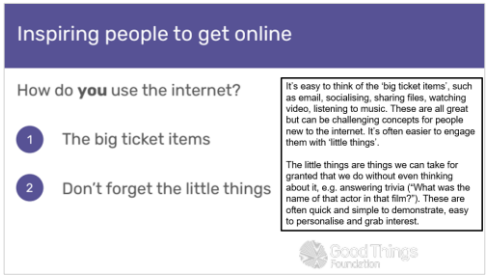
- You don’t need to know everything
- It’s about people, not digital technology; the relationships between volunteers and older people carry trust and can build confidence
- Focus on people’s interests, needs and problem solving rather than ‘teaching digital skills’ or ‘learning the internet’ – it’s more fun for everyone
- Offer patience, repetition, reassurance, and encouragement; forgetting things and making mistakes are normal
- Don’t move on to trickier tasks until someone is comfortable with the basics
- Showing someone what you do – e.g. shopping at Tesco online – can help to demystify things

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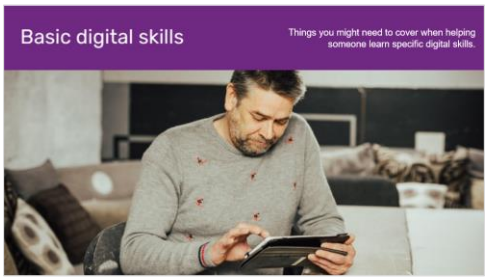
Good Things Foundation digital champions training

















Check online for upcoming training sessions

Online Centres Network

Good Things Foundation

Being a Digital Champion

Michael Skeldon
Hilary Nugent









Let’s think about things that many of us see and need to understand everyday: road signs.

The first two are pretty easy, even if you don’t drive: stop, and no u-turns.

The third is from Canada, it means bed and breakfast nearby. This is less obvious but could probably be guessed eventually. And it’s obvious once you know.

The fourth is from Japan, it means honk your horn. While the first ones are easier because even if you don’t know the answer, you can have a good guess, the later ones are harder to guess at without a frame of reference.

It’s the same with the digital world: we can use our knowledge and experience to infer what something new means. For example, if you visit a new website and you need to register an account, you could guess that the ‘sign up’ button is in the top right corner.



What's this?

This isn't really about guessing what the picture is, it's about recognising and remembering what it's like not to know something that you feel you should, and **knowing there's something there to be understood but it's just not making sense**.

Again, that's how digital is for some people. Some people get embarrassed, some get frustrated, even angry.

We can't unlearn things, so we forget what it's like not to know.

Try and hold on to how you feel now. Embrace the ignorance of not knowing because once you know the answer, you'll never be able to 'un-know' it.



It’s a frog.

Whether it’s a picture puzzle or using digital skills, it can be difficult to remember what it was like not to know something.

This is why it can be so hard for someone to grasp technology, particularly for the first
time - because we take so much for granted.

What is a Digital Champion?



You'll inspire and support people to gain digital skills. You'll also promote confidence and independence, which goes towards reducing social exclusion.

Supporting digital skills - qualities you need

1. Enthusiastic
2. Patient
3. Supportive
4. Awareness of online services
5. Good listener
6. Adaptive
7. Basic digital skills

Supporting digital skills is not all about technical skills, it's more focused on being good with people.

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Your role

Do

- Inspire people to give it a go
- Raise awareness of the benefits of digital
- Increase people's confidence
- Maintain confidentiality
- Remain impartial
- Work within your organisation's policies and procedure

Don't

- Do it for them
- Complete people's online forms
- Troubleshoot all technical queries
- Give advice that you're not qualified to

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You’re not expected to do everything for everybody. It’s important to think about and recognise the boundaries of your role.

You are there to help and encourage people to learn. You can give people the confidence to take their first steps online.

If you can personalise the learning experience, people are more likely to enjoy it. For example, if you knew someone had no interest in sport but liked cats, you’d show them how to search for pictures of cats, rather than sport.

Find the hook to engage and keep them motivated.

Inspiring people to get online

How do **you** use the internet?

1. The big ticket items
2. Don't forget the little things

It's easy to think of the 'big ticket items', such as email, socialising, sharing files, watching video, listening to music. These are all great but can be challenging concepts for people new to the internet. It's often easier to engage them with 'little things'.

The little things are things we can take for granted that we do without even thinking about it, e.g. answering trivia ("What was the name of that actor in that film?"). These are often quick and simple to demonstrate, easy to personalise and grab interest.

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Inspiring people: Joan



Age: 82

Digital skills: None, relied on her husband

Device: None

Since her husband passed away last year Joan has found herself becoming increasingly lonely and depressed. Her son lives 50 miles away and visits occasionally.

"I don't really understand this internet thing. My son talks about it sometimes and shows me pictures of the family, which is nice. It all seems a bit complicated and I've enough to cope with at my age, such as sorting out all my medication. It takes longer to do the shopping these days."

Think about how you could help Joan and inspire her to get online. Think about her needs. What would be a hook or way to inspire her to learn more? What online activities, resources, website, community support, etc. would you suggest?

Overcoming barriers

1. I don't know how to use a computer.
2. I don't see a need.
3. I'm worried about internet safety.
4. I'm scared I'll break it.
5. It's all too small, I can't see it properly.
6. I'm too old.
7. I'm worried about feeling stupid.

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Possible responses to these concerns:

● **I don’t know how to use a computer:** There are lots of people still learning to do that and learning can be fun, with friendly volunteers there to help you learn at your own pace.

● **I don’t see a need:** Tell me more about your interests, the internet has something for everyone, whatever you’re interested in.

● **I’m worried about internet safety:** With a little bit of knowledge and practice you can use the internet safely.

● **I’m scared I’ll break it:** Unless you drop it, it’s very difficult to break a computer, and you can’t break the internet.

● **It’s all too small, I can’t see it properly:** I can help you make the text bigger so it’s easier to see.

● **I’m too old:** You’re never too old to learn. Just think how much new information you take in everyday. You’re always learning.

● **I’m worried about feeling stupid:** It doesn’t take long to learn the basics, and we can help you learn here.

Overcoming barriers

1. Community requirements.
2. Learning disabilities.
3. Difficulty retaining information.
4. Low confidence.
5. Negative attitude to learning.
6. No time.
7. I can't afford it.

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Some barriers are harder to overcome than others, but there are some things to keep in mind:

- **Community or cultural requirements:** are there any accommodations you can make to help someone?

- **Learning disabilities:** Identify how their disability affects their learning and research online how to support or reach out to your organisation for help.

- **Difficulty in retaining information:** Break learning into manageable chunks and provide handouts.

- **Low confidence:** Promote the social or fun aspects of picking up digital skills with friends.

- **Negative attitude to learning:** Keep it informal and relaxed. Make learning personal to their interests.

- **No time:** Focus on quick wins. Reassure them that they don't have to commit to a series of classes.

- **I can't afford it:** For some people this may just be a perception that they think they'll need to buy an expensive computer and get broadband installed to get online. For others, finance is a serious consideration. Many hubs and libraries offer free (or low cost) internet access, with devices people can use. Some people may be able to benefit from a social tariff.

Back to basics

1. Simple tasks are only simple when you can do them.

2. Even ‘easy’ tasks can have a lot of related learning.

Try showing a friend or family member how to shop online for a pair of shoes – ask them to pretend they’ve never used a device before and can only do things you’ve told them how to do.

BUT – you can’t touch the device they’re using, and you can’t use online jargon such as: click, highlight, menu, text box, link, filter, select, icon, button, cursor, scroll, address bar.

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Basic digital skills

Things you might need to cover when helping someone learn specific digital skills.

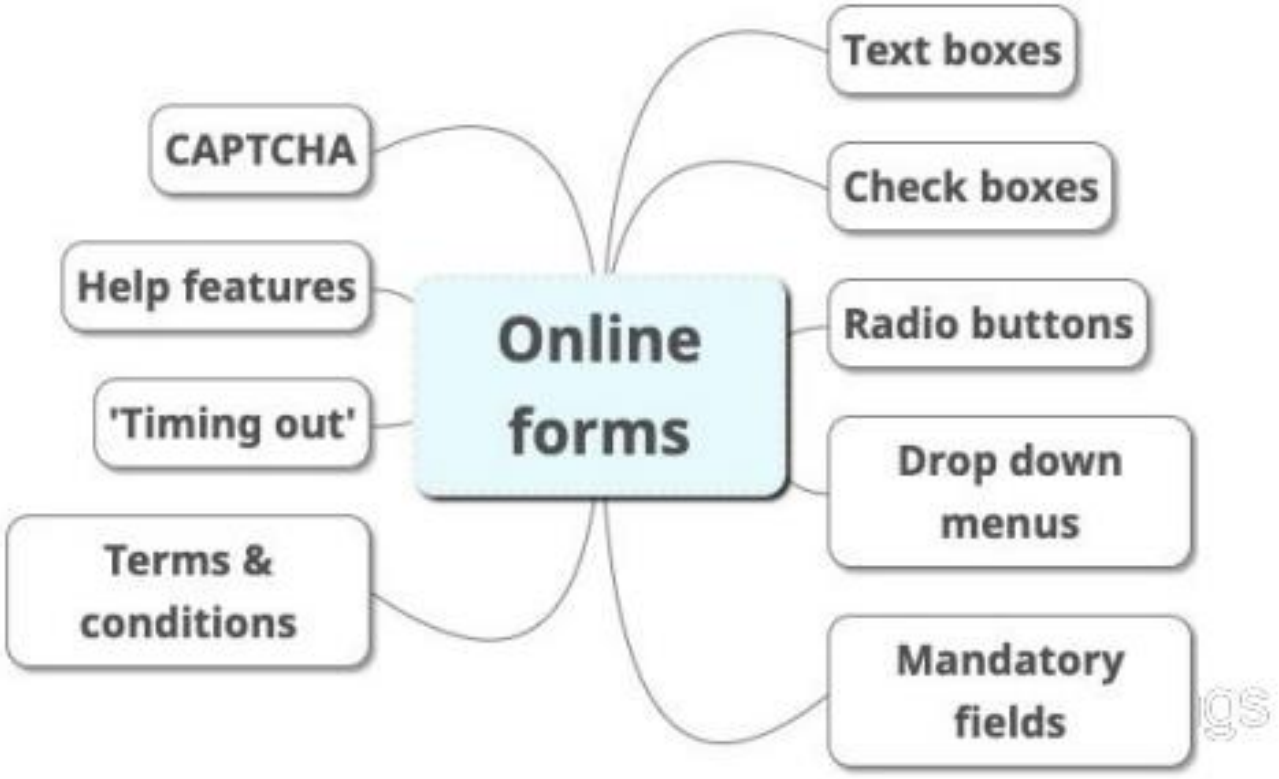


Online forms

common jargon, activities and concepts

Basic features of forms — On Learn My Way

Advanced features of forms



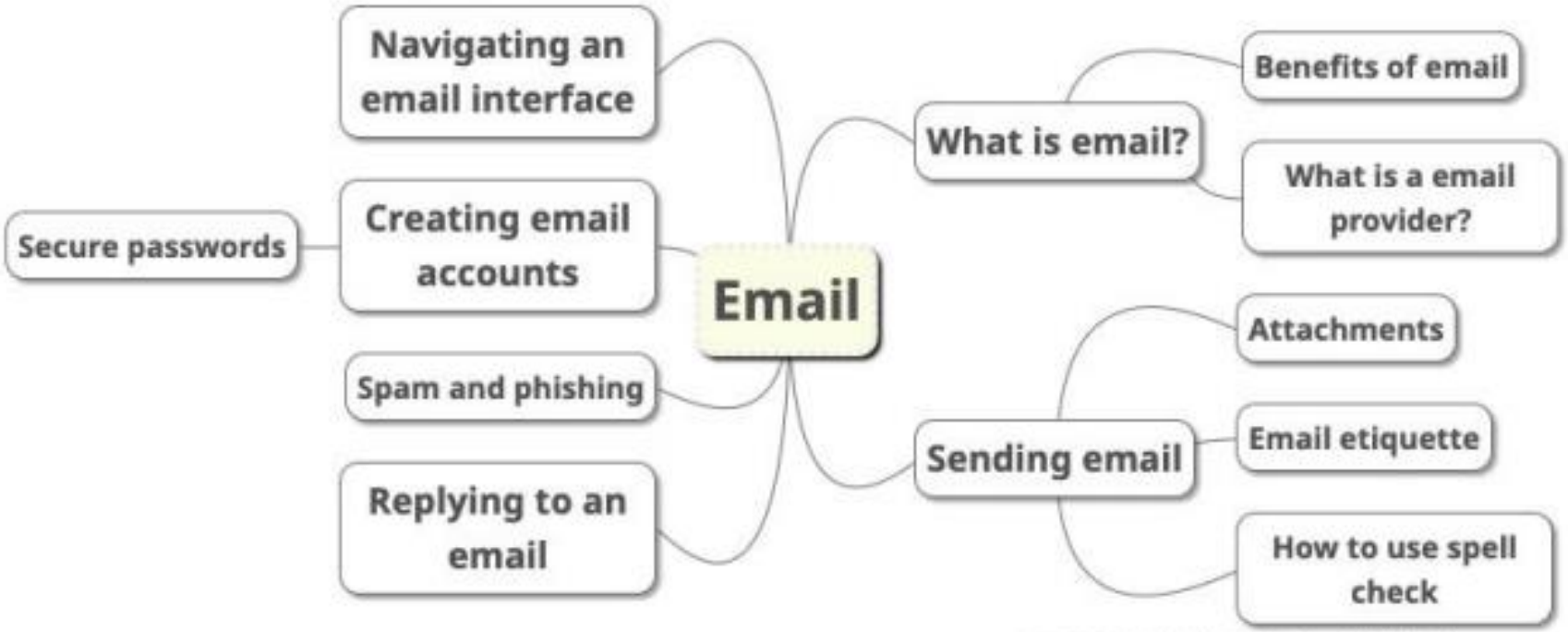
Safety

common jargon, activities and concepts



Email

common jargon, activities and concepts

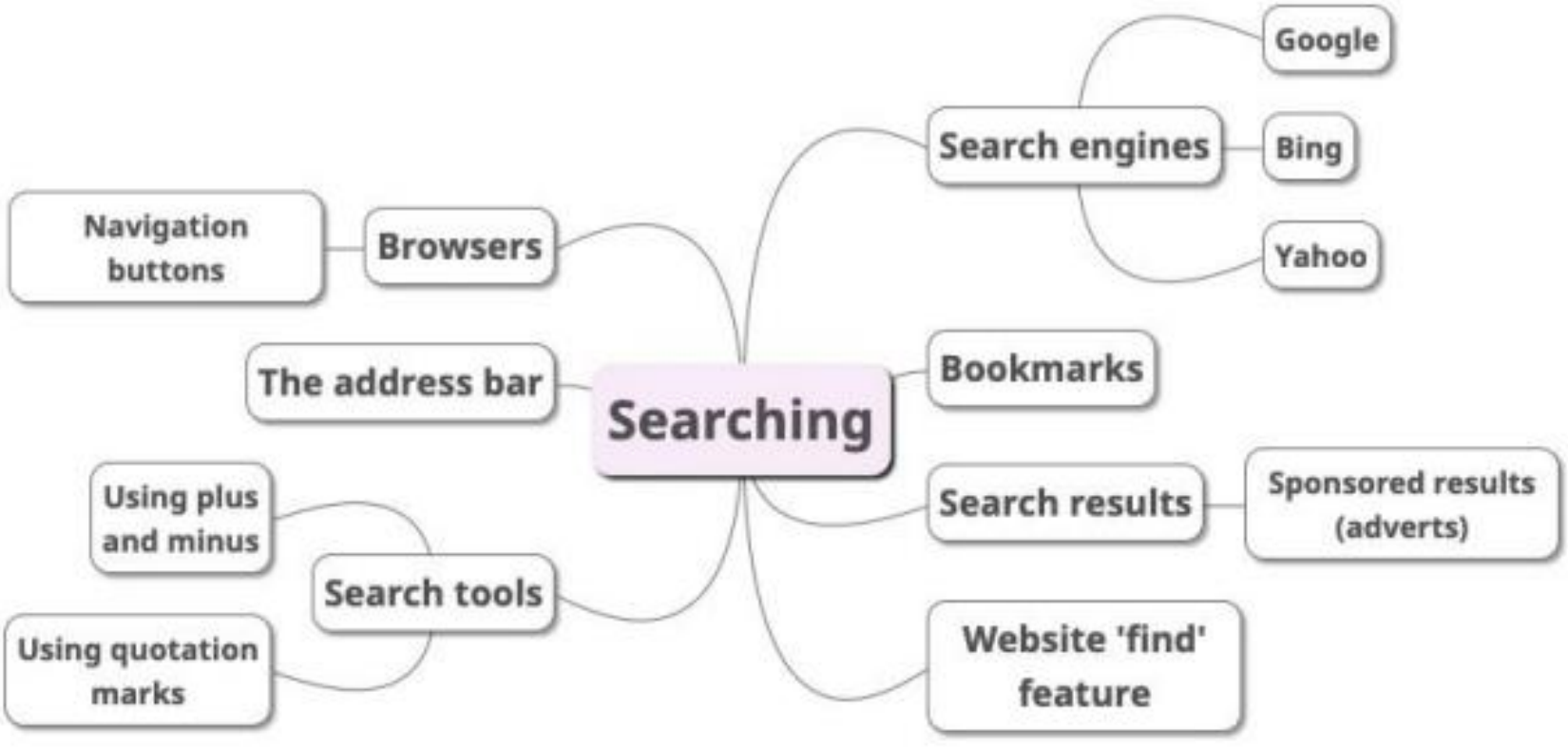


Searching online

common jargon, activities and concepts

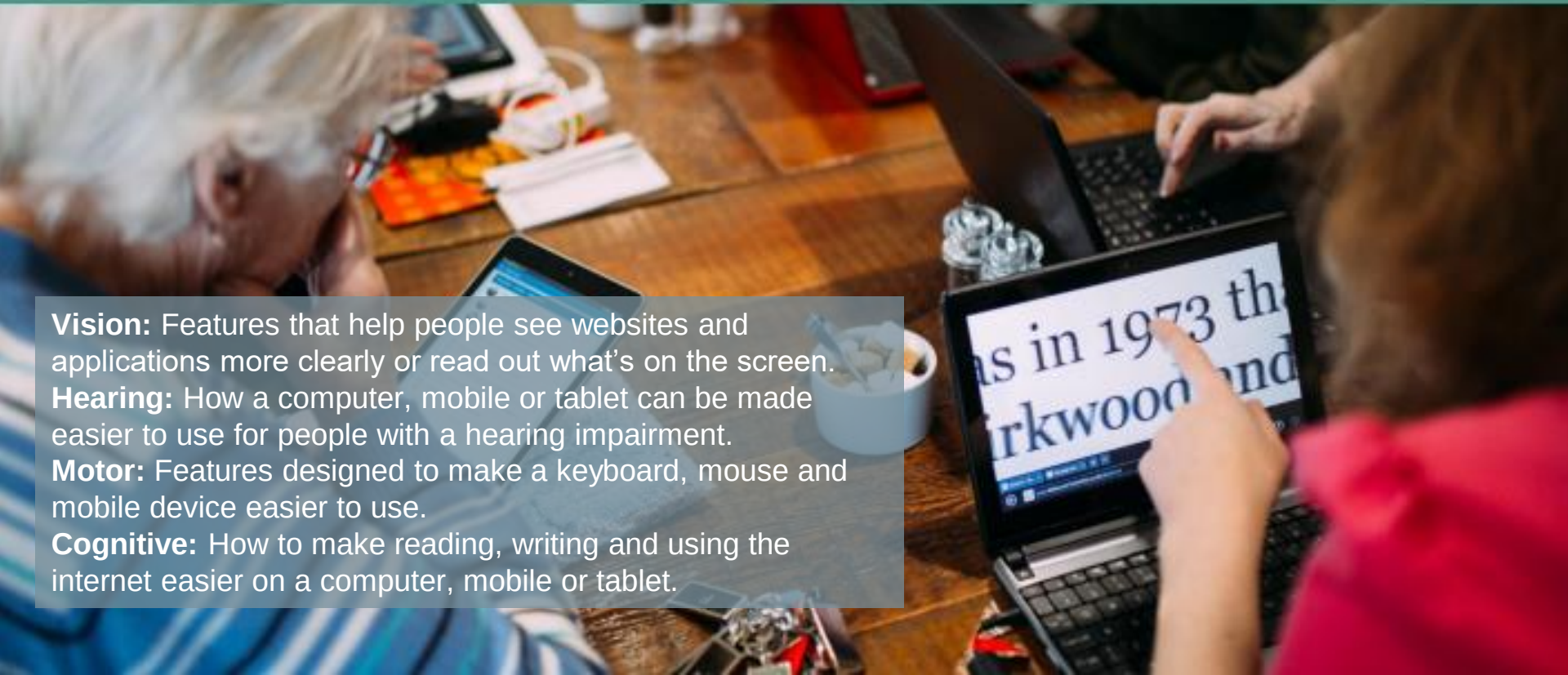
Benefits of using search engines

Searching websites



Accessibility

In computer terms, accessibility is about making a device easier to use. Unless you use accessibility features it's easy to overlook them.



Vision: Features that help people see websites and applications more clearly or read out what's on the screen.
Hearing: How a computer, mobile or tablet can be made easier to use for people with a hearing impairment.
Motor: Features designed to make a keyboard, mouse and mobile device easier to use.
Cognitive: How to make reading, writing and using the internet easier on a computer, mobile or tablet.

Accessibility: Hardware

These are some ideas of hardware people may find useful to help with accessibility needs:

• **Colourful keyboards:** These keyboards are often marketed for young children but their clear, large fonts and coloured keys can help anyone with vision difficulties.
• **Trackballs:** A bit like an upside down, static mouse.
• **Screen overlays:** These acetate overlays change the colour of a computer screen and can make it easier for people with Dyslexia to read what's on the screen.
• **Voice control devices** (digital assistants / smart speakers). Increasingly common and available (eg many smartphones, smart TVs, etc have assistants built in).





Accessibility: Software





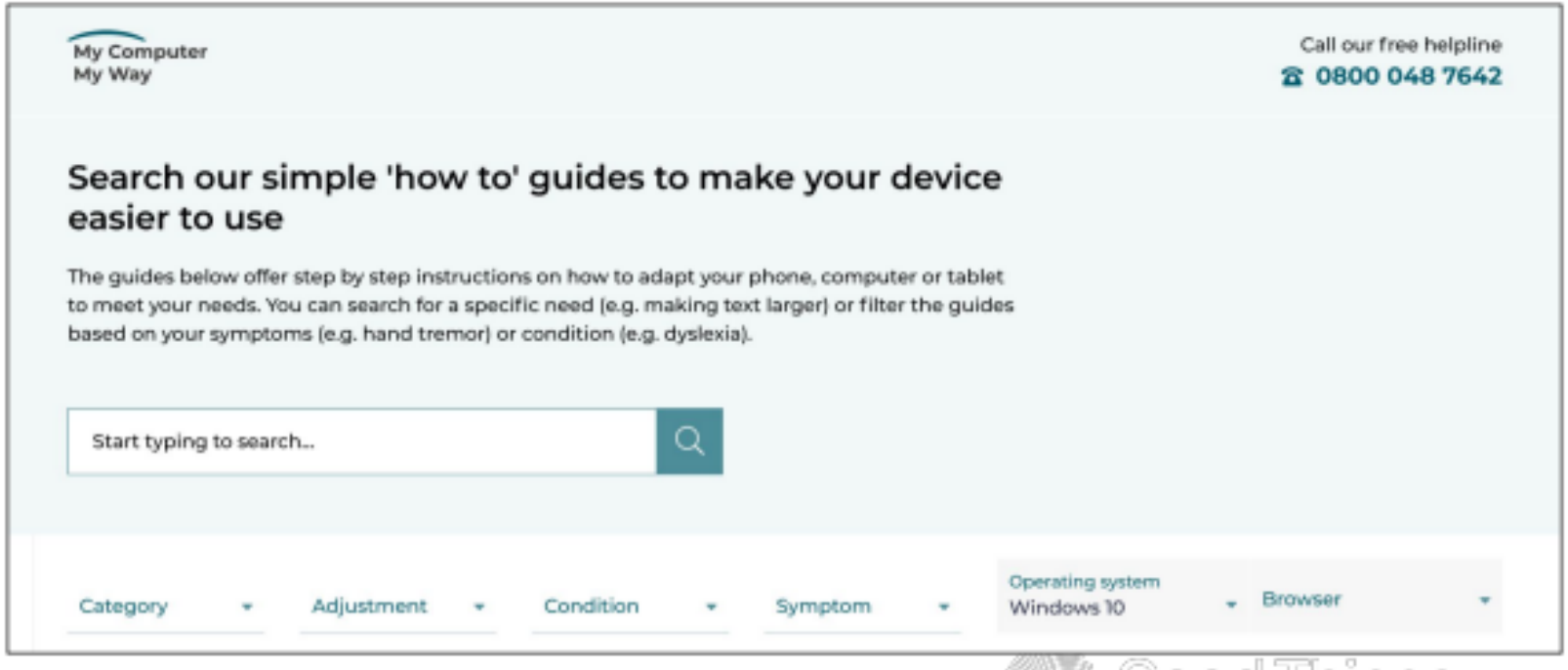


These are some examples of accessibility settings on various devices: ISO 13, Windows 10, Android 9 Pie.

If you've ever used 'CTRL + plus symbol' to zoom in to a webpage, you've used an accessibility feature.

This can also include: changing the mouse speed, activating 'sticky keys', on-screen keyboard, high contrast, screen readers.

Accessibility: AbilityNet



abilitynet.org.uk/mcmw

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Accessibility: Simon



Simon's eyesight isn't as good as it was and he has trouble reading text on a computer screen. Sometimes he gets the words mixed up.

Simon has discovered that he can read white text on a black background better than black on white. At home he's got an old laptop, which he used regularly for web browsing until it started giving him headaches.

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Accessibility: Simon



What could you do to help Simon?

- Make the on-screen text larger
- Make his computer speak text aloud
- Change the colours in his browsers
- Ask him if he's ever been tested for dyslexia - suggest the factsheet 'Dyslexia and computing' from the AbilityNet website
- Ask him when he last had his eyes tested. This might sound like a strange thing to suggest, but the idea is to not assume every problem is related to computer use; it might be as simple as him needing new glasses

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Accessibility: Kala



Kala used to be a secretary but developed arthritis in her hands and has struggled to get back into work.

A community group she goes to has some computers but she doesn't like them. She doesn't know about any alternatives.

The mouse is the most difficult thing for her to use, especially 'double clicking'.

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Accessibility: Kala



What could you do to help Kala?

- Slow down the mouse speed and the double click speed

- Turn off the double click feature (an accessibility option on Windows computers)

- Suggest the factsheet ‘Keyboard and mouse alternatives’ from the AbilityNet website

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Learn My Way

- Over 100 bitesize topics, in 11 subjects
- Easy to browse and find the right starting topic



www.learnmyway.com

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Learn My Way

Learn My Way is aimed at people who just starting out on their journey with digital.

Each topic should take around 5 - 10 minutes to work through. We aim to make all content easy to read, with a target reading age of an 8 year old.

Each topic starts by stating the learning objectives and then leads learners through simple, step by step explanations and instructions.

Topics are divided into small chunks to make sure that concepts are easy to understand.

There's a green progress bar which tells learners where they are within a topic.

Our design uses lots of white space to ensure learning is presented clearly.

We use consistent navigational elements to make working through it intuitive, even for beginners.
Most topics include activities, where learners can practise the concepts covered in the topic.

Learn My Way

Learners can start on a topic that matches an area of interest or meets an urgent need.

Then they can use a pick and mix approach to work through subsequent topics, building a personalised learning programme. Or they can progress automatically through all the topics in a subject in a linear way.

Learn My Way works on mobiles and tablets as well as laptops and desktop computers. It provides a great learning experience whichever device it’s accessd on.

Whatever device you is used, learners can sign in and pick up where they left off.

Other free online learning resources

Online Centres Network



GCFGlobal
Creating Opportunities for a Better Life

DU
Digital Unite

iDEA

age UK

Google Digital Garage

DIGITALLEARN.ORG

ALISON
A NEW WORLD OF FREE CERTIFIED LEARNING

BT Skills for Tomorrow

Facilitating discussions and activities



Facilitating discussions and activities

1. Ensure objectives are clear
2. Ask good quality questions
3. Manage participation
4. Adjust your facilitation style
5. Keep the conversation on track
6. Energise the group throughout the session
7. Be honest and transparent with the group

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