

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS OF LEARNERS WITH SEND TO DELIVERY OF THE ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS STANDARDS (2019)

GUIDE



Original materials created on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation
and funded by the Department for education

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This Guide is designed to help teachers who work with learners who have special educational needs or disability (SEND) to deliver the five skills areas of the [Essential Digital Skills Standards](#) (2019).

It identifies some of the opportunities, challenges, methods and resources that may be relevant or appropriate for some or all of these learners.

It does not provide detailed information around the content of the standards, nor introduce any new content. That is to be found in the 20 [EDS modules](#).

Two levels of awards are supported by the [standards](#):

Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ): from September 2020 covering selected parts of the standards

Digital Functional Skills Qualifications (Digital FSQs): from September 2021 covering the full range of the standards

The precise content and specifications of the EDSQs created by awarding bodies at Entry Level and Level 1 to meet the requirements of the standards will offer a range of alternative course options for providers. You may want to supplement the advice in this guide with commentary and resources from the

awarding bodies when deciding which of these qualifications are likely to be most appropriate for your particular learners and organisation.

The standards have been created to underpin the entitlement for adults to a minimum level of competence and understanding of essential digital skills. This is a right established and supported by government to improve UK citizens' opportunities for life and work.

A core mission of the new entitlement is to reduce barriers, open doors and enable everyone to reap the benefits of digital technology. It is important that every effort is made to give all of those with any form of learning disadvantage the best possible chance for success.



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Teaching the Standards with learners of SEND

SEND is an umbrella term which relates to identified classifications of special needs and disability. The learning needs of individual learners differ significantly from one another, depending on the nature and extent of their disability or disadvantages. This means that the challenges and opportunities presented by particular skills areas and competences in the standards will also differ from one learner to another.

This short Guide unavoidably looks at teaching the standards through the lens of broad categories of disability and disadvantage: physical, sensory, cognitive and neurodiversity. It cannot and does not attempt to replace the knowledge, creativity and determination of experienced professional educators to deliver the best possible experience and outcomes for their particular learners. If you are not a specialist teacher of learners with SEND, you should ensure that you understand and can make effective use in your teaching of the assistive technology available to learners and the built-in and additional accessibility options available for operating systems, browsers and software. These are transformative for learners and include features that can benefit everyone.

The advice given here will be enriched, increased in scale and value and adapted to changing circumstances if you share what you do and the resources you create with your colleagues and

peers through the support programme's communities of practice and other collaborative media.

With the arrival of any new standards comes an opportunity to revisit and refresh your teaching methods to make them more inclusive. Do you use video, screencasts or audio clips to provide explanations that learners with poor literacy skills can use? Do you get learners to consolidate and demonstrate learning by creating their own screencasts, videos or audio clips? Do you use QR codes on laptops, tablets or PCs to direct learners to short video explanations? Do you use augmented reality apps to embed demonstrations in interactive posters or handouts? Developing your own repertoire of approaches will allow you to engage more learners more effectively. It can also model a playful attitude towards technology that makes learners less fearful of unfamiliar things.



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Using devices and handling information

Looks at different types of hardware, software and apps and how to use them and keep them up to date; finding, evaluating, storing and organising information – and what to do if it goes wrong; using online resources to update digital skills.

> The Key point

This is a good starting point for many learners and teachers because it includes accessibility settings and options, user interfaces (such as keyboards, screen readers) and other speech to text/text to speech tools.

Challenges

Learners can be overwhelmed by cluttered interfaces or over-demanding login processes (for example complex password requirements).

Opportunities

Explore options for simplifying interfaces and reducing home screens on phones, tablets or PCs to the core needs and interests of the learner. Explore alternative login methods – fingerprints, face recognition, voice recognition or picture-based security (clicking on key areas of an image).

Searching for information about accessibility tools, options and settings on machines and on common software is a practical way to develop search skills and to address several of the competences in this area (software updating, presenting accessibility options positively as tools for everybody, rather than just for disabled learners, is good practice). Tools such as voice recognition and text to speech offer opportunities for skills development and can support other essential skills work. Interactions can be managed by Cortana/Siri smart assistants. The equivalent hardware devices, such as Amazon Echo and Alexa, can offer simple ways for learners who lack confidence to begin to engage in digital opportunities.



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Creating and editing

Entering and editing text in a range of formats in common packages; creating and editing digital media – images, sound, videos; working with numerical data and spreadsheets (Level 1 only).

> The Key point

This starts with familiar IT fare – working with office-type packages – and extends to more contemporary skills of creating and editing photos, videos and sound files around a range of purposes. These are essential digital skills.

Challenges

The physical process of entering and editing text and digital media can be problematical with a standard keyboard and mouse for a range of learners. Learners may also struggle with spelling and grammar. Working with images is challenging for varying degrees of visual impairment.

Opportunities

Creating and editing documents, data and media confronts the fundamental barrier for many SEND learners – being able to interact effectively with computers. Assistive technology ranges from inbuilt alternative inputs (e.g. voice, keyboard, mouse) to specialist tools (such as ‘switch’ operated inputs and eye-gaze interfaces) to bespoke equipment designed for individuals. A range of modified keyboards and physical input devices (e.g. trackerball, joystick) are available along with smart assistants. There is a huge range of accessibility options in systems and software to explore and unlock for computers, tablets and phones. The skills that can be developed in this part of the standards are well described as essential. Spelling and grammar difficulties can be resolved by using dictate options, word prediction capability and plugins like Grammarly and spellcheck.



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Communicating

Looks at core essential digital skills in a modern world of mobile phones and devices, chat, messaging and social media.

> The Key point

Knowing how to use online communication effectively and responsibly is arguably the core essential digital skill in a modern world of mobile phones and devices, chat, messaging and social media.

Challenges

Identifying appropriate communication channels for particular types of disability and disadvantage. Learners who lack social awareness can unintentionally cause offence and those who are socially naïve can be vulnerable to external influence and scamming.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to explore a variety of methods and media for communicating effectively online. Communications technology is one of the great equalisers, overcoming all types of disability and disadvantage and offering alternatives for most forms of disability, including voice recognition and text to speech, communicating by live streaming, audio clips or uploaded images, videos of BSL signing, text messaging and the use of emojis. Creating and using avatars in place of personal images is a good skill to acquire here for a whole range of learners. Some online tools have begun to give feedback on the tone of your communication with smiley face or scowling emojis. This can help people on the autistic spectrum.

The standards at Entry Level include the importance of creating, storing and using contacts to facilitate easier communications and it is worth spending some time on this.



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Transacting

Looks at using and interacting with a range of online services; buying online safely to get the best deals.

> The Key point

Private, commercial and government services have moved online in such great numbers that anyone who is unable or ill-prepared to use them is at a significant disadvantage.

Challenges

Making payments online directly as a learning activity is problematical in any sector of education. Dealing with payments safely and securely is particularly challenging and may be stressful for visually impaired learners and for some cognitive and neurodiversity conditions. The important issue is to enable learners to find ways to interact, to shop and pay safely and effectively. This may involve relying on a family member or helper. Online transactions can be particularly problematical for visually impaired learners – many websites are inaccessible to screen readers.

Opportunities

There are opportunities here to discuss the pros and cons and sources of support in accessing online services, shopping and making payments safely and securely. Making learners aware of the importance of up-to-date browsers that can block pop-ups and suspicious sites, will help to protect all learners and be of particular value to the more vulnerable. Using reliable password managers can reduce the burden of remembering logins and passwords.



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Being safe and responsible online

Protecting privacy and data; behaving responsibly online; digital wellbeing.

> The Key point

This is a large area of the standards for which there is already a considerable body of understanding, resource and experience. The 2019 standards have largely caught up with current teaching practice in updating their 2007 predecessor, but understanding and teaching around these issues has been a core component of ICT education and skills for some time.

Challenges

The core theme running through this module is to use the internet safely, wisely and with confidence, being aware of the risks and how to deal with them. The best way to teach any learners this is not to expose them to online risk, but to build sound knowledge of the issues to prepare them for going online and being online.

Opportunities

A consideration in the shift away from older ICT skills programmes to an essential skills perspective is that learning is not always best served by learners constantly facing a screen and interacting with a computer. Many of the issues around behaving responsibly online call for guided and informed questioning and discussion rather than hands on keyboard activity. Particular areas of concern and of great opportunity for SEND learners are social media.

CONCLUSION



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Technology plays a major role in achieving equality of opportunity for SEND. Knowing how to access and apply it in the service of learners is an essential skill for teachers.

For SEND learners, the knowledge, understanding and skills required to locate and use assistive technology and accessibility tools to support their learning is the essential skill that unlocks all the others.

The tools themselves are valuable to all learners and can play a transformative role in opening up learning for other groups with a disadvantage, such as offender learners and those with limited English language skills.



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<p>Check out the Accessibility category in the Enhance EdTech modules for good advice and links on supporting disability and learning disadvantage.</p>	<p>https://enhance.efoundation.co.uk/</p>
<p>CALL Scotland has collated a range of downloadable posters and summaries of assistive technology tools and apps. These are organised both by disability and by type of tasks (for example see the 8 sections in this 'wheel' for people with literacy difficulties).</p>	<p>https://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/posters-and-leaflets/</p>
<p>Emptech has a useful list of links to hardware and software to support different access needs.</p>	<p>https://www.emptech.info/wp/strategies/</p>
<p>The FutureTeacher resource on Supporting Reading has a range of tools and plugins organised according to the reading difficulty, they can solve.</p>	<p>https://learningapps.co.uk/futureteacher/play_32#resume=10</p>



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GoogleDocs have inbuilt VoiceTyping, allowing users to speak the text they want to write.	https://support.google.com/docs/answer/4492226?hl=en
Windows 10 has inbuilt voice recognition that can reduce the burden of writing by typing and spelling.	https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/help/4042244/windows-10-use-dictation
Making technology work for you, which was developed with learners with SEND.	https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf3091
Information about ETF's wider SEND offer on their SEND site.	https://send.excellencegateway.org.uk/

Acknowledgements

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Original materials created on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation and funded by the Department for education.