



Vision Northumberland Assistive Tech Series

Accessible desktop computers (PC's)

Whether you want a PC for work, to check your emails or to surf the web, it doesn't have to be expensive just because of your sight loss.

There are very few computers specifically designed for the blind and visually impaired. In most cases, people with visual impairments use regular computers equipped with technology to help operate a computer like anyone else.

Most modern PC's have these accessibility features already installed through their operating systems and will let you install specialist software as well.

In our opinion, the best computers for the blind or visually impaired are those with either a Microsoft Windows or Apple MAC operating system because of their built-in accessibility options. We can provide a set-by-step guide to adjusting these features.

However, the type of accessible software and hardware you would need would very much depend on the severity of your sight loss.

Additional hardware that can be add to a PC:

- **High visibility keyboards** - standard keyboard keys are small and can be hard to see. Instead you could purchase a high contrast keyboard or modify your keyboard by adding high contrast stickers (usually yellow and black).
- **Larger keys** - there are several keyboard available with much larger keys, and can even come in high contrast colours.
- **Bump-ons** – a low cost, simple solution could also be to add bump-ons to your keyboard so you can find important keys easily.

Additional software that can be add to a PC:

- **Screen Readers** - If you need more support than the preinstalled options can offer, there is screen reading software available. Free versions include NVDA, Apple Voiceover, Orca and Emacspeak. There are some more advanced programs that can be purchase such as Jaws and ZoomText but these can be expensive. You may qualify for a RNIB Technology Grant Scheme which could cover the cost.
- **Screen Magnification** - For some the magnification tools may not be enough. Screen magnification software packages are available to apply for through the RNIB Technology Grant Scheme.