

Using ICT at home

As a parent, you may be interested in how information and communication technology (ICT), such as a computer, can be used to support your child both at school and at home. Perhaps you or your child has access to a computer after school hours, or perhaps you are considering buying ICT for home use? If so, you may be overwhelmed by the amount of products available and find it difficult to know what type of hardware and software would be most appropriate to use with your child. Below you will find some tips to help you get started.

1. Find out from your child's teacher how ICT is being used, or how it might be used, to support your child in the classroom. Ask the teacher if there is anything you can do at home to complement this work (you don't always have to have a computer at home to support work being done on the computer in school).
1. If your child is given some technology by the school for home use, do your best to ensure that it is used appropriately and kept in good condition. Report any technical problems or difficulties to your child's teacher as soon as possible so that the use of ICT at home does not become a barrier to your child's achievement, rather than being of help.
1. Take an interest in what your child is doing in relation to ICT. Ask your child to demonstrate to you how ICT works and what programs they are using.
1. Keep computers in a family room where you can keep an eye on what the child is doing, especially if the computer can be connected to the internet. There is lots of information available for parents on internet safety. See, for example, the internet safety section of the NCTE website (see the section '[Addresses and Web Links](#)' in The Library).
1. If you are considering purchasing ICT for home use, explore ways in which it might be used to support the needs of your child together with your child's teacher. Ask your child's teacher about specific tasks that you could do with your child at home using ICT (e.g., letter recognition, word recognition, reading comprehension), as these might influence your purchase.
1. Ask your child's teacher to identify what hardware and software or websites, if any, are being used with your child at school and determine if it would also be appropriate for you to use something similar at home to reinforce learning. If your child has frequent access to a computer or similar technology at school (e.g., laptop equipped with talking word processing software or word prediction software), you may find it beneficial for your child to use the same tools at home to complete homework. If the tools are portable, discuss with the teacher the possibility of also using them at home.
1. You may also want to consider using different software programs / websites at home than what is used at school to provide sufficient stimulation as your child may become bored using the same software time and time again. Your child's teacher may be able to suggest some easy- to-use

software programs or web resources that are geared towards home use which reinforce skills/concepts with which your child needs assistance. In addition, some websites, such as the Parents Information Network (PIN), provide evaluations of software and websites that are suitable for use at home (see the section 'Dyslexia and ICT' in The Library).

1. If you are in a position to purchase a computer but don't know anything about the technology, try to get some technical help and advice from someone in the know, other than the salespeople (see the section 'Dyslexia and ICT' in Further Support).
1. Bear in mind that the right technology in one setting may be entirely wrong in another. Different types of learning take place at school than at home so it is not always a good idea to try to replicate the classroom at home. As students with dyslexia can sometimes feel stressed and overwhelmed during the school day, home learning should be more relaxed and ICT use at home should be both enjoyable and motivating. Some software programs that may not seem to have any educational value (e.g., some computer games) can offer your child an opportunity to work on problem-solving skills, memorisation and collaboration. They can also offer opportunities for increasing self-esteem and building confidence.

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