Supporting young people with disabilities to use social media


Resources accessed or developed during two intervention research studies supporting young people aged 10-21 years to use the Internet for connecting with others are listed below. Further references related to these projects are listed below.

Devices used to access Internet:
- Personal Computers/ Mac Computer
- Laptops
- Communication Devices
- Education Department Funded laptops
- iPad/ iPad mini
- iPod (e.g. for mail or blogs)
- iPhone
- X-Box
- Wii
- Mobile broadband Internet connection

Intervention Tool Kit:
- Local Area Network or Ethernet cables
- A Prepaid Mobile Broadband Internet Connection
- Microphones (array/ headset)
- Web cameras
- Trial laptops
- Trial keyboards/ mouse/ switches
- Trial software
- USB with installation files for commonly used downloads (e.g. word read trial, Skype install, google chrome browser).

Intervention Support Team:
- Having the Internet on a smart phone to demonstrate/ use as second person in a conversation (e.g. I'll be in the lounge room and call you on Skype) or Having a second person back at the office able to link in on Skype.
- IT technical support
- Product and software technical support.
- Support from product suppliers

Software Purchased and Installed on Participant devices:
- Text Help Read and Write Gold
- Word Read
- Speak Q
- Word Q
- Dragon Naturally Speaking
- Cowriter
• iReadwrite (ipad application)

Supports for using assistive technology
• Set up abbreviations & expansions in Word Q
• Set up abbreviations on ireadwrite
• Set up common phrases dictionary on sticky notes (used in conjunction with Text Help)
• Set up email dictionary in text help (so that words commonly used in email would be predicted quickly)
• Support with using AAC apps (e.g., editing or adding vocabulary) and moving between social media and AAC apps

Other Equipment
• Stylus for iPad (Caduceus)
• Colour coded letter stickers for Keyboard
• USB microphone & headset (for use with Dragon)
• iPad & Griffin Survivor Case
• Web Camera
• Antenna to boost Internet Connection
• Hotspot mobile internet connection and data recharge

Free downloads Installed on Participant devices:
• K9 Web Protection – A freely available customisable internet filter
• Avast or AVG AntiVirus (or supported set up of family purchased virus software)
• Skype (app/ computer program)
• Hangouts (app/ computer program)
• Incredimail (computer program)
• Thunderbird (computer program)
• live mail (computer program)
• Safari/ Chrome/ Internet Explorer/ Firefox Mozilla (computer web browsers a variety were used depending on family/participant preferences and compatibility with assistive technology)
• Dragon Naturally Speaking (app)
• Facebook (app)
• SnapChat (app)
• Instagram (app)
• SPOKENPHOTO (app)
• Tellagami (app)

Websites
• Livewire – This is a monitored website. Organisers will contact the family and ask for drivers licence and name of a professional involved in supporting client to determine suitability for Livewire. livewire.org.au
• facebook.com
• twitter.com
• edublogs.org
• wordpress.com
• pinterest.com
• flickr.com
• steamcommunity.com
• Virtual Reality Games (e.g., secondlife.com, thesims.com, habbo.com)
Examples of Supports Developed:

Cyber safety
- Cyber Safety House Rules (picture supported and text versions)
- Cyber safety checklist
- Cyber safety quiz activity cards
- How to manage privacy settings
- Agreement of how I will set my privacy settings
- How to reset your password
- Ideas for a good password
- Enabling restrictions on devices

Identifying account names and passwords.
Prior to the appointment to set up Internet accounts it helped to ask participants to think about some of their favourite things and that they could use in their user names or passwords. We recommended that participants only used their first name online in most situations. We encouraged them to use a name alternative by substituting a last name with a favourite thing (e.g. purple, star, rocket, soccer, golf, baby, basketball, port, Ferrari, sailing, name of the family pet, shortened or modified version of actual name).

Finding Friends
- Address cards to share online contacts with family & friends
- Email contacts list for friends to record contact details
- List of Internet social networking accounts and user names

Setting up Social Networking Accounts
- Password reminder hints
- Device/ social network log in hints
- How to change accessibility settings in Windows (e.g., use of mouse)
- Setting up bookmarks for Social networking sites on your internet browser
- Changing settings or set up on iPad (e.g. speak selection, moving apps onto bottom panel on iPad, moving apps into folders)
- How to recharge your Internet connection

‘How to’ help sheets and guides (e.g., with symbols or pictures)
- Help sheets for learning Email and Internet symbols/language
- how to blog (guidelines for blogging-what to say, what not to say/ do’s don’ts/ visual steps)
- how to send/receive an email (visual steps)
- how to use Assistive Technology program (e.g. visual steps for starting Word Q, command prompts in dragon)
- using FB (visual steps)
- Rules for using a stylus
- Social story for participant with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Symbol supports (I need a break, I don’t understand)
- Task specific cueing/prompting hierarchies for support persons

Writing Support
- Letter cards (for writing support)
- Practice phrases for writing (e.g. your user name, password, information about yourself, format for letters)
- Template for writing an email (e.g., to, subject, opener, message, closer)
- Computer access check list
- Conversation turn or topic dictionaries

Common Barriers
- Having trusted peers to talk with online
- Home computer breakdowns or slowness; Family’s home Internet connection not working
- Forgot password
- Family unaware of administrator password delaying installation of support software.
- Family or participant personal choices (e.g., to use different set ups at school and home or not to use assistive technology because it’s for ‘dumb people’).
- Difficulties in accessing the Internet account (e.g. account blocked)
- Equipment not charged
- Difficulties making and keeping appointments (e.g., cancelling, rescheduling, participants not at home)
- Time to travel to appointments.
- Installing Dragon (e.g. commonly not successful on first attempt and required support from project coordinator or software helpline, for one participant difficulties were unable to be resolved despite several contacts with the helpline)
- Setting up the voice training component on Dragon (e.g. had to be repeated several times for some participants, unsuccessful for one participant).
- Fear of social networking (family or participant)
- Behaviour difficulties
- Needing a second person to attend and provide support at participant appointments
- Setting up, programming and troubleshooting access to the Internet on communication devices.
- Bypassing school proxy server that filters social networking use.
- Problems with compatibility of Word Q and Speak Q with different software & browsers

Facilitators
- Motivation of families and participants
- Experiences of success and the benefits of being connected to others online (e.g., talking with other friends and family, having the ability to connect to someone when needed)
- Quick and responsive resolution of technical difficulties
- Being able to take the actual computer/communication device back to the office and set up outside of appointment times.
- Having access to an IT consultant able to provide support in the set up and troubleshooting process
Publications from our research


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