

# Organising an Accessible Technology Event

A Guide to help you plan

**R N I B**

See differently



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This guide has been developed as an outcome of an RNIB led programme, Online Today; whose objective was to support people with sight loss to gain access to information and help them to get and stay online.

Online Today offered support to people in a number of different ways, including small group events designed to give people a chance to explore their options, see demonstrations of various digital devices and get hands on with technology themselves.

Experience and learning developed during this 3-year project has been brought together here to assist anyone planning to run similar technology training activities.

The guide should be used as an aid for anyone considering delivering technology support to people with sight loss. This may range from an informal and basic introductory workshop through to specific topics or areas of interest at a more developed level.

To find out more about the learning and evaluation of Online Today please visit: [bit.ly/329ywPV](https://bit.ly/329ywPV)

RNIB's Technology for Life service continues to provide support to people with sight loss and partner organisations to develop and grow their own technology offer. To find out more visit: [www.rnib.org.uk/technology](https://www.rnib.org.uk/technology)

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# What is Assistive Technology?

Technology is transforming the way we live our lives. It has changed how we shop, communicate with people and find out what's happening around the world; how we engage in our community, how we read books, listen to music and find employment. For people with sight loss, technology is an enabler to live independently, participate in and take control of their world.

Recent advances in technology mean sight loss is no longer a barrier to being able to get online. Mainstream devices have been designed with built in accessibility functions, such as magnification, voice assistants and screen reader software. They can be bought on the high street, used right out of the box and many can be set up with speech alone.

Software in desktop computers, laptops and mobile phones means it is possible for blind and partially sighted people to use them to perform the same tasks as fully sighted people, accessing emails, word documents, spreadsheets and the internet.

New home assistants like Amazon Echo and Google Home are fully accessible to blind and partially sighted people and make it easy to set calendar reminders, listen to books and the radio, search the news and follow sports results. Developments in GPS technology make it easier for blind and partially sighted people to navigate and find their way around at home or on holiday. The many apps available for phones and tablets address countless problems, such as reading post aloud, identifying colours and recognising products in the supermarket.

All these developments mean that anyone, with any level of sight loss, can find an assistive technology device to meet their requirements. But it isn't always intuitive or easy, so a demonstration or little training can be really helpful.

To find out more about assistive technology go here:  
[www.rnib.org.uk/technology](http://www.rnib.org.uk/technology)

# Setting Up Your Technology Event

## Getting Started – planning and preparation

When planning for your technology session or group event, first consider the basics:

- what is the theme of your event?
- who are your attendees going to be?
- who is going to deliver your event?
- where will it be held?

Have you thought about what kind of event you want to deliver and what outcomes you want to achieve? If this is a new area for you, starting with a short, informal workshop to raise awareness of different assistive technology options can be a fun, interactive way to start.

Maybe you could add a technology element to an established initiative you already run? Some organisations that hold informal social groups and coffee mornings have added in a fun demonstration of technology as a “taster” to get people interested, with no commitment.

If your clients already have a basic level of understanding they may want to know more about technology, more about accessibility functions or get more in-depth practice.

Or maybe you are planning to deliver at a more progressive level. In this case it's important to think about the target audience for your training and what you hope to achieve.

It may be helpful to work through a short questionnaire with your clients. This can help you understand their current abilities, what they struggle with and their aims and goals and can help with the planning process. Your local Technology for Life Coordinator can send you a sample questionnaire template.

Whatever kind of event you decide to run it's best to start planning well in advance. Where possible try to start at least eight weeks before your anticipated date. In Appendix A you will find a sample timeline to help you plan.

No matter where you are with your plans for running a technology event, the RNIB Technology for Life team will be able to help you. Making the first step towards something new can feel daunting, but get in touch and we'll do our best to help. Our contact details are at the end of this guide.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Depending on the size of your planned session or event, there are different roles and responsibilities you might need to think about.

- **Coordinator:** For a large event or group it's useful to have one person to oversee arrangements. Their role can include planning, venue and hospitality organising, taking bookings, promotions and marketing, staff and volunteer organisation and participant follow up.

Giving this role to one person means they have an overview of the shape the event is taking and can spot problems or clashes before they occur. This person doesn't have to be knowledgeable about technology, just organised! They should keep good clear notes and store them in a shared location so that someone else could step in and take over if necessary.

- **Presenter or Trainer:** It may be that you already have suitably experienced staff or volunteers who can deliver the kind of technology session or group event that you and your clients want, or you might need to get an experienced person in from an outside organisation. It's not necessary for your presenter to know all about every assistive technology, but a good trainer:

- knows their subject (even if it's very specific)
- is patient, confident and good humoured
- speaks clearly and projects their voice to a room
- knows a bit about sight loss (you can offer some visual awareness training to help here).

If you can sit in on a training session or talk being delivered by your potential trainer this will help you decide if they are right for your clients.

- **Guide/Support:** If there are a lot of people attending your event, consider having volunteers or staff lined up to act as guides and support on the day.

Your clients may need support to access your premises, locate the room, get seated and set up, use the facilities or make a safe exit in an emergency. You could ask attendees to bring their own support if they think it is necessary, but you should have people on hand who know how to guide a blind or partially sighted person and understand what might be required. Find out more about How to Guide here: [www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-family-friends-and-carers/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person](http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-family-friends-and-carers/guiding-blind-or-partially-sighted-person)



**TOP TIP!** To ensure your attendees are able to keep up with what the presenter is showing them and are not falling behind, you should consider having some floating tech support - volunteers or staff who can survey the room, check that everyone is keeping up and step in if problems arise. These support staff should have a reasonable understanding of technology and be confident, but they don't have to be experts.

RNIB might have a local Technology Event Volunteer who could assist. Contact your local Technology for Life Coordinator to enquire.

- **Partnership:** Is this all in-house event delivery or should you work in conjunction with another organisation?

It may be that your event is specific to your own organisation and client needs. Or maybe working in partnership with local societies supporting people with sight loss and other community organisations (eg libraries) would be an option for you.



## Hardware and Logistics

There are lots of things to consider when you are planning a technology session or group event. Whether you have your own venue or are using someone else's space, here are a few things to think about:

- **Equipment:** It's ideal if your organisation has its own assistive technology kit that can be used to run group sessions. It is important your presenter or trainer knows everything is charged and has everything installed that they want to demonstrate. Everything should be connected to the WIFI in advance and should be good to go when your clients come in.



If you don't have equipment, talk to your local RNIB Technology for Life Coordinator about the best way to source equipment for your activity.

You could ask clients to bring their own devices. If you do this, be clear in advance about what they need. Clients may not understand the difference between Apple and Android or Google Home and Amazon Echo. Make sure devices are brought in fully charged, are running the latest Operating System and have the right things installed.

Good, clear joining instructions will enable your trainees to get the best out of the session and will help prevent delays to the start of your events.

- **Preparation:** If you are delivering a technology session or group event, make sure to research your subject thoroughly. Try out the features you want to discuss on a variety of devices using different operating systems. They will vary from one to another. If you are sighted, practise using magnification and speech features to make sure you understand the issues.

The Technology for Life team at RNIB have access to lots of training notes that you might find helpful. Contact your local Technology for Life Coordinator to tell us what you're doing and we'll be happy to share.



- **Training accounts:** To demonstrate something like Gmail, you should consider setting up a dummy account. Something like: **myorganisation.trainer@gmail.com**
- **Duration:** This can be determined by the amount of time you have to achieve your aim and how long you have the room or the presenter for. But more importantly, think about your attendees. How long might they take to understand the subject and learn the skills they need? Shorter sessions dealing with one subject may be more successful than long ones trying to cover a lot. It's hard and tiring to concentrate for a long time, especially if you're trying to learn something new. Don't be too ambitious with what you can cram into one session.
- **Research your venue:** If you are using your own premises this is easier but if you are in a local library or community hall there are some things to look out for.

Check out the WIFI and make sure the signal is strong enough where you are positioned and can cope with all your attendees at once. Sometimes it might be necessary to bring your own portable WIFI device. Even where there is good WIFI, there might be restrictions imposed by the organisation (like not allowing streaming sites for example). Check this out in advance to make sure you're not stuck on the day.

If you have clients with hearing loss make sure your venue has a loop system, and make sure it works.

Check how accessible the venue is. Look out for ramps for wheelchair users, narrow or cramped rooms that will be uncomfortable for trainees, disabled toilets, even the provision of public transport nearby. Can the lights in your room be dimmed? Can blinds be pulled to cover the windows? Is there good clear directional signage?

Make sure the venue staff know that you are coming and understand the requirements of your trainees. Introduce yourself to the Receptionist or Front of House staff and tell them where you are and how to get in touch if they need to.

**TOP TIP!** Check what else is on in the venue at the same time. 20 tiny tots singing nursery rhymes at the same time as your technology session can be very distracting!

- **Risk Assessments:** Complete a risk assessment to ensure that you have considered all potential issues associated with your technology session or group event. On your own premises visitors are covered by your organisation's Public Liability Insurance. Externally you should check that visitors are properly indemnified. Your own organisation may have templates for appropriate risk assessments.

- **Headphones and Splitters:** This is especially important when you are training using speech software like TalkBack, VoiceOver or NVDA. In a room with a number of people using this software it can get very noisy and hard to be heard. You may need to provide attendees with disposable ear buds, or ask them to bring their own headphones.

**TOP TIP!** Headphone 'splitters' plug into the standard jack of a device and allow two sets of headphones to hear the same content. This means the presenter or supporter can listen in to what is happening on any of the attendee's devices.

- **Health and Safety:** As part of your venue research check where the fire exits are and if there are any tests planned for the day. Know where the fire assembly points are and the disabled refuge point. Make sure your attendees know what to do in the event of an emergency at the venue.

The best thing you can do is deliver what you promise in a safe, inclusive and accessible way. Your local Technology for Life Coordinator can provide you with a useful factsheet called Providing Training Courses for Blind and Partially Sighted People.



## Your Clients

When you are planning your technology session or group event it is important to find out a bit more about your clients so you can get an appropriate group together.

### Things to find out are:

- **Skill Levels:** Try not to mix beginners with experienced users as some will move fast and want to progress while others take more time and need the basics.
- **Sight Levels:** Clients with little or no sight will benefit from using speech, whilst those with useable sight might prefer magnification. It's difficult to train a mixed group of blind and partially sighted people as the gestures and steps are quite different.

You may have to run more than one event depending on the number of clients you have, and if a few people are left out you may have to run a one-to-one session to address their needs. Don't forget the Technology for Life team at RNIB can help over the phone with help and support on many devices.

When advertising your technology session or group event be clear about who you are aiming it at. Don't be afraid to say that it is suitable for absolute beginners or experienced users, and be specific about the topic. If you are running a large group event and taking bookings your coordinator will have an opportunity to double check that clients know what they are signing up for.

**TOP TIP!** On the day make sure that someone in the room has access to a list with the names of everyone expected to attend and their contact details. In this way you can check if the majority of people have arrived and follow up if you know someone was keen and they aren't there yet.



## Marketing and Promotion

You may know from listening to your clients what subject or theme is of most interest to them. Equally, you may be introducing a new thing or maybe you know something new is coming on the market and you want to tell your clients all about it. You know the best ways to contact your existing clients.

- **Eligibility:** Running a technology session or group event can be a great way to attract new clients. Lots of people are keen to learn more about how to make best use of technology and will want to take part. You need to be clear on eligibility in your marketing material, perhaps adding an age requirement or a postcode or employment status.
- **Detail:** Remember to be clear in all your marketing about what exactly you are offering. Make sure clients know if it is a general introduction or about 'using speech on an iPad for example' and that it is 'suitable for experienced users' or 'absolute beginners welcome'.
- **Accessibility:** Your marketing should be accessible to blind and partially sighted people. You could consider having braille, audio and large print versions of your printed material. If you need support with this contact: [www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/transcription-services](http://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/transcription-services)
- Also make use of RNIB platforms that could be used to tell our clients about your event. You should contact your local office who will be able to put you in touch with Connect groups of blind and partially sighted people in your area.
- **Bookings:** Large group events are best done by taking bookings. In this way your coordinator has a chance to talk to the trainee and make sure they understand the offer.
- **Lead Time:** Start advertising enough time in advance to assess if you have suitable interest to run the session, or if you need to plan more than one event. It can be valuable to call clients who have expressed an interest or booked to attend a week before, to make sure they are still planning to come.
- **Publicity:** A successful technology session or group event can be a great PR opportunity. You can use social media to share your own success story or invite local media to come along and see the work you are doing. Not all attendees will be comfortable with this so make sure to ask permission to take and share pictures – it's good practice to get that in writing. Your organisation may have a policy that you need to consider.

**See Appendix A** for a sample communications timeline to help you plan.



## Follow Up

Having completed a successful technology session or group event, there's still a bit more work to do to. In order to give your clients the best, most lasting experience, here are some further things you should consider:

- **Notes:** These should be written in advance and be ready to give out to your attendees when they're going home. Notes should be a reminder of the information that has been received with basic step by step guidance to refresh the client's memory. You can also add value by putting follow up tips and hints.
- **Permission to Recontact:** Make sure you get permission from your attendees to contact them again and invite them to attend future sessions or other events your organisation is planning. Under data protection rules you need to get explicit permission to contact people and cannot just assume their consent to do this.

Notes should be provided in the format that the client requires. The coordinator should ask at the time of booking about preferred formats, finding out about whether it's braille, audio or the required font size for print. It may be easier to email the notes directly to people.



## Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

We know how important it is to evaluate the impact of your work. Data you collect can be used to continuously improve your work and provide evidence that can then help in future funding bids. We also know how time-consuming evaluations can be.

A key document to use when considering any kind of impact measurement work is the Essential Digital Skills Framework which defines the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world. The Gov.UK website says that this framework has been designed to support providers, organisations and employers across the UK who offer training for adults to secure their essential digital skills.

The framework sets out 5 categories of essential digital skills for life and work:

- communicating
- handling information and content
- transacting
- problem solving
- being safe and legal online

This can be found online with the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework)

The Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations has produced a very useful Essential Digital Skills Framework Toolkit – this includes a helpful Checklist as to what impact areas you should aim to develop your evaluation work around: [scvo.org.uk/digital/participation/skills/scotlands-essential-digital-skills-toolkit/](https://scvo.org.uk/digital/participation/skills/scotlands-essential-digital-skills-toolkit/)

The more consistent you are with measuring impact, the more robust evidence you will have to demonstrate to funders about need.

Gathering, with consent, customer stories, quotes and testimonials around this work will really help celebrating success and possibly be useful in future funding bids.

Your local Technology for Life Coordinator can give you an example of a follow up call template you can use to get feedback and an example of a post event checklist.



## More Sources of Support

**There is a lot of information available online. Some useful resources to start with can be found here:**

**RNIB Technology for Life:** Here you can find a useful technology resource hub for access to the latest facts, tips and guides.

[www.rnib.org.uk/technology](http://www.rnib.org.uk/technology)

**Online Centres Network:** Brought together by Good Things Foundation, the Online Centres Network is made up of over 5,000 grassroots organisations, all working to tackle digital and social exclusion by providing people with the skills and confidence they need to access digital technology.

[www.onlinecentresnetwork.org](http://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org)

**One Digital:** One Digital is an exciting and unique Big Lottery funded collaborative digital inclusion programme developed by Age UK, Citizens Online, Clarion Futures, Digital Unite and SCVO. Here you'll find resources to support and develop digital inclusion projects.

[onedigitaluk.com](http://onedigitaluk.com)

**My Computer My Way:** This website was built to help people find out how to use the accessibility features on the devices they already own. It has lots of really helpful step by step user guides.

[mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/impairment/rnib-vision](http://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/impairment/rnib-vision)

**RNIB Helpline:** The RNIB Helpline is the gateway to access all RNIB services. This one number can put you in touch with your nearest Technology for Life Coordinator and connect you with a local RNIB Network Manager who can link you with their community connections.

Phone: **0303 123 9999**

# Appendix A: Sample Communications Timeline

## 8 weeks In advance

Send out invitations and/or post event listing describing the objectives of the event and what guests should expect to experience if they attend.

- Who will be leading the event?
- What skills should they anticipate learning?
- What should they bring to participate?
- Will there be food and drink served?
- Will there be time for them to socialise with their peers?

## 4 weeks in advance

Send a follow-up email to guests who haven't responded to remind them about the event.

- Reiterate how much fun it will be and what they will learn if they attend.
- Provide an RSVP deadline (including the deadline to provide accessibility and dietary requirements if applicable).

## 2 weeks in advance

Send a follow-up email to attendees with details for the day. Include:

- Timings – what time they should arrive, start and end times.
- Directions – driving or public transport based on what's applicable.
- Parking – proximity to the venue, any accessibility instructions.
- Contact number – for the organiser.
- Reminders – about what they need to bring, and providing accessibility and dietary requirements (if applicable).

## 1-3 days in advance

Send a one more email to attendees to generate excitement.

- Remind them of details – timings, directions, parking, number for primary contact and what they should bring.
- Emphasise how much they'll gain from attending!
- Ask them to come prepared for an icebreaker – i.e. bring one object that represents them, their funniest tech story, etc.
- Provide accessible formats of any documents that will be handed out on the day (if applicable).

# RNIB

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