

## Penfriend XL

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Penfriend XL is a comprehensive literacy aid which can boost confidence and increase reading and writing skills across a range of abilities and ages.

Penfriend XL contains a wealth of features to support learners with reading and writing difficulties, particularly those people with dyslexia or physical/sensory disabilities including visual impairment and motor difficulties.

It is also a powerful tool for those learning Foreign Languages (MFL) or English as a second language (ESI).

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## [Word Prediction](#)

Penfriend XL works with your word processor and accurately guesses the word you are typing. For example, when you have entered the first or second letter, when the word appears in the prediction window, one key press will finish the word for you. If you want it will offer you the next word as well.

Other features include:

- There are over 31 lexicons, currently covering 9 languages.
- Penfriend learns the words you use frequently and recently.
- Word prediction improves as you use it.
- Lexicons and personal preferences can be saved for each user.
- You can hover the mouse over the words in the prediction list and hear them spoken, and a simple click enters it.
- Helps users with mobility difficulties to increase text input and accuracy.
- The prediction window can be positioned anywhere on the screen, or if you prefer, follow the cursor.
- The prediction window can also be resized to allow for up to 1 – 12 word predictions or guesses.
- Window and font colours and sizes can all be adjusted and saved
- Abbreviation expansion for commonly used text or correcting spelling errors.
- Integrates with Clicker and SAW.
- Works in any word processor or email program.
- Very easy to use on a network

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## [Screen Reading](#)

Penfriend XL offers flexible screen reading which reads menus and dialogues on your desktop, text from your word processor or other applications and text from web pages.

For example:

- Option to have screen text read and highlighted automatically via the clipboard. Using a large font helps the visually impaired.
- Individual words, sentences or paragraphs can be spoken
- You can listen to text by hovering the mouse pointer over the specified text, great for users with trackerballs.
- Easy to use screen reading options to suit different users needs.
- Screen reads in many browsers, word processors or email programs.
- Screen reads pdf documents
- It works in most European languages if you have appropriate native voices
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## [Easy to edit Lexicons](#)

Penfriend XL is configurable to suit the preferences and needs of different users and it is easy for teachers and tutors to select preferences and add topic specific vocabulary.

A great new feature of Penfriend XL is the ability to quickly and easily select a new lexicon by 'dragging and dropping' existing lexicons into the prediction window.

You can also create 'empty' lexicons and add words one at a time, e.g., create a lexicon based around colours or animals for younger learners – great for word building!

For example:

- You can create topic lexicons for specific projects, topics and/or curriculum based subjects such as science, history, geography etc.
- You can easily save topic specific lexicons.
- Use existing lexicons by simply dragging and dropping the lexicon into the prediction window.
- Words can be banned, so Penfriend will not predict words a child should be able to spell, (or should not be using!)
- Spelling errors and their frequency can be tracked and analysed to assist with spelling strategies.
- Currently 34 lexicons in nine languages

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## [Spell Checking, Thesaurus and Dictionary](#)

The screen reader in Penfriend XL makes it possible to read and highlight alternative spellings, synonyms and dictionary meanings available in Microsoft Word. In any language which Word offers.

For example:

- Penfriend works seamlessly with Word's built-in spell checker and Thesaurus. Quickly find the word you want to look up by right clicking and Penfriend XL will read the options provided.
- Or select the 'Look Up' facility in Word's Task Pane and access the range of reference books including dictionaries, encyclopaedias, thesauruses and many more.
- Penfriend will read any word or phrase highlighted in Word's on-line dictionary – helping the learner to contextualise and understand word meanings.
- If you have appropriate voices you can access dictionaries in any of the languages Word offers.
- For the visually impaired enlarged text can be automatically transferred to the clipboard.

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## [On Screen Keyboards](#)

Penfriend XL also includes on-screen keyboards for several languages with accented and special characters.

They can be used without affecting the main keyboard of the computer. There are additional characters such as the € and @ which are accessed via the Alt key.

Features include:

- Provides keyboard access to users with a physical difficulty.
- Reduces the visual strain for dyslexics of glancing between keyboard and screen.
- Works well with a trackerball for users with motor difficulties.
- Special keyboards are available with SAW and Penfriend to enable switch scanning.
- Can be resized to meet individual preference and positioned anywhere on the screen – very accessible for users with upper limb and shoulder problems.
- Helps to simplify typing foreign languages on your computer.

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## [Modern Foreign Languages](#)

Penfriend XL can help anyone learning a foreign language or wanting to type their language in another country.

- Provides correct spelling in many languages
- Word prediction helps word choice.
- Can be used to read web pages and text in other languages helping the development of fluency.
- The on-screen keyboards make typing a foreign language much easier, without having to make any changes to the locale of the computer you are using.
- Provides a level playing field for those with additional needs wanting to learn MFL.

The Government aims to have every child at Key stage 2 learning another language by 2010. The language aids in Penfriend XL are an ideal tool to facilitate this MFL teaching for both those with additional needs and mainstream

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## [Making Reasonable Adjustments](#)

With the implementation of the Special Educational Needs Act 2001 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004 education authorities are obliged to make reasonable adjustments and meet the additional support needs of every person for whose education they are responsible.

With the range of accessible features in Penfriend it offers an all-inclusive learning support tool for struggling learners with literacy difficulties, dyslexia as well as physical and sensory disabilities.

Penfriend offers a range of customisable options, for example:

- Word prediction helps users with mobility and cognitive difficulties to increase text input and accuracy.
- Topic dictionaries can be easily created to cater for the most difficult subjects.
- Text in the prediction window, clipboard and on-screen keyboard can be resized to meet a range of visual needs.
- Screen reading support provides audio support and word recognition within different environments, eg, web pages and in any browser.
- Dwell and/or hover options allow Penfriend to be used alongside a range of alternative and adaptive keyboards and pointing devices, for example, trackerballs and Intellikeys keyboard.
- Users can choose from a range of colour backgrounds and font sizes.
- Word highlighting allows users to track words, sentences and paragraphs when screen reading.

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