# digital inclusion & older people

# Hints & Tips
## Encouraging older people to get the most out of digital stuff

## Why we wrote these tips

Digital inclusion is about ensuring that as many people as possible have access to, and skills to use, technology such as smartphones, tablets and computers, social media and the internet. This lets them participate in and benefit from the new technology, and then be more included in their communities.

We have been talking to older people across Scotland, to hear what they like about digital technologies and the concerns they have. We also asked them about what they liked about the training and other advice and help that was available and what was not so helpful.

This note has tips for older people on how to get the most from their smart phone, tablet, and computer and the internet.

There are also tips for people providing training or advice for older people on getting started and feeling included in the digital world.

They all come from the experience of other older people across Scotland and from examples of good practice.

Older people tend to use the new technologies less than younger people do and miss out of some of the benefits, such as keeping in touch with friends and family and getting savings on the items they buy.

We are all interested in different things and people use the internet and digital technologies for many different reasons and in many different ways. We also learn how to do things in different ways and at different times. There is not one single approach that will work for everyone.

These tips give you some ideas on what works well to encourage and help older people get online and use computers, tablets and smart phones.

"What is so good is that it makes your world so much bigger and sometimes when you're older it feels like your world is getting smaller - now it's changing."

"I like looking up things I'm interested in – getting away from the television. It passes your time, learning things. There are some great bargains and it's all delivered."

"I thought about it for a while and my family encouraged me – 'just give it a go' they said and got me a tablet for Christmas! Now I'm hooked."

# Benefits of digital inclusion

The first tip is to think about how someone can benefit from using digital stuff.

The internet and new digital equipment can be used for many different purposes. These are reasons why the older people we met are using digital technology:

- Keeping in touch with people.
- Buying items like food, clothes and books.
- Buying services such as insurance and gas and electricity.
- Managing our money though online banking and savings.
- Finding out about places.
- Knowing what is going on in your community and in other places you know.
- Looking at maps to plot walks.
- Checking driving routes before leaving home.
- Checking timetables for trains and buses.
- Playing games such as scrabble and chess.
- Looking for music for a singing group.
- Finding out about family history.
- Listening to music and radio.
- Watching television and films.
- Pursuing hobbies and interests and connecting with people who share your interests.

"It's the future, everything is online now and I didn't want to miss out."

"Older people should be encouraged. It (internet) is something that is coming into use for everyone."

"It's good for my fingers – I've got arthritis so I like to keep my hands and fingers moving. I do some knitting and I have my laptop for typing and keeping in touch with everyone."

Most people had one main reason why they started using these technologies. For many people it was to keep in touch with family and friends who lived a distance away. Other people wanted to reduce their costs and make their money go further, or find a way to make life easier for themselves.

"One of the key benefits is the financial savings you can make for things like buying insurance, gas and electricity, savings accounts and borrowing rates. There is also often far more choice available to you online than in shops or the more traditional ways of banking and getting insurance."

"I have family in Canada and I wanted to be able to talk to them and see them. I had heard that Skype was easy to use and free."

"I wanted to get my shopping delivered, all the boring heavy things and then I could save my energy for going out and meeting people and doing fun things."

"I realised that my sister knew more about what my children and their families were doing because she was on Facebook, and was following their holidays and knew about their new hobbies and activities. I decided I wanted to be part of it too."

"I wanted to have email so I could keep in contact with old friends. It's just like writing letters, but this way you get a quicker response and the delivery is instant. I thought about Skype but I like to think about what I want to say and this way I can reply when I'm ready and not just when someone wants to talk to me."

"I was organising a day trip for the group I belong too. I was trying to work out how long it would take us to get there. A friend told me about route finders and google maps and then trip advisor. It's so much easier to organise things this way. I then email everyone the details and the tickets before we go and that way we are all responsible and everyone has all the information."

"I have a tablet, at first I wasn't sure what I would use it for but then a friend showed me how to play scrabble with people over the internet. It's brilliant. I live on my own so don't have anyone to play with regularly. But this way I can always find someone to play with, and with people playing in different time zones it doesn't matter what time of day it is."

"I thought it wasn't for me and couldn't see what all the fuss was about. I like to be out and about doing things, walking and gardening, not sat in front of a computer. But my friend showed me the online plant and seed catalogues and I spent the winter months planning and organising my garden and ordering things online. Everything was delivered to the house and was so much easier than before!"

Once people had started using the internet they then found many more opportunities and benefits from it.

People described how they used the technology to build on activities and interests they already had. It was about fitting it into their lives rather than doing something entirely new.

"I like walking and used to plan my routes with paper maps. Now I explore places online first. I still use and buy paper maps but just the ones I need."

"Like many people I find it difficult to drive to new places. But it's a bit easier now with route finders and google maps. I check the route first and write down the roads I need."

"My daughter got me a fitbit to record how many steps I take a day. She has an office job so I sometimes walk further than her! It gives us something to talk about."

"I belong to a choir - just for fun. I like to listen to the songs so I know what it should sound like."

"I found buying travel tickets a bit tricky at first. But now I have all my tickets sorted before I leave home. It definitely means less standing and queuing and I often get some good deals."

"The staff at my local library showed me how to look things up on the census. Family history is now one of my winter projects."

"My family live all over the place. So I learnt how to use skype to talk to them. It feels very space age but it does work and it's great to see them and not just hear their voice. I also look at Facebook because then I can see what everyone has been doing and then I have things I can ask them about."

"I really enjoy playing games but when you live in your own you don't have anyone to play with. I went to a drop in IT session and they looked up some websites for me. Now I play most days - I think it's good for my memory and it gives me a challenge."

"I like some background noise at home but sometimes get fed up with the radio. But now I have discovered music on YouTube I'm sorted and it's all free too."

"I like the football forums. There is a build up towards each match with people speculating and more and comments and then afterwards every move is dissected. You get to recognise some people and it feels like a community. It reminds me a bit of going to the pub to watch matches when I was younger."

# Some things that put people off

People talked about what had discouraged them from using digital technologies. Most people who were using equipment had found a way of dealing with these problems. But other people still had these concerns.

- Getting it all set up – sorting out the broadband connection and getting the right equipment.
- The time it would take to learn new things and then remembering how to do it.
- Knowing where and who to ask for help and support without it being a bother.
- The technical terms and language - the words are new and different and can make people feel excluded.

- The costs associated with the broadband connection and buying and maintaining the equipment.
- Safety online - keeping safe and not losing money.

Most of the people we met thought that other older people would be worried about these things that were significant barriers to people being included.

"My son sorted it out for me but I don't understand how it works so when it goes wrong I have to wait for him to come round and sort it out. Sometimes it's something really simple and if I had known I could have done it myself."

"I have a few friends now who I can ask about all this stuff. We met doing a basic IT course and now share what we have learnt. I have also made friends locally with a small computer shop. They help me out."

"I manage well with my tablet and can switch the broadband on and off but I did need my daughter to set it all up for me. Having said that I also needed someone to set the TV up as well so I don't feel bad about it. I can use the things once they are set up for me. I'm happy with that."

"I was worried about getting viruses and my money disappearing but I went to a drop in session in my village. They said start slowly by using the internet to check things out first and then perhaps have one credit card that you use for buying things and that way you are protected."

"My son got me a tablet for Christmas but I'm not sure what I'm meant to use it for"

"I didn't want to spend loads of time on lessons or a course. I just wanted to read the news online so just wanted to know my way around a few websites I would find interesting."

# Experiences of learning about computers and other digital technology

Older people told us about the help they had to get started. They also described their experiences and what had been helpful and not so helpful.

## Where to go
People used a range of sources of help:
- Asking family and friends for their experience and suggestions.
- Classes or support groups aimed at older people.
- More general classes for anyone wanting to learn about computers.
- Informal drop-in sessions to help people with any new technologies, including mobile phones.
- People coming to your house and teaching you on your own computer or tablet.
- Sessions at groups and services older people were using already – another form of the support coming to you.
- Inter-generational projects where young people showed older people how to use digital equipment.
- Help from staff in the local library.
- Checking out some websites that show people how to use the internet and equipment.

## Stages of the process
Setting everything up: most people want some help with this. It is complicated knowing what provider to use for your broadband connection and then setting up the router. And then there is the decision about whether to have a computer, laptop or tablet.

Learning the new skills: most people need some help to learn and practice more.

On-going support is important as most people get stuck at some point. It is also good as people get more confident and now want to try something new.

## What works well?

Many people found that learning as a group of people can be very helpful. They all learned together and could share the experience and later help each other.

There were mixed views about the courses that were fairly general and tried to give people a basic introduction to a range of computer uses and programmes, such as word processing, spread sheets and email. Most people preferred learning that focussed on the specific things they wanted to do, especially at the beginning.

Many people who used informal drop-in sessions told us they liked this approach. It appeared to work best when people already had a bit of knowledge and had their own equipment to practise on.

People coming to your home or group had been very successful. It was especially convenient for people who lived in sheltered housing and care homes and for other people who had disabilities or other sorts of higher support needs.

The most helpful forms of support on practicing skills and learning new skills were those that were very flexible and adapted to the pace and situation of each person.

It also helped when people could focus on small bits at a time. Some courses aimed for a wider group of people with sessions that lasted several hours were too much to take in. Just concentrating on one activity at a time helped people too. It kept it simple and encouraged success that can be built upon.

People found that getting written instructions made a difference for every form of training and support. Having a short simple guide for key activities is very useful for most people. It is something they can refer back to and use for their own practise outside of any lessons or support sessions.

The form of the notes for people to refer to later had been a problem for some people. Difficulties included small type, notes that were mostly screen shots of the computer or smart phone, and technical language with no explanations. Positive examples included notes that were written for each person by a scribe when tutors/helpers worked in pairs, audio recordings as well as written notes for people who wanted that, and clear and accessible notes.

Everyone welcomed the opportunity to practise on their own and using their own tablet or laptop or phone.

"We have a local support group that meets weekly and you can just drop by for a coffee and a chat. It's also useful because sometimes you have just forgotten one simple step. All you need is a reminder and you are on your way again."

"Using my own tablet has really helped. I also like the support I have had with help in my own home too. It's was much more relaxing and I think I learnt more."

"Inviting people to your group is one way to share skills and learning and you can also support each other too."

"Learning a new skill is often about repetition at first. If you get the first steps right then you are off and can do things by yourself. But those first few steps took me a while to get right!"

"Support and classes that let you go to the loo as often as you need to, and have breaks to let you pause and catch up with yourself."

"It helps when young people understand that they are teaching someone to learn something, not doing it for them. We've had some teenagers who just whizz through it in a flash, and others who were very good at going at each person's pace and got on well with us."

"We need people who are good at helping us learn, not good technical experts."

**Example •** A sheltered housing provider was thinking of installing Wi-Fi in the communal areas of a sheltered scheme. They thought this would encourage people to access the internet more, as well as making it more sociable and fun, with people sharing the things they were doing. They also asked the residents what they would like to see happen too. The residents liked the idea of Wi-Fi in the communal rooms but said that they also wanted it in their own rooms too because it would give them greater flexibility and would be used more.

"I knew that if I had Wi-Fi in my rooms, when my family visited they would use it too. My grandchildren are very impressed that I have Wi-Fi and they can use it very easily."

"Once you start using the new technology you can see how and where you would use it in other places. I like the idea of having Wi-Fi in the communal rooms but I also wanted to use it in my flat too. So much easier and less hassle."

"I sometimes use Skype to talk to my family. I didn't want to have those conversations in the communal areas and I don't think anyone else wanted me to either!"

**Example •** A worker at a daytime group for older people got some members beside her when she looked up recipes for them on the internet. That led on to people helping her order food shopping for the group's lunches online.

That led to people getting their own email accounts and doing their food shopping themselves.

A few women wanted to order dress materials so they checked out websites and did that together.

That led to some people getting into sites with pictures of old fashion collections and reminiscing about dress styles they had worn over the years.

A few people then got into looking up family history, this time on their own with support from the local library.

By this point some people had got their own tablets and were using them at the group and showing other people what they were doing.

# Top Tips

## Tips on getting started

Having a reason to get started, to go online and use the internet is very important. It's a tricky one because if you have never used the internet or a computer it can be very hard to see the benefits or reason why you should.

- Look at the list in this note – are there ways other people are using digital stuff that could be useful for you?
- Ask friends what they use the internet for.
- Think about what is going on in your life. Are there some things where life could be easier, such as keeping in touch with people or getting the shopping delivered to you? Than ask about how the internet could help you with that.

Once you know why you want to do this, it is easier to think about what equipment will be most convenient for you.
- Do you want something that is small and easy to take with you?
- Do you want a big screen?

It is easier to learn with other people, so look for a group of people doing it and helping each other. Or you can have 1 or 2 people who are your digital pals.

If you want to start with a class or similar activity:
- Check who the class is aimed at. If it is for younger people using computers at work, this may not be as helpful for you. If it was designed to help older people get started, this is likely to work well.
- Find out from other older people in your area what they have found helpful.

## Tips for reducing the costs

Most libraries give free access to the internet. They can also be a good place to learn.

Some services that are used by older people are getting in equipment and internet connections, to make it easier and cheaper for people when they use it there.

Groups may be able to buy equipment and get a discount for larger orders.

Look for equipment that is not the very latest model.
- Friends and family may have older models that they can let you try when they are getting something new.
- There are places that sell second hand equipment that has been reconditioned.
- The price of new equipment often comes down when a new model comes out. It may not have as many new features, but that may be ok for you – it is something that you can check out.
- After several years it will be more difficult to get technical support for old models but people usually have plenty of notice.

## Tips for keeping safe

Be careful with your personal information.
- Avoid giving details of your full name, address, phone numbers, especially in social media like Facebook or internet forums.
- Don't give too much personal information about location, address and names of friends and family on social media and internet forums.
- Never give out personal details to online friends you do not know offline and in real life.
- Do not share other people's personal information.
- Do not share passwords, user names, account numbers and passwords or your bank PINs with anyone.

It can useful when learning how to do new things, like on-line shopping or buying tickets, to have other people around you to help you and check over things.

The main message it to be sensible and use the precautions you would use in ordinary life when meeting new people or buying things.

## Tips for groups and services in touch with older people

Think about ways to build in digital activities as part of what you are all doing already.

Talk to people about the benefits of digital technologies and how you and other people use them to make life easier.

Also talk about people's worries. Then find ways to address these concerns.

Organise sessions where people can learn about new technology. Have frequent top-up sessions, where anyone can come along for advice or a refresher.

People can help each other learn and become more confident around the technology, such as computer buddies, or sessions on how to cope with new mobile phones.

Have safe ways for people to be part of the group through social media, such as a closed Facebook page. This also helps people learn about how to keep themselves safe.

## Tips for people providing support and learning for older people

Start with why people want to use digital technologies – what they want to achieve and what will make their lives easier.

Ask people what will work for them.
- Everyone is different and learns in different ways and at different speeds.
- Sometimes older people need to take more breaks for health-related reasons.
- People may need different ways of recording what they are being shown.

Also keep asking people because things change.
- A different group or combination of people may want different things and have different experiences.
- There are new technologies and ideas that make things easier that you can bring in to what you do.

Look at ways for older people to be part of designing and leading the learning. Share your experience on what works well for older people and be open to ideas from other people and organisations.

# Finally

The people who helped us develop these tips found that that using the digital technologies and the internet had improved their lives, making some things easier and giving alternative ways to do things.

"I now feel part of things, the world has opened up a bit more."

"There is just so much stuff on the internet and I keep learning more - its keeping my mind active."

"It opens the world so you don't feel so isolated."

# Some websites that offer help are

Living it Up is a website encouraging people to look after their wellbeing and get more out of life. It encourages people to connect to the virtual community for support and ideas. It offers support and guides on how to uses digital technology to improve health and wellbeing.
https://portal.livingitup.org.uk

Let's get on is a website to encourage and support people to develop online skills, or help friends and family to take that first step.
http://www.letsgeton.sco

Gransnet is an online forum where older people can meet and talk to like-minded people about issues that matter to or interest them.
http://www.gransnet.com/forums

Age UK has information to help people use the internet safely.
http://www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/technology-and-internet/making-the-most-of-the-internet/getting-started/

Learn my way has information and short courses to help people get started using the internet safely and specific courses on how to use online banking, how to buy things and how to use social media.
http://www.learnmyway.com/subjects/online-plus

The memory box network is a way for people to create, store and share digital memories and reminiscences, such as films, photos, stories and pictures. It is used by lots of people, but families and carers looking after people with dementia say they find it a huge bonus in helping people reminisce about earlier times in their lives.
http://memoryboxnetwork.org

# Contact and thanks

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Outside the Box
Unit F23
150 Brand Street
Glasgow
G51 1DH
www.otbds.org
admin@otbds.org