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32 Tips and tricks for helping people with digital skills

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We've been chatting with lots of our Digital Champions about how they provide digital skills support - whether that's remotely or face-to-face.

Here is a quick-fire round-up of some of the top tricks and tips...

1. **Take. It. Slowly**.

2. **Talk their language**. If it's a 'pointer' rather than a Cursor or a 'button' rather than a Computer Key, let it be so.

3. Break the task down into **distinct steps**, however simple. It will help you and your learner feel like you're making progress. And progress is a wonderful thing.

4. Taking notes aids memory and understanding. Give your learner time to **write stuff down**.

5. Go easy on yourself, **this is hard**.

6. It's about **small steps, not giant leaps**. Teaching online shopping? Start with browsing a supermarket website and writing a shopping list a neighbour could use. Leave the online transaction for another time.

7. Email is great but save it for afterwards for sending links, questions, guides etc, don't do it as you go along - so you can **keep the learning flow, man**.

8. **Location matters** so make sure you're both somewhere where you'll not be disturbed.

9. **Don't try to do too much** in one go. The average adult attention span is 15-20 minutes.

10. Not every detail is important when describing an online thingy. So leave some out. You just need to **get the main point across**.

11. If you're doing it remotely, try and use the same browser/device as the learner so you can **see what they see**.

12. **Focus and listen**. If you're online, less visual clues mean it's easy to miss when someone's got confused or panicked by your instructions.

13. **Zoom, Facetime or Skype?** Zoom seems to be the popular choice but experiment and see what works best for your learner.

14. **Don't underestimate the telephone.** 81% of remote Digital Champions are giving their help this way.

15. Wherever you are, allow time to sit back and **let your learner practice** on their own. It will help them remember what you've said.

16. **Need kit?** These guys might be able to help: FutureDotNow and Wavelength.

17. **Need connectivity?** Lots of internet companies have removed data caps, and some, like BT Home Essentials, offer low cost phone and broadband packages.

18. **Create your own demo**. Some devices and programmes like Macs and Windows 10 have built-in screen recording.

19. The top three things people want help with right now are using **video tools, online boredom busters and using email**.

20. **Use a Voice Recorder** for 'How to Do' instructions and email it as an MP4 file.

21. **Take screen shots.** You could send these separately e.g. via WhatsApp.

22. If the **internet's dodgy** make sure you and your learner are sitting as close to the router as possible.

23. If the **internet's still dodgy**, use the ethernet cable and/or reset, otherwise known as the classic turn on and off again approach. Our guide might help too.

24. **Make it fun**. Help them play online scrabble, take virtual tours, plan a holiday, learn the ukulele.

25. Pause a little and **listen to their fears**. What aspects of digital technology can help ease their personal concerns?

26. **You don't have to have all of the answers.** No one does. It's fine to say you don't know and go and find out more. Or you can refer to a digital helpline, [like AbilityNet](#) that's manned by expert tutors? 0800 048 7642.

27. **Be encouraging**, even if someone is doing it wrong, over and over, and over again. Encouragement gives hope.

28. Print a couple of our [how-to guides](#) for your learners. We've got hundreds, literally hundreds, of them.

29. **Talk about scams**. There's some [great advice here](#). And you can report suspicious activity to the National Cyber Security Centre via [report@phishing.gov.uk](#).

30. **Further your knowledge and skills** with our [free technology guides](#).

31. Or try our [free course](#) on helping learners stay safe online.

32. **Remember, we are all learning.**

If you like this advice, we've got more:

- [Check out our guides on providing digital skills help remotely](#).

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Next steps

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