

# Helping dyslexic students overcome barriers to writing

Victoria Crivelli was a specialist Dyslexia teacher for over 30 years, with a particular interest in harnessing the power of technology to help overcome barriers to learning. She is still active in the voluntary sector with her local Dyslexia Association, and a current member of the British Dyslexia Association New Technologies Committee.

In this paper, Victoria identifies a range of common problems dyslexic young people often face when undertaking writing tasks and explores how DocsPlus, an award-winning secondary school writing tool, can help.



Victoria Crivelli

# Levelling the playing field

Many dyslexics use and rely on Assistive Technology to help overcome their barriers to writing, including planning, editing, spelling and creating quality written information.

Technology can level the playing field, create an independent environment and help reflect their true ability - rather than what they can recall and spell of their original idea. DocsPlus has an impressive range of tools, options and free resources to offer dyslexics and resolve many of their challenges in producing quality written documents. Better still, they do not need to worry about remembering where to find / how to organise the tools, resources and options they need as they are - reassuringly - all in one place.



# How can DocsPlus help?

Let's take a look at some of the most common problems dyslexic learners face when undertaking written tasks, and the solutions and scaffolding DocsPlus can provide.



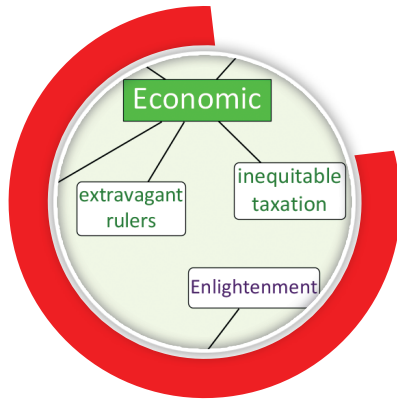
Problem – recalling thoughts and ideas.



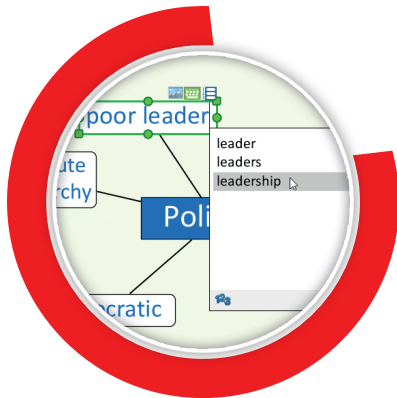
Solution – audio recording tool to capture ideas and thoughts instantly.



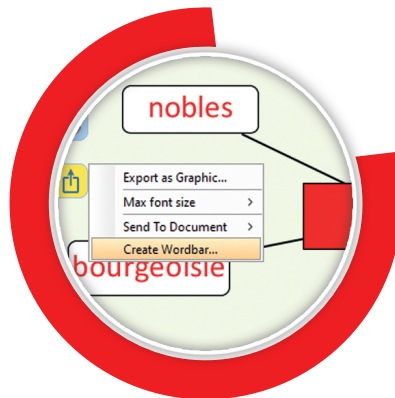
# How can DocsPlus help?



Problem – planning written tasks



Solution – integral mind mapping facility (WorkSpace), complete with audio recording, prediction tools and Wordbars. Mind maps can be exported directly into current documents in graphic or linear form, and any text used can be put in a new Wordbar if required.



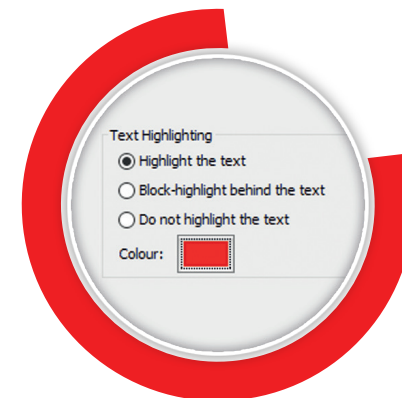
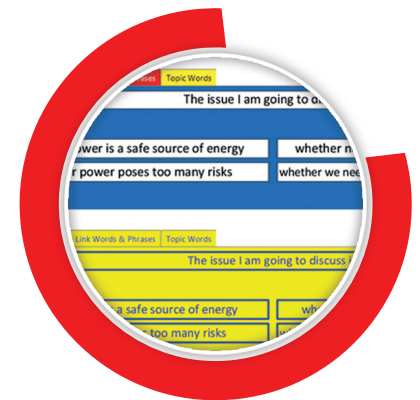
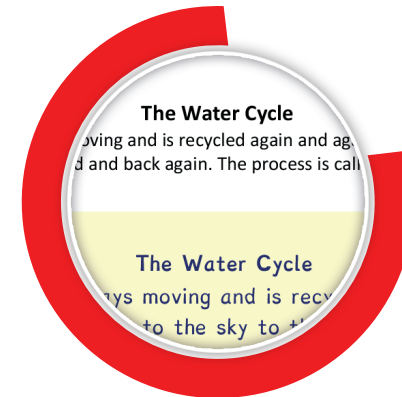
# How can DocsPlus help?



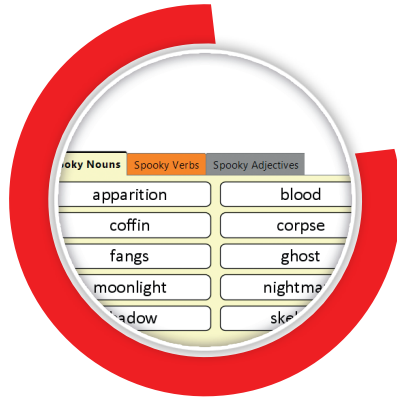
Problem – visual stress of reading text onscreen



Solution – options to change colour background, font style (including Dyslexia friendly font) and highlighting text as it is spoken.



# How can DocsPlus help?



Problem – spelling words and technical vocabulary; not being limited by just using ‘known’ spellings



Solution 1 – onscreen Wordbars to support technical, subject and complex vocabulary and phrases.



Solution 2 – intelligent prediction using flexi spelling - spell it as sounds e.g. ‘sico’ will predict ‘psychology’. This feature can also predict additional or technical vocabulary from any Wordbar open and /or hidden.



Solution 3 – talking spell checker that enables students to make informed choices.

# How can DocsPlus help?



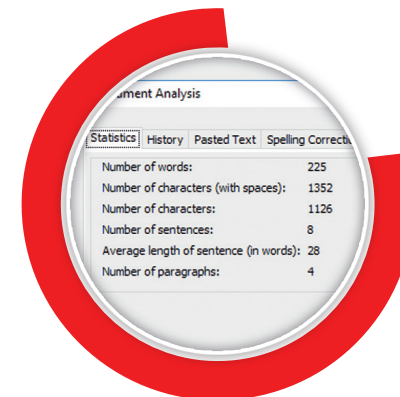
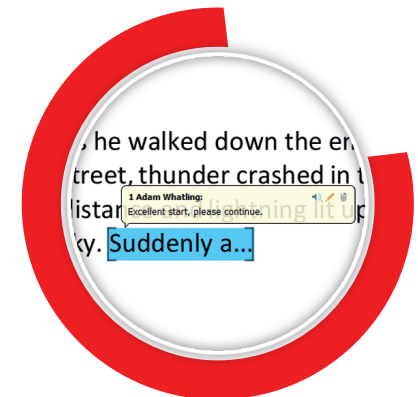
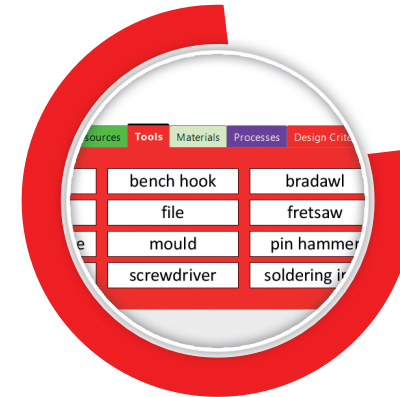
Problem – improving quality of writing



Solution 1 – free, ready-made curriculum word banks and writing frames with useful vocabulary, sentence starters and structure support. These can be edited or teachers can create their own resources very quickly and easily.

Solution 2 – discreet written text notes can be inserted to prompt, comment or give positive feedback. This feature has an audio option if the writer cannot read the note independently.

Solution 3 – analytical data is automatically collected from documents and can be used to inform feedback and illustrate progress.



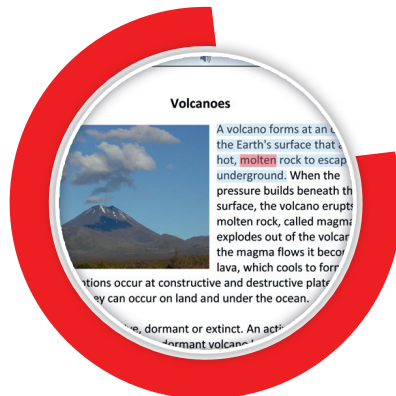
# How can DocsPlus help?



Problem – reading, processing and understanding information



Solution 1 – the talking word processor will read any text (word, phrase or paragraph) written or pasted into the document, in a choice of voices and speed, highlighting the text as it is spoken - making it easy to follow.



Solution 2 – integrated 'DocReader' that will read aloud any PDF or Word document, providing equal access to worksheets, exam papers and more.

# How can DocsPlus help?

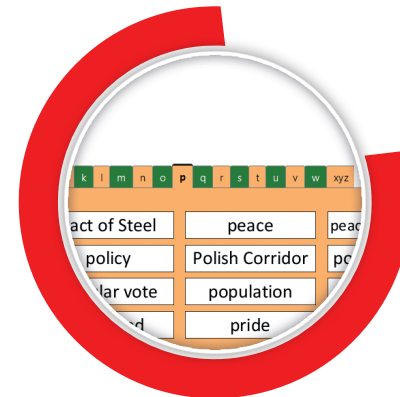
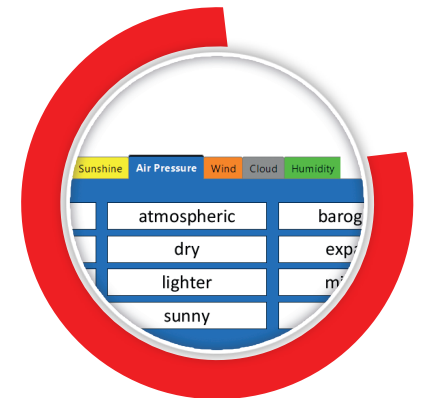
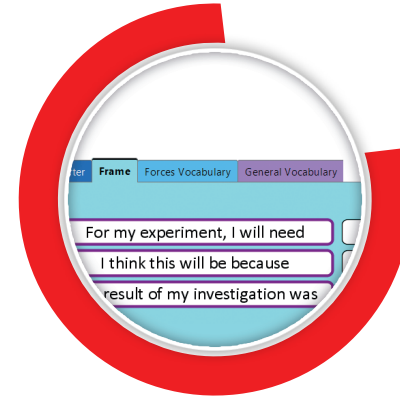


Problem – availability of accessible subject resources



Solution 1 – hundreds of free Wordbars and resources to cover the curriculum and beyond - all editable if required.

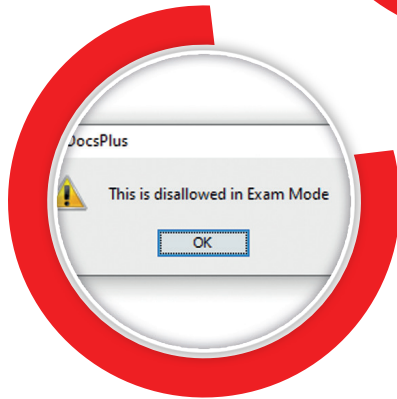
Solution 2 – simple and quick ways to create personalised Wordbars with any list of vocabulary or copied and pasted text; common words can be removed at a key stroke, leaving only essential vocabulary.



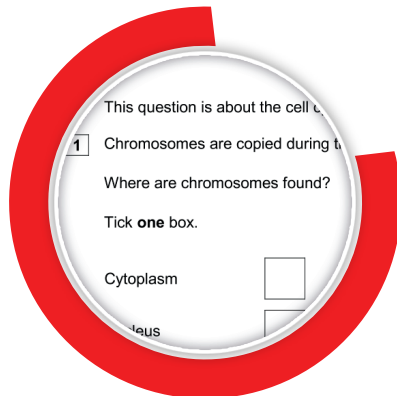
# How can DocsPlus help?



Problem – participating independently in exams



Solution – a built-in Exam Mode that can switch off specific tools and easily be adapted to meet assessment criteria.



# DocsPlus

In summary, DocsPlus is a collection of very useful tools, conveniently packaged in one program - ideal for many who need support in writing tasks, but especially those with dyslexia. They can select the features to suit their needs and personalise their approach to any writing project.

You can find out more about DocsPlus, including licensing options, case studies, and how to book a free demonstration, by visiting [www.cricksoft.com/DocsPlus](http://www.cricksoft.com/DocsPlus).

