



Making best use of tools, apps, and tech

for disabled people and disabled-led organisations





Tools, Apps & Tech

for disabled creatives and disabled-led organisations

There's a wealth of technology out there and lots of different tools that are promising to make your life easier as a disabled creative - but which ones should you pick? Whether you're a new freelancer, established and fully booked, or building an organisation, using the right tools can be vital for your success. For neurodivergent people, staying on top of the admin can be a barrier, whereas, for others, the barrier might be juggling numbers or entering text.

Within the CRIPTic team, we have many people with different neurotypes and access needs. We have slowly built a tech stack that allows people to stay on top of, track, and manage their load. These tools are useful both during the CRIPTic work and in the work many of us carry out in our freelance careers.

Reflecting on our own experience as individuals and organisationally, we've put together a short guide to some tools, apps, and tech that actually work for us as disabled people. We've looked for things that are free - as well as paid - and tried to look for charity and student discounts.

Hopefully you'll find this useful

Time Tracking & Management

For creatives in any field, finding the time to get things done is a huge task in itself - particularly when you're juggling multiple projects or freelancing. Not only do you need to know how long work takes for invoicing, you also need to find time to meet with people and predict how long a new project will take.

Neurodivergent people and people whose ability to work on a given day is unpredictable can often struggle with calculating how long work took or will take. This affects planning and budgeting. Calendar organisation can also become a mysterious black hole (or at least that's our Artistic Director, Jamie's experience).



Time Tools

1 Track how long each project takes
Toggl Track draws from your calendar and allows you to set timers for projects, tracking how long the work took you.

Timebro records how much time you spent in each programme, browser window, or table and allows you to assign that to projects

2 Schedule meetings efficiently
Doodle allows you to send polls around a group of people and is ideal for collecting availability for a group meeting date that works for as many people as possible.

Calendly allows you to set up a link people can click to find your availability and book a meeting from a range of slots you've offered them - saving lots of time and back and forth emails. Some tools are reserved for paying users.

3 Keep track of your calendar
This also has the option to send a meeting booking link, and the full calendar is fluid and easy to share with the people you're working with. You can block out focus time or time you're away from your computer, and set up meetings from it - though some tools are reserved for paying users.



Social Media Management

01 **PUBLER**
Schedule social media across lots of workspaces, tracking analytics. Alt-text for posts, except on Instagram. A good place to get started given that it's got a free tier

02 **SKED SOCIAL**
Apparently the only social media scheduler with built-in alt-text for Instagram, this looks promising, but is pretty costly with no free tier

03 **HOOTSUITE**
Another scheduler that isn't cheap, but is very fully-featured and has a good reputation for analytics. If you're keen to study what's working for you on social media and up your game, this might be a strong place to look.

04 **CANVA**
As well as writing great content for social media, it's important to keep it looking good. Canva is free for non-profits on the pro-tier, which we've found very useful for holding our brand kit and creating content.



Most creatives find that an active social media presence boosts their visibility and creates opportunities. Thankfully, there are now many tools to keep this process efficient - without cutting into your workday too much.

By using a scheduler, you can create content at a time that works for you, instead of constantly being distracted by the need to check in on social media (though you will need to respond to engagement from time to time. And if you're not a design person, tools like Canva can take a lot of the load off you, and make that easier.

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Remember that the content you create needs to be accessible. Make sure you've got image descriptions written for every picture you post, and that all your videos are captioned. There are lots of excellent resources on both captioning and image description,



Project Management



As you take on work, you're going to need to stay on top of everything you're doing. For some people, a pen and paper are the right tools, or a nice spreadsheet containing a Gantt Chart. However, if you're juggling lots of things you need to stay on top of, you might want to move to more robust project management software.

Many of these offer a limited free tier, which may well meet your needs if you're working alone, but if you're part of a team, the costs can mount up. There are simpler tools out there like Toggl and Trello, and more complex ones like Asana and Monday.

If you live in a sea of chaos, having your projects neatly tracked makes it a lot easier to get work done and hit deadlines, without the constant panic that something has been forgotten.

Toggl

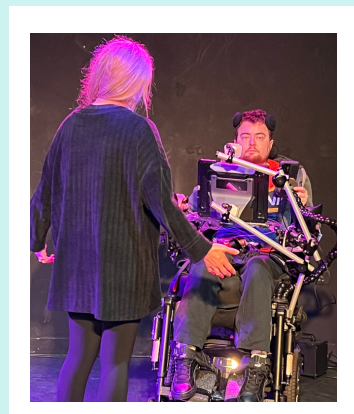
Especially if you're using Toggl for time tracking anyway, it's also good for basic project planning, especially when it comes to timelines and laying out task cards, though it isn't good with automation, dependencies and the more complex projects and tasks with multiple stakeholders.

Trello

More project-centred than Toggl and easier for teams to use. Particularly good in laying out and shifting cards and tasks, and better for teams than a tool like Toggl, with more features and automations, but not as in-depth as Monday or Asana.

Project Management:

What tools are out there for you if you need something more in-depth to manage your projects?



Asana & Monday

As you grow your practice or potentially move from being an individual to an organisation, you may need something capable of managing more complex projects and teams. Unfortunately, funders and society are big believers in 'clock time' and getting things done in specific ways for specific deadlines, but there are tools that can make life easier for you in keeping track of everything and not dropping the ball on your projects.

Tool	Asana	Monday
Pricing	Has a usable free plan and significant non-profit discounts	No usable free plan but significant non-profit discounts
Getting started	Templates for lots of different projects, but limited support available.	Templates for lots of projects, as well as paid areas e.g. their CRM. 24/7 support
Task and Workflow Management	Very good at tracking individual tasks and bigger projects with lots of moving parts, but annoyingly only lets you assign one person per task. Lots of automations on paid plans. Lots of ways of viewing tasks and projects.	Fewer automations and working in a less granular manner, but very good project views. Easy to get an overall workflow and birds-eye-view of what you're doing. Even emails can be run entirely through Monday if people prefer.
Integrations	A range of integrations with other tools which are free to use on all plans, making it easy to connect with documents etc	Integrations with a range of other platforms which are deeper than Asana, but not available on free plans, and limited on low-cost plans.

Managing Finances

Both as a freelancer and if you're running an organisation, you're going to need to stay on top of your finances. As a freelancer, the better you keep track of the money you spend, the easier it will be to do your taxes. If you're running an organisation, you're going to need to both keep track of income and outgoings but also correctly record what you're spending on a per-project basis, so you can report to funders correctly. If you struggle with numbers and spreadsheets, using a simple, streamlined tool will make your life easier.

Freelancers

Sage Start

- Create and send invoices
- Attach to your bank accounts to let you sort transactions
- Keep track of what you're owed
- Be ready for tax time

£14
Per month

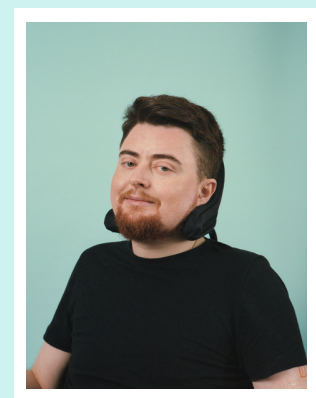
Quickbooks Self-Employed

- Create and send invoices
- Attach to your bank account to let you categorise your expenses as you spend money
- Keep track of the money you're owed
- Store invoices and receipts ready for tax time

£9.60
Per month

Starting to use Quickbooks Self-Employed has revolutionised how I manage my income and taxes. Once or twice a week I categorise every spend as personal or business, attach images of my receipts (which I just email to Quickbooks and they appear on my system), and predict what I'll owe HMRC. It's even able to track my work mileage for me

-Jamie Hale



Organisational Finances

If you're building an organisation, the more money it starts to handle, the more important it is to have your banking organised, sorted, and confident. Whilst a spreadsheet can take you a long way, eventually you'll need to use some kind of online financial system that is able to track expenses across multiple projects and budgets, store receipts, and help with cashflow predictions and reporting.

These tools can get expensive and are quite similar to one another, with Sage offering tools for businesses that go beyond accountancy and into HR, management, and payroll. Quickbooks also offers business accounting software with payroll, invoicing, and automatic bank connections. We haven't used either of these, we use Zoho to manage our finances and BrightPay to manage our payroll.

Zoho is a very in-depth piece of software that allows us to track spending on various projects quickly and efficiently, making it far easier to report to funders. The learning curve was steep but it is excellent to use. BrightPay is far simpler to use and helps you run payroll and ensure that you're paying tax and NIC as appropriate.

Zoho Books

- Create and send invoices
- Attach to your bank accounts
- Sort and tag transactions by type, funder, project, restriction etc as required, including some automatic sorting
- Produce annual accounts
- Input and produce budgets, track spending against budget categories, and produce reports
- Track accounts, types of expenditure etc
- Visualise spend broken down by category

£300
Per year

BrightPay

- Run Payroll every month and produce payslips for all employees
- Calculate contributions due from employer to HMRC and NEST
- Keep everyone's tax codes etc up to date
- Track holiday and sickness on inbuilt calendar

£139
Per year,
plus £0.60
per employee
per month

Writing Text

In the modern world, email is vital, and people are frequently judged on spelling, grammar, and sentence structure- heavily disadvantaging many disabled people. For some people retaining their own approach to spelling and grammar is a vital part of their identity, while for others, they'd rather fit in. If you're struggling to enter text, there are lots of tools out there that might help you

DICTATION:

- ✓ Available, free and inbuilt across major operating systems
- ✓ Can be done in any text window
- ✓ Services like Sri, Cortana, and Google Voice Typing are now very high quality, though they still struggle with accents they haven't been trained on
- ✓ Higher-end dictation (e.g. Dragon Dictation) can be costly but is excellent

ON-SCREEN KEYBOARDS

- ✓ Available, free and inbuilt across major operating systems
- ✓ Can be done in any text window
- ✓ You can use your mobile phone as a keyboard, with apps including Remote Mouse for Windows/Android or Mobile Mouse Remote for Apple.
- ✓ Shortkey lets you create shortcodes to enter long blocks of text with a few key-presses
- ✓ Programmes like Lightkey offer auto-correct but far more thorough and helpful
- ✓ Dasher is a keyboard alternative controlled by mouse or switch, but very different to any other input method
- ✓ Switch and eyegaze keyboards are made by companies including Tobii Dynavox and Smartbox

If you struggle with 'accurate' spelling and grammar and want to change that, most browsers have some form of built-in spell checker. However, if that's not enough for you, tools like Grammarly are designed to run both in your browser and in Microsoft Office, reading your work and making suggestions for improving the grammar. They can be particularly useful if you're dictating work but want it to read as if it was written, not as if it was spoken.

Hosting Online Meetings

01 **ZOOM**
We use this for anything outward facing - lots of features allowing you to integrate human and auto-captions, pin (and multi-pin) interpreters, and is something that many people are familiar with.

02 **GOOGLE MEET**
We use this for everything internal because it fits into Google Workspace effectively, with good auto-captions, simple integrations with tools such as Tactiq.

03 **TEAMS**
Not our favourite. Teams also has auto-captions and similar breakout features etc to Zoom. It's very embedded within the Microsoft suite, and if you're using that then it may be more effective, but we've heard from deaf signers that it's not as good as other platforms.

04 **TRANSCRIPTION**
Paid apps, including Rev.Com, Otter.AI and Tactiq are excellent for producing autocaptions and/or transcripts, depending on the tool.



So many meetings take place online now - and while that's more accessible for some, it's less accessible for others. For hard of hearing people, online may be more challenging than offline, and for deaf BSL signers, ensuring the right structure and speed for interpreters is vital.

Here are some of the key pieces of software used for online meetings. They all have autocaption features built in, but each of the pieces of software has advantages and disadvantages. We also recommend looking at transcription tools to offer higher quality captions and transcripts.

Minuting Online Meetings

It's one thing going to a meeting and another thing remembering what was discussed later. There are lots of tools for minuting online meetings but sometimes the simplest option is the best - sending round an agenda document, and taking minutes by typing. However, this isn't accessible to everyone, so what are your options if you can't do that?

Most platforms let you record the meeting, which lets you listen back and take minutes later. However, there are also tools that either use built-in autocaptions provided by the platform or create other own captions that can then be saved as a transcript. Two key tools here are the very well-known (and more expensive) Otter.AI and the rather cheaper but nonetheless excellent Tactiq, which is what we use.

Tactiq

Works in Chrome and many apps taking notes across all platforms

Code words and icons can be used to highlight sections of the transcript

The transcript can be kept private or automatically shared

GPT summaries can be produced of the transcript highlighting action points

\$0-\$16
Per month

Otter.ai

Works in browser and apps

Can join multiple meetings to note-take simultaneously

Tag speakers and assign action points

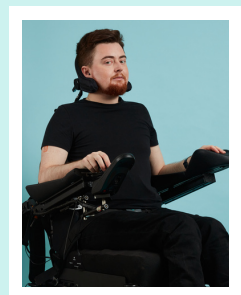
Able to transcribe additional audio and files each month

Places a cap on the number of minutes each month (up to 6000 dependent on plan)

\$0-\$20
Per month

Tactiq means I always know what happened in a meeting - and if my memory fails me, I can look it up. Thanks to this, I can frequently find documents and resources I would otherwise have lost, and remember things from meetings I would otherwise have forgotten.

-Jamie Hale



FAQ's

Can CRIPTic offer me direct support with any of this?

We have guidance on our website, and host regular drop-in, networking, and 1:1 sessions for disabled people, so why not come along and ask for some guidance there?

What do you mean by 'disabled people'? Do you include deaf and neurodivergent people?

Very much so, and many of the strategies in this guide are aimed at neurodivergent people (like our Artistic Director, Jamie Hale). We aim them at anyone who faces disabling barriers, whatever their diagnosis, impairment, or condition. You can find out more in the FAQ on our website

Are all of these tools free?

Many of these tools have both free and paid for options, where the free options give you a chance to test them out before purchasing. We've only included things we really believe save us money overall, given the time and effort tasks would otherwise take. If you run a charity, many of them will do very good charity discounts. They will also often offer a non-profit discount if you run a Community Interest Company (CIC)

I know a really great tool - how do I tell you about it?

Why not drop us an email to team@cripticarts.org and we'll have a look at adding it to the next version of the guide - and thank you so much for reading!



Tools, Apps and Tech for disabled creatives

Written and designed by Jamie
Hale for CRIPTic Arts

Edited by Chris Bond

SUMMARY:

- ✓ This guide contains a wide variety of tips for tools, apps and tech, from dictation to project management
- ✓ It has been built on the basic technology used within the CRIPTic team currently and previously, with additional information based on research
- ✓ We hope it will support other disabled creatives (including deaf and neurodivergent people) to find out more about the ways technology could support their career