



Beginner handout

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Finding out about benefits

This activity will help you use the Internet to find out what services and benefits are available to you.

What will I learn?

- Where you can find information about benefits
- What information you need to find out if you qualify
- How you can find out what benefits you're entitled to



How do I do it?

Be safe! If you're using this hand-out on a shared or public computer, remember to:

- Log on using a 'strong password': one that includes upper and lower case letters, numbers, and isn't something that someone else could guess
- Don't share or write down your password
- Log out when you're finished

The web links referred to throughout this document can be found in the Useful Links section at the end.



Directgov web page: beginner's guide to benefits

Where can I find information about benefits?

1. If you are unemployed, sick, have dependent children or a disability, you may qualify for benefits. There are many different types of benefits, but the Internet can help you find out which ones you might be entitled to.
2. Go to the Directgov Money, tax and benefits web page in the Useful Links section. The advice on these Directgov pages applies to anyone living England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland:
 - Click on the web link for the 'Beginner's guide to benefits'.
3. To receive benefits you must have a National Insurance number. This is a personal account number that acts as a reference number when you claim benefits. You should have been sent a National Insurance number when you were 16:
 - Find and go to the link on the Beginner's guide web page that explains how to apply for a National Insurance number if you don't have one, or if you've lost or can't remember it.

What information do I need to find out if I qualify?

4. You can use the Internet to get an estimate of the benefits you could claim:
 - Find the 'How to find out if you qualify for benefits' link on the Beginner's guide page.
 - Read this page and click on the 'Benefits adviser' link to find out:
 - what you can do with the online benefits adviser
 - what information you'll need before you start (print this page and take it home if you need to).

How can I find out what benefits I'm entitled to?

5. On the same web page, click to start the benefits adviser (your Helper may do this as a demonstration instead). There are two ways to use the benefits adviser:
 - 'Check available benefits now' is a simple way to just find out which benefits you might qualify for. You don't need to enter any actual amounts. **Use this option for now by following the steps opposite.**
 - 'Get a benefits estimate now' calculates how much you might get. To use this you'll need to enter actual amounts, so you'll need the information you found out about in section 4. Use this option at a later date.



Directgov web page: benefits adviser

6. The benefits adviser takes you through four stages:
 - Practise completing each stage by filling in information, clicking on a button or selecting from a drop-down menu.
 - At the end you'll be shown a summary of what you have entered. You can edit each answer if you've made a mistake.
 - Once you are sure your answers are correct, you'll see your results.
 - At the bottom you can click to find out how to claim for each of the benefits you might qualify for. Each link opens a PDF document that you can open, save or print. This provides advice, and the form you need to fill in.
 - You can save your results for another time. Next time, enter your reference code into the box at the start of the benefits adviser.
7. You can return to the benefits adviser in 'Try your new skills'.

My learning checklist

- I can find information about benefits online.
- I can use the online benefits adviser to estimate what I qualify for.
- I can find out how to apply for each type of benefit.
- I can download information and forms to help me apply.

Top tips

- Have all the information you need ready before you get an estimate or apply. You will need to find your old payslips, information on any payments you receive, and on your council tax, mortgage, rent and childcare payments.
- Remember to close your web browser program afterwards if you have filled in personal information on a shared or public computer.
- For advice on your benefit claim, ask at your local JobcentrePlus, your local council or your nearest Citizens' Advice Bureau (use your skills to search for these online).
- You may be able to apply for housing and council tax benefit through your local council. Use Beginner guide 6.2 to help you find out how.

Where next?

- Apply for the benefits that you qualify for. You can apply for Jobseeker's Allowance or State Pensions online using the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) eservice website (see Useful Links). To do this you may need to register as a new user with the Government Gateway. The eservice website will take you through this step-by-step.
- Search your local council website for other local support that could help you, or search for your local Citizens Advice Bureau and get in touch.

Write down any notes that will help you:

Useful Links

You may want to use these links in your session:

Directgov Money, tax and benefits:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm>

DWP eservice:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice>



Connect with us on:

