Portable music players for dementia

Playlist for Life is often asked by people with dementia or their carers to recommend a music player. We conducted in-depth usability research on three commonly available MP3 players which showed that each could be recommended with confidence to people with dementia.

# The testers

29 people with dementia. All but one of the 29 testers were supported by a family carer who also took part in feedback

# The players

## Player 1: Bush 4GB MP3 Player

* Argos
* Under £15

## Player 2: Bush 8GB MP3 Player With Display

* Argos
* Under £30

## Player 3: Solo USB Personal Audio MP3 Player

* Kings Access Technology
* Under £50

# Using the players

## How often was it used?

* A few times a week: 67%
* Several times a day: 12.5%
* Once a day: 12.5%
* Less than once a week: 4%
* Never: 4%

Players 1 and 3 were more likely to 4% be used more often.

## Did you have to check the instruction sheet regularly?

* Yes: 29%
* No: 71%

People using player 2 were more likely to have to check the instruction sheet.

## How easy was it to find specific songs?

* Very easy: 4%
* Quite easy : 48%
* Quite difficult: 22%
* Very difficult: 26%

Results were similar across all players.

## How much support was needed from a carer?

* None: 6%
* A little: 47%
* Quite a lot: 12%
* Carer had to do it all: 35%

Results were similar across all players.

# Design of the players

## How easy was it to understand what each button did?

* Very easy: 17%
* Quite easy: 29%
* Quite difficult: 37%
* Very difficult: 17%

People using players 1 & 3 were slightly more likely to report quite easy or very easy.

Most people found the on/off switch on players 1 & 2 difficult to use.

## Button size

* 79% thought the button size was ‘just right’
* 21% thought the buttons were ‘too small’

# Screen

## How useful was the screen?

* Very useful: 33%
* Quite useful: 22%
* Not very useful: 33%
* Not at all useful: 11%

## How easy was the text to read?

* Very easy: 11%
* Quite easy: 33%
* Quite difficult: 22%
* Very difficult: 33%

# Other equipment

## How easy was it to recharge the player?

* Very easy: 21%
* Quite easy: 17%
* Quite difficult: 25%
* Very difficult: 37%

## How easy was it to use the headphones?

* Very easy: 33%
* Quite easy: 46%
* Quite difficult: 17%
* Very difficult: 4%

People using player 1 reported the most difficulty charging it. This possibly reflected the stage of their dementia as the charging process was identical to player 2. .

# Recommendations

## Would you recommend your player to people living with dementia?

* Yes: 74%
* No: 26%

All of the players were recommended by the majority of users. People using player 2 were less likely to recommend it.

# Bonus result

9 out of 10 people with dementia reacted positively to the music on their player.

# Conclusions

* All players can be recommended to people living with dementia.
* Players 1 and 3 were the simplest and most likely to be used.
* Player 2 was more suitable for those who already use technology and are at an earlier stage of dementia.
* Carer support will usually be essential to successful use.
* More testing and guidance will be necessary around adding songs to players.

# Credits

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