

Assistive Technology

What are Assistive Technology (AT) Devices?

Assistive Technology (AT) Devices are items, pieces of equipment or products which are used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. AT Devices can be standard “off the shelf” items or modified or customized to suit the individual needs of the student. Many AT Devices are “no tech” or “low tech” and require little accommodation and minimal expense. For example, magnifiers, raised line paper, a pencil grip that helps a student hold his pencil better for handwriting, an adapted cup with large handles, or colored filters that help a child with visual tracking. AT Devices can also be very high-tech, such as electronic communication devices where the student types a message and the message is spoken aloud by the computer or tablet, text-reading software for the computer or handheld devices. The need for AT Devices should be documented in a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).

What are Assistive Technology (AT) Service(s)?

Assistive Technology (AT) Services are the services that need to be provided so that a child with a disability can use an AT Device. This could include an assessment/consultation/evaluation to determine if an AT Device would be appropriate. If a device is needed, another service could be acquiring the device and adapting it to the individual needs of the student, coordinating use of the device and providing necessary training to the student, family and professionals on use of the device.

The Facts You Should Know:

- ✓ Students may require more than one type of AT device depending upon their individual needs.
- ✓ Assistive technology must be considered during the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process for each student.
- ✓ Assistive technology devices and services must be provided at no cost to the family.
- ✓ If AT is needed for a student, it must be documented on his or her IEP.
- ✓ If AT is documented on a student’s IEP, the school is responsible for providing the device(s) and for repairing or replacing it if needed.
- ✓ If a student needs AT to participate in district or state testing, the need for AT must be included in his/her IEP.
- ✓ IEP teams are not required to identify a specific name-brand of assistive technology on an IEP.
- ✓ AT devices supplied by the school may be taken home and used in the community if the IEP team agrees that it is necessary for the student to be able to actively and fully participate in learning and daily activities outside of school.
- ✓ Assistive technology (AT) devices are available in many categories, including:
 - Academic and learning aids – calculators, spell checkers, word processors, computer software, etc.
 - Aids for daily living – devices to help with eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, toileting, etc.
 - Assistive listening devices – amplification devices, close captioning systems, environmental alert systems, etc.
 - Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) – electronic and non-electronic tools that help students communicate
 - Computer access – modified keyboards, switches, special software, alternative access aids
 - Environmental control – switches, adapted appliances, environmental control units
 - Mobility – wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, and other devices that help the student move around

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- Work – adapted timers and watches, adapted knobs, picture-based instructions for how to do a job, etc.
- Recreation and leisure – adapted books, switch-operated toys, leisure computer software, etc.
- Seating and positioning – devices that help with seating so students can participate in the classroom
- Visual aids – magnifiers, talking calculators, Braille writers, screen reading software, Braille note-taking devices, etc.

Tips for Families:

- ✓ Talk with your child's IEP team if you have questions about assistive technology for your child.
- ✓ Share ideas about items or devices that you may use at home and think could be adapted for the classroom.
- ✓ Think about the following questions when preparing to talk about AT with your child's IEP team:
 - What does your child need to do but cannot do because of his/her disability?
 - What are your child's biggest educational challenges?
 - Can your child communicate effectively?
 - Can your child sit, stand, and walk independently?
 - Is your child able to feed himself/herself?
 - Be sure to think about your child's physical, communication, cognitive, social/emotional, and academic strengths and needs.
 - What assistive technology tools are available that might help your child rise above these challenges?
 - Will assistive technology help your child become more independent? Can assistive technology help your child to more fully participate in school?
 - Can your child achieve his or her IEP goals without access to AT?
 - How will we know if the AT has helped your child in his/her educational program?
- ✓ If you think your child could benefit from assistive technology, you can ask the school to do an assessment, a consultation or an evaluation of your child's AT needs.
- ✓ You may know what type of device you want your child to use, but it is important to be willing to try out different devices at school and at home, before deciding on one device.
- ✓ As much as possible, include your child in discussions and decisions about assistive technology. Your child may not want to use a device or AT that he/she thinks makes him/her look different from the other students in the class. Ask your child what he/she wants to use.
- ✓ If your child brings his/her AT home, ask the school to have someone show you how to use it.
- ✓ It could happen that you disagree with the IEP team's decision about AT for your child. You could learn that your child's school is not providing the AT devices or services that are written in his/her IEP. If you cannot solve the disagreement or problem informally, you may want to ask for mediation, a due process hearing, or you may file a formal complaint.
- ✓ Remember that your child's AT needs will change as he or she grows.
- ✓ Start preparing for your child's future technology needs in advance! Think about what technologies your child might need to use beyond school!

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Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038
www.p2pga.org

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
<https://ectacenter.org/topics/atech/atech.asp>

Understood for Learning and Thinking Differences
<https://www.understood.org/en/topics/assistive-technology>

Step Up AT
(Find Your Resource)
<https://www.stepupat.org/>

Additional resources:
Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.