

What is Assistive Technology?



“Assistive technology includes a wide range of tools, from a simple, low-tech device such as a magnifying glass, to a complex, high-tech device, such as a computerized communication system. AT products can be made by hand, purchased off the shelf, or adapted from an existing product. The term “assistive technology” is often misunderstood to apply exclusively to electronic devices or products; however, AT includes non-electronic, low- and high-technology items or equipment.

Assistive technology services help individuals acquire and use AT devices. They include, but are not limited to, assessment of an individual’s need for specific AT items, “trialing” of potential devices, training for all involved, maintenance of devices, and evaluation of the individual’s experience with selected items.”¹

Assistive Technology Services

AT services as defined in IDEA Sec. 1401 include:

The evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child’s customary environment;

Purchasing, leasing, loaning, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;

Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, retaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;

Coordinating and use other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;

Training or technical assistance for a child with a disability or, if appropriate, that child’s family; and

Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of children with disabilities.

¹ Assistive Technology 101: Get informed about assistive technology for your child. The Center on Technology and Disability is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) under award #H327F130003 – 13A.

Assistive Technology Devices Domains

AT Domain	Definition/Explanation	Examples <i>(Not an exclusive list)</i>
Cognitive & Academic	<p>Academic and Learning Aids</p> <p>Electronic and non-electronic aids to support access to reading, writing composition, (including motor aspects of writing), and math instruction.</p>	Calculators, computer-based software, text-to-speech, speech-to-text, word prediction, spell check, electronic or audio books, graphic organizers, outline templates, slant boards, highlighting, reading windows, etc.
	<p>Cognitive Aids and Self-Monitoring Supports</p> <p>Supports, tools, or devices to aid students in self-monitoring, organizing, time management, studying, or planning.</p>	Calendars, agendas, memory aids, color coding systems, adapted paper, timers, pictured sequences/steps of an activity, headphones, etc.
Adaptive	<p>Aids for Daily Living</p> <p>Self-help aids to support independence in activities such as eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, and toileting.</p>	Adapted utensils, drinking aids and eating equipment, hygiene tools, reachers, adult changing tables, dressing aids, etc.
	<p>Access to Computers and Electronics Aids</p> <p>Hardware or software aids to provide a student access to a computer or other electronic device.</p>	Alternate keyboards, key guards, head mouse, track ball, touch screen, screen reader, switch with scanning, etc.
	<p>Enabling Technology and Environmental Control</p> <p>Systems or devices which increase access and independence in homes, schools, businesses, community buildings, etc. as well as assist in controlling other environmental needs.</p>	Ramps, door openers, lifts, switch, or electronic controls of the environment, such as lighting, temperature, etc.
	<p>Supports for Low Vision</p> <p>Low tech or high-tech equipment to aid access to printed materials, projected information, the white board, and/or the teacher during instruction.</p>	Magnifier, magnification dome, Mojo, Zoomax Snow, closed caption television (CCTV), monocle, lighted table, high contrast paper or colored overlay, specialized glasses, etc.
Communication	<p>Assistive Listening Devices and Environmental Aids</p> <p>Electronic and non-electronic aids that assist students who are hard of hearing or deaf with accessing information that is typically presented through an auditory modality.</p>	Classroom amplification, personal FM systems, closed captioning systems, and environmental alert systems, etc.
	<p>Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)</p> <p>Methods, aids, and devices (electronic or non-electronic) used to supplement or replace spoken and written language to assist people with expressing their thoughts and ideas.</p>	Picture symbols, object-based communication displays, alphabet boards, speech generating devices, computer-based communication devices, eye gaze, switches, communication boards, and other communication systems, etc.



AT Domain	Definition/Explanation	Examples <i>(Not an exclusive list)</i>
Physical	<p><i>Fine Motor Tools and Aids</i> Tools or aids that provide support, or alternative means of access to produce fine motor tasks such as writing, cutting paper, or stabilizing writing materials.</p>	<p>Weighted pencils, alternate writing instrument, pencil grips, adapted scissors, raised line paper, slant boards; pointers, adapted art supplies, etc.</p>
	<p><i>Mobility Aids</i> Adaptive equipment or supports to aid independent or supported movement, transitioning (stand to sit), or navigation across a variety of terrains (grass to blacktop).</p>	<p>Canes, crutches, standing devices, prosthetic devices, wheelchairs, gate trainer, walkers, etc.</p>
	<p><i>Seating and Positioning Aids</i> Supports, medical devices, or specialized equipment designed to provide physical support for safe and secure positioning or seating.</p>	<p>Adapted chair, foam supports, footrest, customized neck braces, tilt and space wheelchair, molded foam seating with secure harness systems, custom seating or position equipment, mats, wedges, etc.</p>
Social Emotional	<p><i>Recreation, Leisure, and Play Aids</i> Adapted toys, recreation equipment, or play equipment that aids students in active participation in recreation, leisure activities, or play.</p>	<p>Switch activated spinner, electronic dice, adapted sports equipment, soccer balls or kickballs with a beeper, wheelchair accessible swings, playground ramps, etc.</p>
	<p><i>Transportation Use and Access Aids</i> Adapted equipment, seating, or supports to aid access to and use of personal or public transportation.</p>	<p>Electronic lifts, adapted cars, hand brake and gas pedal, specialized transportation services (access-a-ride), bus route software, safety software, etc.</p>

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