*Special Education*

# Assistive Technology

## What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology (AT) are tools that help people with different abilities work around challenges so that they may more easily and fully participate. AT makes tasks and activities accessible at school, work, and home. They can be low-tech or high-tech.

## What are assistive technology devices?

Assistive technology (AT) devices are used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of the user with a disability.

## What are assistive technology services?

Assistive technology services are services that directly help the person with a disability in selecting, acquiring, or using assistive technology. Examples include functional evaluations, procurement, customizing, servicing, or fixing AT devices.

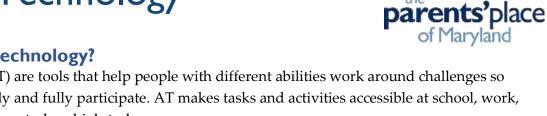## Some examples of assistive technology

- Specialized pencil grips
- Tactile books
- Voice recognition software
- Timers
- Screen readers

- Modified scissors
- Seat cushions
- Audiobooks
- Calculators
- Tablets

- Page holders
- Standing aids
- Digital recorder
- Reading guides
- Graphic organizers

## How to know if an assistive technology is a good fit

- It addresses the user's challenges and needs regarding a specific task(s).
- The user, with training on how to use it, is willing and comfortable using it.
- The AT makes sense for what and where it will be used for.
- It is compatible with other technology the user uses, if applicable.

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# FAQ

If an AT device is deemed needed by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, it must be provided.

Training must be provided to the child and any adults working with the child on how to use the AT device, including school staff and parents.

The device should be used across all environments - at home and at school.

AT may be used for state assessments.

AT must be considered as part of a child's transition to adulthood plan.

## What assistive technology is not

- AT is not the same as *accessible* technology. Accessible technology is technology that is designed to provide a variety of people with access to its content, for example with a variety of features to expand the usability and accessibility. Assistive technology, by comparison, is selected for the individual for a specific purpose or purposes. AT may go beyond the offering of accessible technology.
- AT is also not the same as *Universal Design* (UD). UD increases accessibility, but unlike AT, it is not selected for an individual.

## Assistive technology improves outcomes

Research shows that the use of AT devices and services:
- can lessen the impacts of a child's disability.
- can increase a child's motivation to communicate, complete assignments, etc.
- is helpful for children with a variety of disabilities.

## Resources

Considering Assistive Technology for Students with Disabilities - Center for Parent Information and Resources (parentcenterhub.org)

Maryland's Technology Assistance Program offers free trials of devices:
https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Pages/MDTAP-Home.aspx

**Sources**
- Adapted from Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services (PDF) (ed.gov)
- Adapted from What is assistive technology? (understood.org)
- Adapted from Considering Assistive Technology for Students with Disabilities - Center for Parent Information and Resources (parentcenterhub.org)