



"Disability Solutions Through Technology"

Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network 1-800-327-5287

Fact Sheet 1- What is Assistive Technology?

The Definition of Assistive Technology from the Assistive Technology Act 1998, as Amended

The term Assistive Technology Device means "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." AT Service means "... any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device."

Technologies used in education, rehabilitation, and independent living to help, to change or to train are now commonly grouped into the generic term "assistive technology". People of all ages with physical, cognitive and communication disorders, or a combination of disabilities may benefit from the application of assistive technologies.

Examples of Assistive Technology Include:

Interaction with subject matter and instructional materials:

Individuals with disabilities can use computers with adaptive switches and keyboards substituting for normal keyboard use or conventional handwriting, audio tape players, or print magnifiers for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Communication:

Individuals with speech and/or hearing disabilities are able to both transmit and/or receive communication with such devices as communications boards, speech synthesizers, modified typewriters, head pointers, text to voice software, voice to text software, and telecommunication devices for the deaf, such as text telephones.

Mobility and active movement:

Individuals with physical disabilities may use electric or conventional wheelchair for full body movement, modified vans for travel, crutches and walkers and gait trainers for support and stability. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired may use canes and guide dogs for travel.

Control of equipment:

For people who have limited control over voluntary movement, there are switches that can be activated by touch, sound, voice, light pointers and movements of the body to activate computers, televisions and other home appliances.

Self-help skills:

Individuals with disabilities may use devices that assist in daily living such as modified eating utensils, adapted books, and pencil holders, page turners, dressing aids, and adapted personal hygiene aids.

Body support, alignment, and positioning:

Adapted seating, standing tables, seat belts, braces, cushions and wedges to maintain posture, and devices for trunk alignment assist individuals in maintaining body alignment and control for performing a range of daily tasks.

Modification of the work environment and home (See Fact Sheet #7 on Home Modification):

Work modifications include desks and work tables to accommodate wheelchairs, computer modifications for alternate input systems, speech devices for the blind or visually impaired, and automatic door openers. Home adaptations include ramps, widening of doors, lowering kitchen cabinets and bathroom accessories.

Leisure time, recreation activities, and appreciation of the arts:

Devices for leisure and recreation include guide rails for the blind and visually impaired, special prostheses that assist individuals in sports, and audio description for movies, sporting events and cultural events.