

Assistive Technology

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is any [device](#), equipment, item, product, or service used to increase, maintain, or improve accessibility. AT may include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs or [computer software](#), [applications](#)—known as apps—and equipment to facilitate communication and enhance a person’s daily living. Any popular technology (e.g., cell phone, text messaging, [email](#), [Internet chat](#), and [Instant Messaging](#)) also can be considered AT if it increases access and decreases or removes systemic barriers. AT also may be referred to as adaptive devices; however, adaptive devices really are a subset of AT. Please view the resource sheet, [Examples of Assistive Technology](#), for more detailed information.

Who Uses Assistive Technology?

AT can be any technology, item or service that is used to increase safety and accessibility for people who:

- Are elderly
- Are Deaf or hard-of-hearing
- Are blind or have low vision
- Have physical/motor disabilities
- Have cognitive/intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Have mental health concerns or psychiatric disabilities
- Have multiple or invisible disabilities.

AT also has been found to be useful for many younger people and those without disabilities due to its focus on making access universal (e.g., a mother pushing a baby stroller using a ramp to enter a house versus navigating steps).

[Where to Find Out More About Assistive Technology](#)

[AbleData](#) provides objective information on AT and rehabilitation equipment available from domestic and international sources to consumers, organizations, professionals, and caregivers within the United States. AbleData serves the nation's disability, rehabilitation, and senior communities and maintains an extensive database of assistive technology with objective information on almost 40,000 assistive products. <http://www.abledata.com/>

The [Accessing Safety Initiative](#), funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, helps organizations and communities meet the needs of women with disabilities & Deaf women who are victims or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, & stalking. <http://www.accessingsafety.org/>

[Association of Tech Act Projects \(ATAP\)](#) strives to collaborate with AT Programs and persons with disabilities and others at the state and national level to increase the availability and utilization of accessible information technology (IT) and assistive technology devices and services (AT) for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories. <http://www.ataporg.org/>

[Disability.gov](#) connects people with disabilities, their families and caregivers to helpful resources. The website contains a section specific to technology that includes links to information on assistive technology. <http://www.disability.gov>

[Eldercare Locator](#) offers information about the benefits of assistive technology for older adults, including how to find out if assistive technology is right for an individual and how to get help paying for it. <http://www.eldercare.gov>

[National Council of Independent Living](#) is the national organization made up of hundreds of community-based centers for independent living. These centers, known as CILs, provide services and advocacy by and for people with all types of disabilities, including assistive technology. Many CILs have a "loan closet" for individuals to try out various assistive technology devices that could enhance their safety and accessibility. <http://www.ncil.org>

Sources: Disability Rights Wisconsin; Federal Communications Commission



National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life,
a project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
www.ncall.us