




# Available Technology for Individuals with Disabilities

A young child who cannot speak may use a communication device to express his or her needs in a preschool class. A young adult with vision impairment may use computer screen reading software program to continue employment. A junior high student with a physical disability may use the computer, instead of a paper and pencil, to complete math homework. Many people with varied disabilities use technology to enhance learning, work, and independence. Technology for individuals with disabilities is also known as assistive technology, and it helps people with disabilities reach their full potential. Through increased independence and productivity, people with disabilities can be physically, socially, academically, recreationally, and vocationally integrated into the community.

Whether it is a common tool, a customized device, or a product system, technology can promote increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Technology helps people get and keep jobs, and it allows people to enjoy greater participation in the community. People with disabilities who use technology discover how much it enhances the overall quality of their life; they see new possibilities and experience more of what life has to offer. The fourteen categories of technology for individuals with disabilities are:

	<p><b>Aids for Daily Living (ADL)</b></p> <p>Devices for use in activities such as eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, toileting and home maintenance.</p>
	<p><b>Beds/Bed Modifications</b></p> <p>Devices that make bedroom functioning easier. Examples include manual and electric beds, side rails and transfer equipment.</p>
	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Aids, devices, and methods that enhance personal expressive communication. Examples include manual and electric picture boards.</p>



### **Computer Access/Ergonomics**

Software and hardware that allow persons with disabilities to use computers. Adaptations to the computer to improve its use are included in this category.



### **Education/Employment**

Equipment that enables people with disabilities to carry out school or work-related tasks. Job accommodations are included in this category.



### **Electronic Aids for Daily Living (EADL)**

Primarily electronic switches or systems that enable a person to control appliances, electronic aids, lights, telephones, security systems, etc. in a room, home or other surroundings.



### **Hearing**

Devices that enhance hearing. Examples include hearing aids, visual and tactile alerting systems and telecommunications devices for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



### **Home/Building Modifications**

Structural adaptations to buildings that remove or reduce physical barriers. Examples include ramps and elevator lifts, as well as minor physical adaptations such as replacing doorknobs with levers.



### **Mobility/Ambulation**

Devices that enhance movement. Examples include transfer aids, patient lifts, all types of wheelchairs and wheeled vehicles, canes, crutches and walkers.

	<p><b>Prosthetics and Orthotics</b></p> <hr/> <p>Artificial limbs and devices used to replace, substitute or augment missing or malfunctioning body parts and facilitate function. Examples include braces, splints and supports.</p>
	<p><b>Recreation/Leisure</b></p> <hr/> <p>Adaptations that enable people to participate in sports or other fun activities in their free time. Examples include hand cycles or modified snowboards.</p>
	<p><b>Seating and Positioning</b></p> <hr/> <p>Modifications to wheelchairs or other seating systems that provide greater body stability, improved posture or reduction of pressure. Examples include wheelchair cushions, supports, modular seating and seat lifts.</p>
	<p><b>Transportation/Driving</b></p> <hr/> <p>Items that enable personal transportation. Examples include cars and vans adapted with lift systems, child restraint systems and modifications to ensure vehicle access.</p>
	<p><b>Vision</b></p> <hr/> <p>Devices that enhance sight. Examples include eyeglasses, magnification devices and other equipment (e.g., talking calculators and large button phones) for people with visual impairments.</p>

It is important to remember that productive use of technology for people with disabilities requires more than just having access to equipment. Without services such as information, selection, acquisition, evaluation, and training, technology for individuals with disabilities is virtually useless. Below are types of services that support technology for people with disabilities:

<b>Consultation/Observation</b>	A preliminary service that gathers information about the range of potential technology that may be of value to a person with a disability.
<b>Assessment/Evaluation</b>	A formal analysis performed by a skilled practitioner or a team of practitioners in the field of technology for children with disabilities. The evaluation will incorporate multiple techniques and include recommendations for technology products or systems that will enhance an individual's life in defined areas. There may be specific requirements for a technology evaluation in education.
<b>Ordering</b>	Help in obtaining commercially available technology or components.
<b>Fitting</b>	Installation and modifications to optimize the consumer's ability to use the technology.
<b>Training</b>	Help in acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes that maximizes the use of the equipment.
<b>Maintenance/Repair</b>	A systematic set of procedures aimed at keeping the device in working order; an action taken to correct a problem in a device or system.
<b>Custom Fabrication</b>	Making or modifying devices/equipment when those commercially available do not meet consumers' specific needs.