

# What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology is used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible for them.

Assistive technology (AT) is an important factor in reducing barriers for students to access the curriculum and learning.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act defines AT as, "Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of students with disabilities." (34 Code of Federal Regulations Sec. 300.5.)

The official definition of assistive technology is very general in that it provides IEP teams with the flexibility to explore and provide a range of AT for students to access the curriculum and complete their learning tasks.

A large variety of technological devices and equipment, from no-tech or low-tech to high tech, can be considered for students to support writing, reading, math, executive functioning, and speaking & listening. AT can help students gain confidence in their abilities ability to produce work and demonstrate what they know.

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AT Webpage:  
[www.buttecountyselpa.org/info/assistive-technology](http://www.buttecountyselpa.org/info/assistive-technology)

## Helpful Websites

- <http://abilitytools.org/>
- <http://castpublishing.org/at-wheel/>
- <https://www.isetcec.org/>
- <https://askjan.org/resources/California-Assistive-Technology-Network.cfm>



# Assistive Technology

Making Learning  
Accessible for All





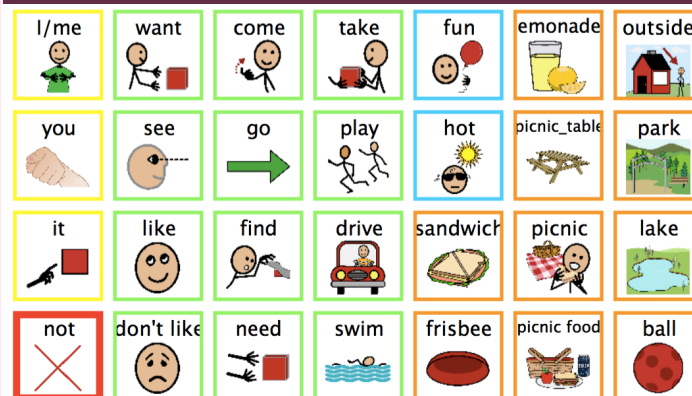
## What are Assistive Technology Services?

Also defined in federal law, AT services are “any services that directly assist the student with a disability in the selection acquisition, and use of an assistive technology device.” Assistive technology should be thought of as any technology that enables an individual with a disability to compensate for specific deficits. In some instances, the technology may assist or augment task performance in a given area of the disability, while in others it is used to “bypass” specific deficits entirely.

Assistive technology is not aimed at “curing,” “fixing,” or remediating; rather, it is used as a strategy to compensate for, or circumvent, areas of difficulty, generally, by “playing to” an individual’s area of strength. Furthermore, assistive technology is not intended to teach or instruct (as is the case with computer aided instruction), although it to teach or instruct (as is the case with computer aided instruction), although it can be used to increase access to instruction.

## When considering AT:

When considering AT, it is best practice to start with low-tech strategies, techniques, and modifications. These strategies (e.g. pencil grips, slant boards, different types of paper, communication board, visual timers, switches, text-to-speech (TTS), word prediction, etc.) are often first trialed in the classroom by school staff. If further assistance is needed, the IEP/IFSP/ 504 team may make a referral to the Butte County SELPA AT. (Schools generally follow their District procedures.) Referrals may initiate further observation, interviews, and device trials.



Determining the appropriate AT is an on-going process and several devices may be trialed in an effort to find the most appropriate device. Data is collected during the school day to clearly demonstrate that a particular device increases or improves a student’s performance in an identified area of need. Once a device is seemed appropriate, the needed AT services and the device are provided and a description of the device is added to the IEP/IFSP/504 plan.

## Assistive Technology versus Augmentative or Alternative Communication (AAC):

**Assistive Technology (AT)** - *broadly stated, AT enhances function of verbal and written communication*

- Computer or iPad systems to support writing for a student who successfully communicates verbally
- Amplification for student with quiet voice
- Reading support for a successful verbal communicator
- Sign language skills for receptive communication
- Visual supports for education or behavior
- Consults with classroom support staff to the student
- Typically assessed by an AT Specialist

## Augmentative or Alternative

**Communication (AAC)** - *broadly stated, AAC replaces communication or writing*

- Low-, Medium-, or High-tech language systems that support functional communication for activities of daily living/learning
- Typically assessed by an Speech Therapist or an AAC Specialist.
- Consult with OT and AT/or PT necessary to increase access to communication systems using switches and related to placing communication systems in different mounted positions