

Booklet 1

What is Assistive Technology?



This booklet is the first of six sections in the Assistive Technology Toolkit, which was created in collaboration with the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Manitoba and Jewish Child & Family Service.

Table of Contents

Definitions of Assistive Technology

Benefits of Assistive Technology

Getting Started with Assistive Technology

- Steps to Help you Consider
- Step 1: Understanding your Needs
- Step 2: Reflect on Your Options
- Step 3: Finding your Perfect Fit

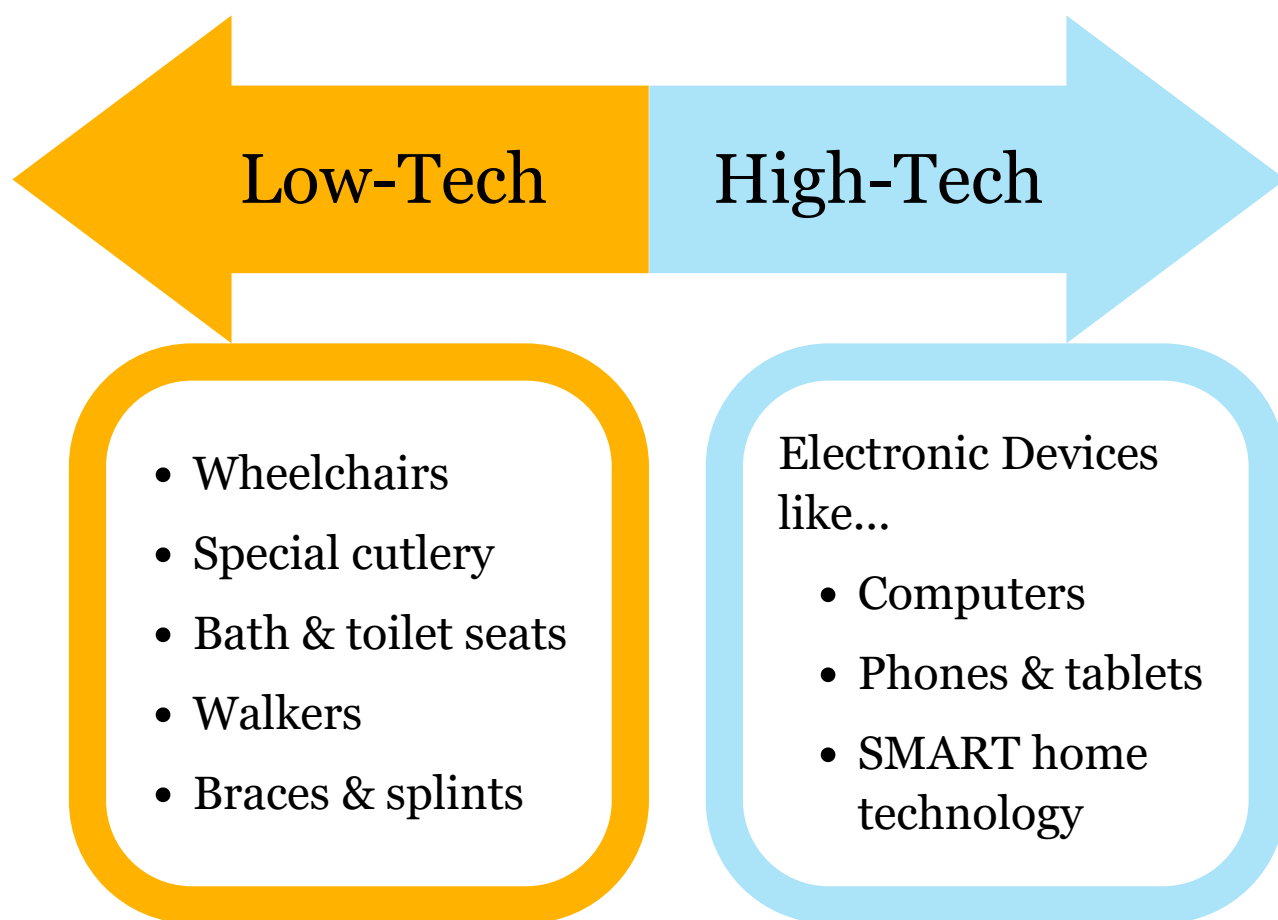
Disclaimer

This document was developed by students from the University's Rady Faculty of Health Sciences in accordance with their program requirements. The information provided in this document is intended to provide helpful information and is not intended to replace the advice & guidance of a professional health care provider. There are no guarantees of completeness or accuracy with regard to the information contained in this document. All individuals involved in the creation of this document disclaim any liability in connection with the use of this document & the information contained herein. This document is provided without warranty of any kind.

Definition of Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or electronic device that helps a person function in day-to-day activities. This means using technology to complete chores and tasks and to monitor and change your home environment.

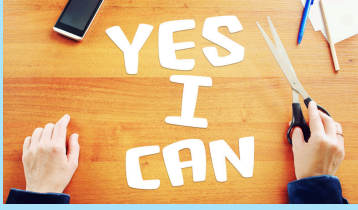
Assistive technology falls on a spectrum. Low-tech assistive technology is more like equipment. Meanwhile, electronics would be considered high-tech assistive technology.



This toolkit will serve as a beginner's guide to high-tech assistive technology.

The aim will be to provide information about the range of electronic devices; what they are, what they do, and where you can go if you have more questions.

Benefits of Assistive Technology



Increased self-confidence & efficacy



Foster connections and social engagement



Increased independence



Health monitoring



Cognitive stimulation



Reduced isolation



Increased safety and security



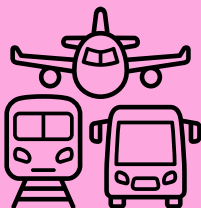
Increased physical health



Increased mental health



Personalize devices to fit your needs



Book travel and transportation



Help in completing daily activities



Opportunity to increase education



Entertainment

Getting Started with Assistive Technology

The six booklets are here to guide you in finding the perfect assistive technology for your needs. If you are having trouble following along, reach out to family and friends or check out the toolkits' resources section for assistance right here in Winnipeg. Remember, this process is all about you—your life, your activities, and your lifestyle!

If certain tasks feel challenging, know that there are solutions available. Do not simply accept difficulties as they are—there is almost always a way to make things easier in today's world.

Assistive technology can empower you and make tasks more manageable in three main ways:

- **Adapting the Environment:** Assistive technology can change your surroundings to make tasks easier. For instance, lights with sensors can turn on automatically when you enter a room.
- **Automating Tasks:** Some assistive technology can even perform tasks for you. For example, a Roomba is a vacuum cleaner that can clean on its own.
- **Supporting you in Tasks:** Assistive technology can also assist you directly in completing activities. For instance, using an app to order groceries online.

Remember, the goal is to improve your independence and make daily life more enjoyable and manageable. Let us find the perfect tools to make that happen!

Ask Yourself

Have you considered consulting with a healthcare professional, such as an occupational therapist, to find the best assistive technology for you?

Steps to Help You Consider

You Are the Expert!

When it comes to finding the right assistive technology, remember that you are in charge! There are plenty of ways to solve a problem and lots of things to consider. As you explore your options, make sure they fit your lifestyle, budget, and needs.

How to Decide What to Buy:

With all the choices out there, it is easy to feel a bit lost. Here are some simple steps to guide you:

1. Understand your needs
2. Reflect on your options
3. Choose the best device for you



Step 1: Understanding Your Needs

Let us begin by understanding what you need help with. Use the template below to guide you:

1. First, write down activities you find challenging. These could be daily tasks like grocery shopping or things you enjoy, like reading.
 - Example: Reading
2. Next, for each activity, pinpoint what is difficult for you.
 - Example: Trouble seeing the words while reading.
3. Then, consider why you are facing this challenge.
 - Example: Low vision makes it hard to read.
4. Finally, rate the importance of each activity on a scale of 1 to 3 (3 being the most important). This will help you prioritize what matters most to you.
 - Example: Reading (3)



Step 1: Understanding Your Needs			
Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1-3 scale
Example: Using the bathroom at night	Trouble finding my way to the light switch at night.	Balance Low vision	3
Example: Reading	Seeing the words	Low Vision	2

Step 2: Reflect on Your Options

Now that we have identified your challenges, it is time to reflect on your options (shown in orange). Think about potential solutions for your specific needs as you go through each booklet.

Use the other booklets in this toolkit to learn about the ways you can use assistive technology in your life and jot down notes here! You can always ask for assistance from friends and family.

Take a look at the example template below for some ideas.



Step 1: Understanding Your Needs				Step 2: Reflect on Your Options
Activity	Trouble	Why	Importance 1-3 scale	Possible Solutions
Example: Using the bathroom at night	Trouble finding my way to the light switch at night.	Balance Low vision	3	Smart light that turns on when you talk to it. Smart Plug that turns on light when you talk to it. A light with motion sensors that turns on when you get out of bed.
Example: Reading	Seeing the words	Low Vision	2	E-reader so you can adjust the size of the font. Text-to-Speech that will read aloud your book.

Step 3: Finding Your Perfect Fit - Part 1

Now you try!

Step 1: Understanding Your Needs				Step 2: Reflect on Your Options
Activity	Trouble	Why	1-3 scale	Possible Solutions

Useful Insight



Many smartphones and tablets offer built-in accessibility features, making device usage easier for people of all abilities. For example, they can offer screen magnification, which enlarges text and images for better visibility, helping people with visual impairments.

Step 3: Finding Your Perfect Fit - Part 2

Before you buy assistive technology, let us consider a few things. Use the space below to answer these questions:

What problem are you trying to solve?

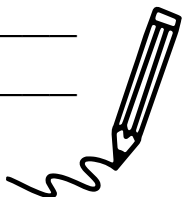
What assistive technology options are available?

Does it solve your problem and meet your needs?

Can you handle the maintenance yourself? If not, who can help?

Can you manage repairs on your own? If not, who can help?

What additional costs might there be? Such as subscriptions, upgrades, installation, batteries, or other equipment?



Step 3: Finding Your Perfect Fit - Part 3

Circle "Yes" or "No" to answer these questions:

- Can you return or exchange it? Yes or No
- Is it easy to use? Yes or No
- Do you like it? Yes or No
- Are you able to set it up yourself? Yes or No
- Can you be trained on how to use it? Yes or No
- Can you get help if you have problems? Yes or No
- Can you afford it? Yes or No
- Do you have room to store it when not in use? Yes or No
- Will it fit (through the door, in your car)? Yes or No
- Will it work with other devices you already have? Yes or No?
- Are there any rebates available for the product? Yes or No
- Does the device have good ratings & reviews? Yes or No
- Have you explored funding options for assistive technology, such as grants or financial assistance programs? Yes or No?



Did You Know?

Because technology is always changing it can be hard to learn but everyone can do it. You got this!



Step 3: Finding Your Perfect Fit- Part 4

Here are a few more things to think about:

- Before you buy, check the return policy and warranty coverage in case you run into any issues.
- Some products might require monthly subscription fees.
- If you are renting or leasing, ask your landlord for permission before installing anything.
- Consider how long the device is expected to last.
- Some devices might require professionals to install them for you.

Ask Yourself

Are you unsure about trying new technology? Take a moment to think: Can I see myself using this every day? Imagine how it might make life easier for you.

