

Booklet 5

Assistive Technology for Connecting with Others



This booklet is the fifth 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 Services.

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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.

Introduction

This section will talk about how assistive technology can be used to connect with friends, family, and health professionals from the comfort of your own home.

Connecting with others through technology allows you to stay up-to-date and keep in touch with important people in your life. By using technology, you can interact with family and/or friends through video calls, messages, posts, and comments.

The use of technology may allow you to maintain your relationships and create new ones too! You can connect and seek or receive social support while physically apart. By connecting with others, a sense of belonging and overall well-being are improved.

Before purchasing **apps**, consider:

- Talking with your friends and family
- Compatibility with your devices
- Potential **subscription** options
- Researching social media **platforms**



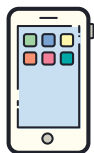
We have organized the assistive technology by price and simplicity. With simple and cost-friendly options listed first.

Look for the symbols from the legend. They will appear at the top right side of the page for each device. This will help you prioritize the assistive technology.

Legend



Requires WIFI



Requires Smart
Phone/Tablet/
Computer



Requires app
installation



Cost

Definitions

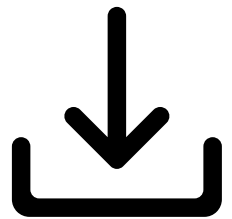
App: An app, short for “application,” is designed for use on computers, tablets, or smartphones. Each serves a specific function for gaming, banking, messaging, shopping, web browsing, & more.



Bluetooth: Allows devices to connect to one another.



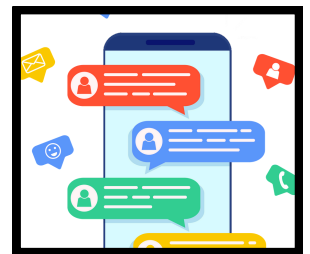
Download: Transfer information from the internet or between devices to access apps, movies, shows, books, etc., offline once downloaded.



Internet: A digital library accessible through devices for information, videos, news, shopping, and communication.



Notifications: Alerts on your devices for messages, reminders, events, or emergencies, through sounds, vibrations, lights, or on-screen messages.

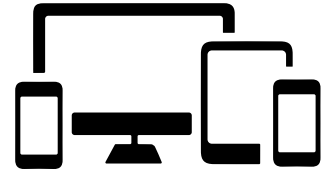


Platform: A digital service that uses the internet to provide services & perform various functions, such as watching videos, connecting with others, or accessing information.



Definitions continued

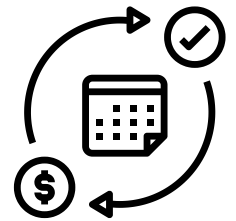
Smartphone/Tablet/Computer: Devices for messaging, calling, gaming, document editing, and internet access, usable with Wi-Fi or cellular data.



Remotely: Accessing & using technology from a distance.



Subscription: Online platforms that charge a fee for service on a recurring basis instead of a one-time purchase.



Wi-Fi: Wireless internet for homes and apartments, set up by providers like Bell MTS, or Rogers together with Shaw.



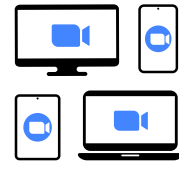
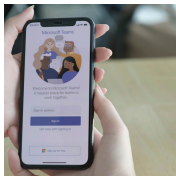
Assistive Technology for Connecting with Others

Overview

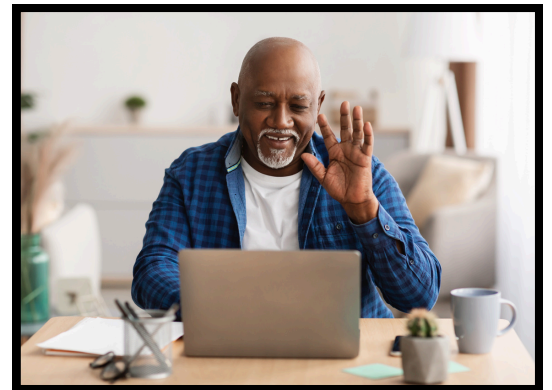
Social Media



VideoChat Apps



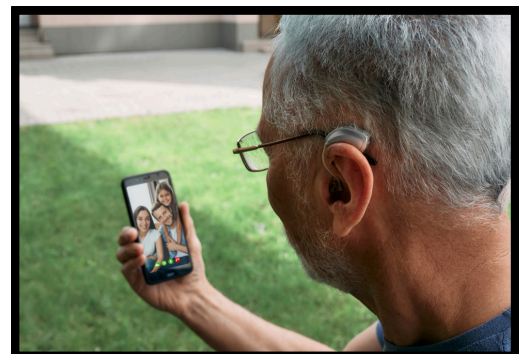
Telehealth



Virtual Support Groups



**Speech to Text & Text to
Speech**



**Assistive Listening
Devices**

Social Media



Apps on your **phone, tablet, or computer** allow you to connect and socialize with others and stay up to date on the latest news from your family and friends. You can use many different **apps** to share photos, videos, and updates in your life. Others allow you to comment on photos and videos and send direct messages!

How does it work?



1. Research **apps** & **download** them onto your device



2. Create an account for the **app** and enjoy!

Examples of Social Media



Instagram



WhatsApp



Facebook



Telegram

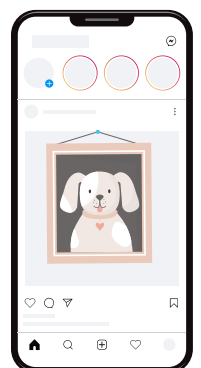


Facebook
Messenger

Is it for you?

- Share fun or interesting photos/videos for friends & family to see.
- Stay up to date on news around the world.
- Keep in touch with birthdays and significant events.
- Join community support groups and events.
- Connect with past and present relationships.

Cost: Free



Video Apps



Video chat **apps** allow you to make phone calls and face-to-face video calls over the **internet** with another person or multiple people at a time.

How does it work?

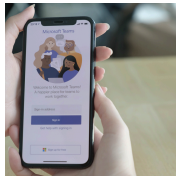


1. Use the **app** on your device or create an account.



2. Join the call and connect!

Example of Video Chat Apps



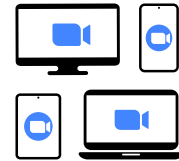
**Microsoft
Teams**



Facetime



Google Meet



Zoom

Is it for you?

- Connect with multiple people at one time.
- Allows for convenient communication without needing to travel.
- Be virtually present during the holidays or special occasions.
- Connect with healthcare professionals or support groups.

Cost: Free to use; however, some may have **subscription** costs.

Quick Tip

Create a strong password, keep personal info private, beware of suspicious behaviour and avoid sharing too much online!

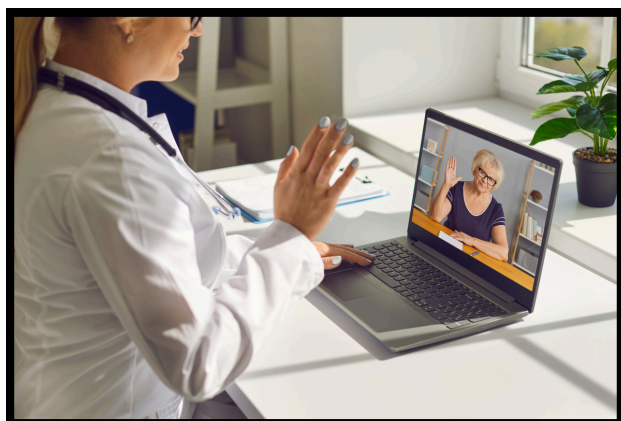
Telehealth



Telehealth allows you to connect and gain access to health services through technology. In Manitoba, MBTelehealth provides opportunities to talk to a healthcare provider, conduct virtual appointments, consult with specialists and receive education on managing your health.

How it works?

- Telehealth: Your healthcare provider (HCP) will forward an appointment request to another HCP to propose that your appointment be completed through Telehealth.



General Inquiry

Contact MBTelehealth directly
for more questions:
Call (204) 940-8500 (Option 4)

Is it for you?

- Connect with health care professionals more easily.
- Access health care services **remotely** and in a timely manner, making connecting with others more manageable.
- Reduces barriers to accessing health services in rural areas.
- If you have insurance, you may choose from various Telehealth options; please contact your insurance to learn more.

Cost: It varies depending on the type of service and insurance coverage you may have. Contact your HCP and insurance provider to learn more.

Virtual Support Groups



Online communities that provide a safer and confidential space to connect with others who may be experiencing a similar situation. Virtual groups offer social support and a sense of community.

How does it work?

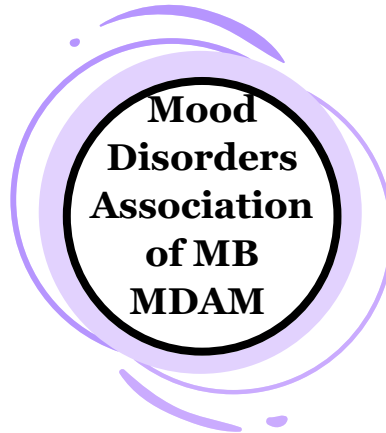


1. Sign up for a group - ask a family member for assistance!



2. Join the online support group or a chat forum.

Local Resources - For more information, see “Resources”



Is it for you?

- Attend groups from the comfort of your own home.
- Connect with people from various places who may share a similar experience or struggle.
- The online **platform** allows for anonymity.
- You can choose from a variety of times and sessions.

Cost: Free to join however, some groups may require registration.

Speech-to-Text & Text-to-Speech



Speech-to-text **apps & platforms** turn spoken words into written text. Text-to-speech **apps & platforms** convert written text into speech.

How does it work?

- **Download** the **app** or use a feature that is already on your device to convert your words into text or text into speech!

Examples:

Apple Specific

- Siri
- Spoken Content
- Dictate
- Voiceover
- Proloquo2go

- Google Assistant
- TalkBack
- Voice Typing
- NaturalReader
- Text to Speech (TTS)

- Audio Descriptions
- Otter AI
- TalkTablet
- Google Text-Speech
- Google Speech-Text
- Google Translate
- Text Reader

Is it for you?

- Communicate with others faster by using your voice to dictate words if you struggle with typing.
- Convert text into spoken language to assist with decreased vision and engage fully in conversations.
- Choose your preferred language for spoken text to help with understanding.
- Provides an accessible way to communicate virtually.

Cost: \$0 - \$250 

Useful Insight



Have sore hands or trouble using the screen? Dictate emails and messages hands-free, while staying connected with friends and family.

Assistive Listening Devices



Amplify sounds by increasing the clarity and volume of noises. This helps people with hearing difficulties follow along with conversations and hear their surroundings when participating in activities.

Examples:

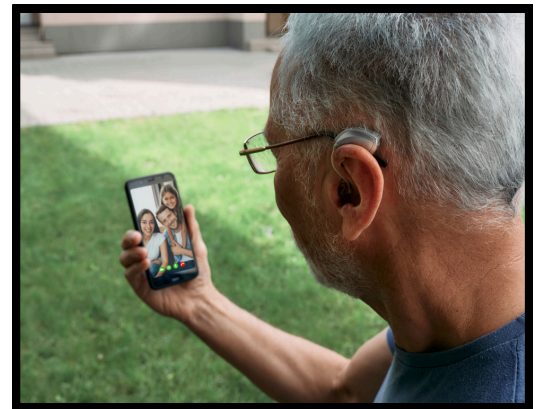
Sound Amplifiers: An accessibility feature on your **smartphone** that makes sounds louder and clearer. For best results, connect headphones, earbuds, or wired earphones to your phone.

Hearing Aids: Wear small electronic devices in your ear or behind them to make sounds around you louder.

Some hearing aids can connect to your device via **Bluetooth**.

Ask Yourself

Struggling to hear conversations? Is background noise distracting? Consider listening devices for clearer communication.



Is it for you?

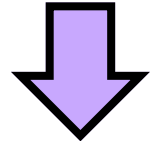
- Improve your ability to communicate with others.
- Hear more clearly in noisy environments.
- Hear **notifications** and alerts to keep you informed and connected with others.

Cost:

- The sound amplifier accessibility feature is free.
- Hearing aids may begin at \$1000+. However, the cost may vary depending on style.
- Eligible individuals for the Government of Manitoba Seniors Hearing Aid Program can receive up to \$2000 towards the purchase of hearing aids.

Resources

This toolkit is a great first step in exploring how assistive technology can make life easier and more enjoyable. By learning more about **computers**, **smartphones**, **tablets**, and **apps**, you can boost your confidence and become more independent.

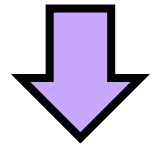


Take a picture of the QR code below to learn more!

- **Staying Safe on Social Media**
 - Article: Government of Canada - “How older adults can use social media safely”
- **MBTelehealth**
 - Address: 772-715 McDermot Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3E 0V9
 - Phone: (204) 940-8500 (Option 4)
 - Hours: 8:00am - 4:00pm
- **GotoDoctor Virtual Services:** Provides video and phone consultation for healthcare services.
 - Website: gotodoctor.ca
 - Address: 2585 Portage Ave #2F, Winnipeg, MB R3J 0P5
 - Phone: (833) 820-8800
 - Email: info@gotodoctor.ca
- **Peer Connections MB:** Drop-in, 1:1 peer support, & individual virtual/in-person & peer support groups.
 - Address: 4 Fort St, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4L3
 - Phone: (204) 786-1616



Resources continued



Take a picture of
the QR code below
to learn more!

- **Alzheimer Society Manitoba:** Support groups for individuals living with dementia and for family & friends
 - Address: 10-120 Donald Street, Winnipeg, MB. R3C 4G2
 - Phone: (204) 943-6622 (Winnipeg) or 1 (800) 378-6699 (Manitoba)
 - Email: alzmb@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba (MDAM):** Online & in-person support groups offered.
 - Address: 4 Fort St, Winnipeg, MB R3C 1C4
 - Phone: (204) 560-1461
 - Email: adassist@moodmb.ca
 - Hours: 9:00am - 9:00pm Monday to Sunday
- **Apple Store:** Chat, call or email to get accessibility support.
 - Address: 1485 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3G 0W4
 - Phone: (204) 777-4500, call 877-204-3930 to speak to Apple representatives who are trained in providing support using accessibility services.
- **Government of Manitoba Seniors Hearing Aid Program**
 - Includes information on eligibility, coverage, claims and application criteria towards hearing assessments, purchase of hearing aid(s) and fitting of hearing aid(s).

