National Down Syndrome Congress Policy Brief
Assistive Technology (AT) Devices and Services: PLAIN LANGUAGE

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What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

Assistive Technology, or AT, means anything that helps a child with a disability learn or function.

AT can be:
Low-tech: pencil grips, picture schedules, squishy balls
Mid-tech: calculators, digital recorders
High-tech: tablets, speech-to-text programs

Did you know? AT isn't always fancy—it can be as simple as a picture chart!

AT Services

AT also means the help your child gets to choose, learn, and use these tools.

Your Child's Right to AT

There are laws that say children with disabilities can get AT if they need it:
· IDEA Part C – Birth to age 3: Families can get AT through a plan called an IFSP.
· IDEA Part B – Ages 3–21+: Students can get AT through an IEP.
· ESSA – Students with disabilities can use AT on state tests.
· AT Act – States help people of all ages get AT.

Question: Does your child have an IEP or IFSP that lists helpful tools?

Did you know?

· AT can be low-tech, mid-tech, or high-tech—it's not just computers.
· AT can help with any disability, not just vision or hearing.
· If AT is needed at home and school, the school must provide it.
· Schools must give AT even if they say there's no money.
· Personal devices can be used at school if parents and schools agree.

AT and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Some AT now uses AI.

Good things:
· Helps kids be more independent
· Works in real time
· Fits each child's needs

Challenges:
· Privacy and safety
· Fairness
· Not everyone has access

How to Speak Up for Your Child's AT Needs

1. Think about what is hard—talking, reading, writing, staying organized, homework, tests, or joining in activities.

2. For babies and toddlers—think about moving, playing, and talking.
3. Use a checklist to get ideas:
   a. English
   b. Spanish
4. Make sure AT is written in the IEP or IFSP.
5. Learn about the SETT Framework.
6. Find your state's AT program.

Advocate at the state level for policies and funding that promote AT access!

Final Thought

The right tools can make learning easier and life more fun for kids with disabilities. Ask questions. Learn your rights. Find the tools that help your child shine.

To learn more, read the NDSC Education Policy Brief: Assistive Technology (AT) Devices and Services in English or Spanish