



Selecting Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) devices are items or products that are used to assist an individual to perform a task. It can enable greater independence, comfort, security and inclusion. AT can be used within daily living activities, as well as educational or workplace activities. For example AT can be anything from an adapted game controller to play games to an eyegaze system for controlling a computer.

Selecting the most appropriate assistive technology to assist with a task can be a complex process as there are many factors to consider. Matching the right technology for the person is key to the success of the technology.

Nowadays there are lots of specifically designed assistive technology products as well as universal designed mainstream products to choose from. The characteristics of the environment, characteristics of the person and characteristics of the technology itself must all be carefully considered together with the person at the center so that an optimal solution is found.

Where to start

Build up your knowledge in the area. Talking to people who may experience similar challenges to see how they have overcome their barriers can yield valuable information, as well as talking to users who have equipment installed. What have they found useful or what issues, if any, do they have with equipment?

Assistance

Ask for help from people who are familiar with the area. Assistance may be available from a local occupational therapist, assistive technology service, or college disability service. The process of selecting AT is ideally made with the help of an experienced AT resource person or occupational therapist. They will involve the person in every aspect of the decision process and may include any relevant stakeholders such as family members, teachers or employers. They can

assist the user to consider all the relevant factors relating to the users capabilities and preferences, the environment factors where the technology will be used and the characteristics of the technology. They may also be able to setup trials of equipment or training around specific products.

Here are some question to consider when selecting equipment:

- Does the device meet my needs?
- Is the technology easy to use and setup?
- Is the size and weight of the device manageable?
- Would I be comfortable or self-conscious when using the product?
- Will it suit the environment where I intend to use it; will I need to adapt the environment?
- Do I need training on the product?
- Is training available?
- Will I be able to get support?
- Have I considered all the alternatives?