What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is 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 functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. [20 U.S.C Chapter 33, Section 1401 (25)].

Assistive Technology at ASU:

- Reader Services – Books in alternate format.
- Scan and Read software
  Software developed for blind and visually impaired individuals that offers access to read, edit and manage printed media by scanning it and converting it to digital information.
- Learning Tools
  Software that helps people with learning/reading challenges. The software usually utilizes a voice reader, study aids, and word recognition.
- Math software – Software that helps students to learn math. i.e. Scientific Notebook.
- Portable Talking Dictionary. Also available in Spanish and other languages.
  A hand held device that serves as dictionary and thesaurus. i.e. Franklin Dictionary.
- CCTV (Closed Circuit Television)/ Video Magnifier
  A device that enlarges printed text. i.e. Optelec Clearview.
- Tactile Graphic Maker
- Scientific Talking Calculator
- Screen Reader – Software that reads anything on the screen. i.e. JAWS.
- Screen Magnification program - An application that enlarges anything on the screen.
- Braille Blazer – Printer capable of printing text in braille.
- Reading Edge – Device that scans and reads texts.
- Voice Recognition software – Software that converts voice input to typed text.
- AlphaSmart – Portable notetaking device.
- Tape Recording
- Assistive Listening Device
- TDD/TTY
- Electronic adjustable table, wrist wizard (device that helps to reduce back, neck and wrist pain), ergonomic keyboard and mouse.
- Half-Qwerty keyboard, IntelliKeys keyboard.


For questions or comments, contact Christina Laurentia in Disability Services (870) 972-3964.
SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING THE STUDENT WITH A MOBILITY IMPAIRMENT

1. If notetaking is a problem for this student, you might have copies of your lecture outlines made for him/her.

2. Give thought to structuring lab experiences for someone in a wheelchair. If the student’s arm/hand mobility is limited, could she/he participate in such an experience on a “buddy system” with another student doing the active experience portion of the exercise?

3. It may be necessary to make arrangements for tests to be taken in some alternative manner. Could they be taken orally? Could they be taken with a T.A. doing the writing under dictation from the student? Could the student take the test in the normal manner if given more time for writing and/or use of a computer?

4. Remember that the student with lower body mobility problems ONLY is just like any other student sitting down. Don’t assume there will be difficulties encountered.
SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING THE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING STUDENT

1. The student should always have preferential seating. The student should be seated near the front of the class so that she/he can get as much from hearing as possible and is in a position to get lip-reading cues.

2. Do not talk with your back to the class (as when writing on the chalkboard)... it destroys any chance of the student getting facial or lip-reading cues.

3. If you are going to be showing slides or movies, it would help the hearing impaired student greatly if you could provide an outline or summary of the materials to be covered. She/he is going to be at a disadvantage in trying to process information from such presentations.

4. When questions are asked from the class, it would be of great help to the student if you would repeat the question before answering it. Most likely, the hearing impaired student will not be able to hear their classmates, particularly those who are seated a distance from the student or those who do not speak loudly.

5. Beware of giving procedural information while handing out papers, etc. Make sure such information is clearly understood by the student.

6. Recognize that the student may have need of a note taker for your class. Students who use a sign language interpreter cannot watch the interpreter and take notes at the same time. Looking away causes the student to "miss words".

7. If the student needs to use a sign language interpreter, you might discuss with the student and the interpreter where it would be best for the interpreter to be located to provide the greatest benefit for the hearing impaired student without creating a distraction to the other class members. You may wish to experiment with different placements until you find the most successful one.
Suggestions For Helping Students who are Blind

1. Allow students to record lectures and discussions.

2. Work closely with the student to determine what accommodations will be helpful. Students who are blind have likely encountered many barriers and will be resourceful in determining what works and what does not work for them.

3. Inform students in class that you are available to discuss modifications with any students who need accommodations for a disability. Do not make students feel uncomfortable by focusing on student(s) with disabilities. Making yourself available to all students is an invitation for the student with the disability to approach you. (Include a disability statement in your syllabus about the availability of accommodations).

4. Preferential seating is important for the student. Since visual cues may not be available, you may want to make sure the student is getting as many auditory cues as possible.

5. When greeting a student who is blind, identify yourself by name.

6. Speak at a normal pace and volume. You may continue to use phrases that you normally use such as “See you later” or “See what I mean?” Most persons who are blind use these phrases as well.

7. Give the students plenty of notice in the event that research papers are to be assigned. Be prepared to provide reading lists, syllabi or assignments in advance. This will allow the student time to have the materials read on tape or scanned or provided into another accessible format. Someone may have to assist with research, both in finding materials and in translating them. You may want to extend deadlines for a student due to disability barriers. Important information should be emphasized verbally.

If you are aware that a student with vision loss is enrolled in your course, prepare your course materials in an accessible format ahead of time and this will make the session go more smoothly.

Other Considerations for the Course

1. If you are using Blackboard or visual aids, describe verbally what you are showing the class. Be specific in your descriptions. It is ideal to provide the information that is included on your visual aids to the student in an accessible format before the class period.

2. When pointing to an object or drawing, use the name of the object instead of “this” or “that”. Make objects available for them to explore more fully before or after class.
Suggestions For Helping Students who are Blind (Cont.)

3. If you are reading from a textbook in class, remember that the page numbers in your copy may not correspond to scanned or large print. In addition to providing the page number, also give descriptive information regarding the section you are reading, such as “the fifth paragraph in Chapter 5”.

4. Allow students to use notetaking devices. Devices may include a Braille writer, a laptop computer, or an Alpha Smart,

5. When needed Disability Services will provide a reader to assist in the classroom. The student will know if someone is needed.

6. When appropriate modify the presentation of the materials (the techniques of presenting the information and materials) and the form of student evaluation, but hold all students to the same standard of competency. This ensures that students receive the same quality of education.

Referenced in preparing this document:

”Make A Difference” Tips for Teaching Students Who are Blind or Have Low Vision Handbook produced by Project PACE, Melanie Thornton, Director, UALR.

Other resources were utilized that are available in ASU Disability Services
How Can I Get Students To Talk to Me
(at the right time!) About Their Accommodation Needs?

The most frequently asked question by faculty at workshops is usually "How do I get students with disabilities to ask for accommodations?" Many faculty would be more than willing to discuss accommodations and to provide appropriate accommodations, but many times they do not find out until too late that accommodations are needed because students with disabilities did not approach faculty to discuss their needs. Often, faculty ask if the support service provider could provide a list of students with disabilities at the beginning of each new term so that the instructor could approach the student in the event the student does not initiate contact. While your willingness to take the initiative in such matters is appreciated, it is neither legal for the service provider to offer up such a list, nor is it necessarily in the best interest of the student with a disability. Legally, students have a right NOT to be identified as disabled, if they choose so. They will not get accommodations unless they identify themselves but, that too is their choice. Moreover, while faculty are concerned with maximizing the learning experience in class for their students, the service provider must also be concerned with helping students develop the independence and self-advocacy that will help him/her outside the classroom, while in college and beyond. Students with disabilities need to learn how to explain their disability, describe their needs and negotiate appropriate accommodations. Their need for accommodations will always exist - the skills needed to obtain accommodations should also be developed for use on a "permanent" basis.

For all of these reasons, it is appropriate for students to take the responsibility of identifying themselves and their need for accommodations to faculty, rather than vice versa. There is something that you can do to help students with this process. It is very difficult to have to identify yourself, time after time, as being "different" — and more so for learning disabled students whose disability is invisible and whom you could not identify otherwise. Students will feel more comfortable about identifying themselves if they are approaching someone whom they believe to be receptive to the discussion. You might try including a sentence like this in every course syllabus you put together:

"If there is any student in this class who has need for test-taking or notetaking accommodations, please feel free to discuss this with me."

Experience indicates that, for the most part, the terms "test-taking" and "notetaking accommodations" do not mean anything to the non-disabled students in your classes and they will simply skip over it. To students with disabilities, however, what you have just done is identify yourself as someone who understands that accommodations may be appropriate and, perhaps, has a little knowledge about the accommodation process. You did not say "I'll give you anything you want" — you merely said "Let's talk about it!" Such an invitation can go a long way toward encouraging students with disabilities to approach the instructor early — which is what you want and what they need!

If you have any further questions regarding the handout, call Arkansas State University Disability Services at 870-972-3964.