

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE GUIDE:

TIPS FOR SEARCHING FOR TOOLS



When making purchases there are many elements to consider in how to spend your budget dollars effectively. Below is an evidence based list of items you can consider when looking for new tools.

Generally tools are purchased for one of the following purposes:

- For an individual student to receive FAPE
- As part of UDL, where for certain students it acts as their assistive technology
- As part of an AT library, so students can try out tools and systems

Criteria	Be it low tech, mid tech, or high tech there are many thoughts and solutions when approaching a tool...a peek into the mind of an ATP.
Activity	What activity area are you considering for the student? What areas are they having difficulty with access to the curriculum? Use the SETT process, or a similar paradigm, to learn the student's strengths, weaknesses, and tasks where they need assistance.
Specific task Demand	What part of the activity is difficult for the student? If it is writing... is it the physical task of writing? Is it organization of writing? Do a task analysis.
Performance	Is it easy to learn this device or software product? Will the student be able to use it independently after training? How well does it support the task-demand it is intended to augment or replace? Are there any outside reviews on the seller's website? If not, can you find other sources (e.g. Amazon reviews, QIAT archives)? Does this device/software serve only one purpose or is it flexible? (i.e. could be used for more than one purpose or more than one task)
Ergonomics/Compatibility	Generally would it be usable in a school environment? For software, address compatibility issues like operating system, type of hardware needed, etc.) Is it portable enough for more users. For software, comment on need for installation vs. cloud-based or can the user install software themselves?
Reliability	What is the manufacturer's reputation for reliability? Does it stand up well to normal use? For software, interpret this as the technical reliability. Is it durable? For software, interpret this as length of subscription or availability of updates.
Safety	Is it safe to use? For software, comment on internet safety and/or Children's Online Privacy Protection Act compliance. Is there a power source, is it safe? Is a margin built in for foreseeable misuse?
Manufacturer support and training	Does the AT manufacturer/vendor provide direct support? How available are repair services? At what cost? For software, comment on tech support services. Can this device/software be tried (lease or free trial)? You may need to call the company to ask if they provide loaners? How likely is this device/software to become obsolete? Will it last for a while or will it need to be replaced soon? Does the manufacturer provide training (videos, handouts, guides)?
Cost-Effectiveness	Do the benefits of the device/software provides justify the cost? Are there less expensive devices/software that serve the purpose as well? ***Cost should never be the only deciding factor though if there are two options with the same features it can be a relevant tie breaker***

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Personal Acceptance	<p>Does the device/software “stick out” and advertise/stigmatize the disability of the user? Does the device/software minimize difference or exaggerate difference? Would students like this device and want to use it? Would 21st century learners prefer some other product?</p>
Other Considerations	<p>Can you use Infinitec Group Buy? Can you rent the tool from Infinitec? Could the tool be available through IATP, or TKEN? Does the vendor have pricing for bulk purchases, or school purchases, trial periods, or rentals? If the student is close to transition age, is the family interested in purchasing? <i>(If it is a highly specialized piece of equipment it may be in the interest of the student, family, and district to come to an agreement regarding purchase. Ultimately, a district is responsible, though this also means the district is the owner of the equipment.)</i></p>

TIPS ON FINDING TOOLS

- Google the feature you are looking for. It seems silly and simple, though many resources can be found in this simple way. You can use Google search, as well as searching in the Chrome store, the Apple store, search YouTube/Vimeo etc. Try using terms in the AT Solutions section of the Resource Guides.
- Check major vendors and resellers, if you are at a conference, take time to visit EVERY vendor, even if you don't use them it is good to become familiar.
- Watch a specialized webinar on the tool category - many free webinars exist (though bear in mind, some are product sponsored).
 - Infinitec
 - Center on Technology and Disability
 - Ablenet University
- Check out the February Edition of Closing the Gap magazine, it is always free, with an extensive resource guide.
- Use resources through ATIA - they are the Industry Association!
- Network - Meet your counterparts in nearby districts, ask what they are using. If you have an instructional technology coordinator locally, chat with them. Meet with your librarians. Often we go to different conferences and learning opportunities and miss out on items which could help us all out! Keep up with the tech currently being used in your buildings and what accessibility features are built in!
- Check out the archives on the QIAT listserv <https://qiat.org/archives.html>
- Learn the terms to use through this AT Dictionary <https://www.ctdinstitute.org/library/2017-08-28/assistive-technology-glossary>

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- Search Apps in databases such as this one <http://gatfl.gatech.edu/favorite-search.php>
 - Search for products by area in this database <https://abledata.acl.gov/products-by-category>

:  IPAT_SELECTING-2-blog.pdf  (383.597 KB)
 KATS Choosing AT.pdf  (111.182 KB)
 Kelker and Holt, 2000. Family Guide to AT..pdf  (417.989 KB)