

What is Adaptive Technology?

Adaptive Technologies are hardware and software that help people with disabilities to access computers or other information technologies.

Adaptive Technology for people with physical disabilities

People with physical disabilities can have difficulty using traditional input devices such as keyboards and mice. There are a number of alternative technologies including:

- Alternative and adaptive keyboards which use varying shapes and key layouts
- Alternative and ergonomic mouse (pointing) systems such as trackballs, touch pads and touch screens
- Speech-to-text software, also called voice recognition/voice command software, that allow you to control the computer with your voice
- Software solutions such on-screen keyboards, cursor enlargement programs, etc.

Adaptive Technology for people with visual disabilities

Most people with sensory disabilities learn to use keyboards for input, but require assistance with computer output, some choices are:

- Braille display/output devices and Braille embosser/printers for Braille users.
- Large size monitors
- Screen reading software that will output what is on the screen to your speakers
- Screen magnification and enlargement software that will clearly increase the size of text on your monitor

Adaptive Technology for people with hearing impairments

Alternatives to audio output can assist computer users with hearing disabilities. For example, if the sound volume is turned to zero, a computer may flash the menu bar when audio output is normally used.

Adaptive Technology for people with cognitive impairments

- Software that aids in efficient and accurate input can assist some people compensate for high rates of input errors by using spell checkers, thesauruses, and grammar checkers
- Word prediction programs (software that predicts whole words from fragments) have been used successfully by people with learning disabilities
- Macro software which expands abbreviations can reduce the necessity to memorize keyboard commands and can ease the entry of commonly used text
- Some individuals with learning disabilities find adaptive devices designed for those with visual impairments useful. In particular, large-print displays, alternative colors on the computer screen, and voice output can compensate for some reading problems
- People who have difficulty interpreting visual material can improve comprehension and the ability to identify and correct errors when words are spoken or printed in large fonts

Your Next Steps To Learn More About Adaptive Technology

- Contact Independent Living Centre Kingston for information, referrals and consultations.
- Visit one of the following Web sites:
 - Adaptive Technology Resource Centre, University of Toronto:
<http://www.utoronto.ca/atrc/>
 - Esmerel's Collection of Canadian Adaptive Technology Sites:
<http://www.esmerel.org/adapt/canada.htm>
 - Dawson College Free & Inexpensive Adaptive Technology Database:
http://adaptech.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/fandi_e.php



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