



GETTING THE TECHNOLOGY YOU NEED

Helpful advice on where to begin and how to proceed

1) WHERE DO I BEGIN? WHO CAN I CONTACT?

A very good place to begin is by contacting the local branch of a national organization. The following website provides a thorough database that can help you find the type of assistive technology you need and the companies that provide it: www.abledata.com. The "Information Center" section of the website provides lists of and links to numerous resources, including national and regional organizations that offer information and services.

Another great resource is a book produced by the Alliance for Technology Access entitled ***Computer Resources for People with Disabilities***. This book introduces clearly the current computer hardware and software that can give people with any kind of disability new ways to interact with the world, bringing together user-friendly support, information, and up-to-date answers to all your questions, including: how to make use of A.T., real-life stories about people using A.T., chapters that help users develop an assistive technology plan using worksheets and checklists that help with decision making, information that helps people zero in on the technologies that are most likely to match their abilities and goals, and contact information for support organizations, vendors, publications and online resources. **To purchase: visit the Alliance for Technology Access website at: <http://www.ataccess.org/>**

2) STEPS TO TAKE

The following is a list of steps to take when beginning an effort to access the technology you need:

a) Make a Plan

You've got to start somewhere! Set your goals. Figure out what it is that you need to get you the technology that you want. Establish clearly what it is you are trying to accomplish and work up a clear plan to get there.

**b) Know Your Resources/Do Your Research**

There may be somebody in your life who can help you that you may not have thought of right away, someone who's comfortable with the technology that you need and the best way to access it. This could be a teacher, a friend, perhaps a neighbor. Finding this person might take a few phone calls. Persist until you find that person that has the ability to help you. Remember, the steps start at your front door.

c) Know Your Needs and Abilities

Trust your instincts— nobody knows you like you know yourself. Know your strengths and needs and trust yourself to put it out there, be your own expert. You're the one who knows what you do everyday, how you live, and the type of technology that will enable you in your life. Use these pieces to put together the best solutions for what you need.

d) Build a Circle of Support

These types of things are tough to do all by yourself; they get easier when people are around who can play a supportive role in your life. Of course call your family, your friends, those close to you, but keep in mind that sometimes this circle of support can get expanded with other, less obvious people. Perhaps somebody you know is familiar with technology- this person might be able to sit in on a meeting with you or to help you in some other way. Making these connections can be critical.

e) Know Your Rights and Be Your Own Advocate

Do your research and know your rights. Be ready to act as your own advocate.

f) Don't Take "No" for an Answer

Your search may take a lot of persistence. More than money and brains, you need a willingness to hang in there until you get what you need. Do not be willing to be way-layed by first set of "no's" that you get or the complications that arise. Know that your life is important and the quality of your life is important, and that just because there isn't usually one clear and easy path to finding the assistive technology that you need, you can still maintain your vision to have the resources you need to live a productive life.