

That could work for me!



A Handbook for Adults About Choosing and Using Assistive Technology

*by
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The best way to learn about what assistive technology can do is to use it. But another really great way to learn about it is to listen to the stories of other people who share their AT experiences . As we developed this guide we listened a lot and began to develop some ideas about the important themes in those stories. Thanks to all of the adults and their families and support teams who shared your ideas and experiences to help us understand the important roles of AT in your lives and how AT works for you.

Feel free to make as many copies of ***That could work for me!*** as you want, but please retain the authors' and CATO information

Resources

If you'd like to find out more about self determination and assistive technology, here are some resources we looked at as we wrote this book.

Assistive Technology Internet Modules,

From OCALI, available online at https://atinternetmodules.org/dash.php?cat=dash_tab_mn

The Assistive Technology Internet Modules for Adults include the following titles about how adults with disabilities choose and use AT.

- AAC Assessment: Adults with DD
- Assistive and Smart Home Technology for Independent Living
- AT Assessment Strategies for Adults: Part I
- AT Assessment Strategies for Adults: Part II
- Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) / Speech-to-Text

Assistive Technology Service Delivery: A Practical Guide for Disability and Employment Professionals,

Shay, A. (Ed.), (2019. retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-812979-1.00009-6>

This guide which addresses processes and strategies for implementing AT in adult employment settings

Education Tech Points: A Framework for Assistive Technology (3rd Ed.).

Bowser, G., & Read, P. (2012). For additional information, visit www.educationtechpoints.org

While originally designed to be used in schools, the Education Tech Points model also applies to adult models of AT services. *That might work for me!* is an adaptation of the original student guide *Hey! Can I try that?*.

Center for Self Determination Theory

<https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/>

The website discusses self-determination research, offers questionnaires and metrics.

TAKE CHARGE for the Future

Powers, L., Turner, A., & Westwood, D., (2001) TAKE CHARGE for the Future: A Controlled Field-Test of a Model to Promote Student Involvement in Transition Planning, *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* 24(1):89-104

A discussion of the elements of self-determination and self-advocacy for students in transition from high school to community.

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There are many things that people use to help with tasks such as budgeting, reading, self care and their work. If tasks are hard for you, there are some tools that you could try.

You could:

- Use a tablet or note taker instead of writing by hand.
- Look at a series of pictures to help you remember the steps to doing your laundry.
- Ask your digital voice assistant to tell you what a word means..
- Use a computer that reads out loud from the internet to help you find your favorite sports team's scores.
- Make lists on your phone to help you organize your day.
- Use your voice to dictate emails and texts

There are many, many more tools you could try. That list was just a sample of some that many people use. Tools that help you to do things that are hard for you (because you have a disability) are called assistive technology. That's AT for short!

Learning about new kinds of AT can be fun and exciting. It can also help you to do new things that you may have thought were too hard for you. If you find the right tool, you may be able to improve your:

- self care
- independence
- performance at work
- independent living
- social time with your friends.

The important thing is to know what you want to do.

Once you have an idea of what you want to work on, you can start by talking about it with someone who can help you find out about AT. There are so many new kinds of technology that no one knows about all of them. It's a good idea to have the help of people on your support team who understand the kinds of tools and supports that you might need.

TAKING THE LEAD: *Self Determination and AT*

It is important for you to be able to make decisions for yourself. And then follow through on those decisions. The ability to do this is called “self determination”. Self determination means you have goals and work toward them. It also means you know your strengths and weaknesses. Self determination doesn’t just happen. You learn it. Your **support team, family and friends** can help you to learn self determination, but **much** of the work is up to you. One part of self determination is to think about what things you want to do that are really hard for you and what tools (or AT) might help with doing them.

If you are reading this, you probably have already taken the first step to finding the right tool. In the next part of this **workbook**, we’ll tell you some stories about other **people** who use **AT** and the steps they took to identify what they wanted to do, chose their tools and learned to use them.

If you'd like to find out more about self determination in general, we suggest you visit the website of the Center For Self Determination at <http://self-determinationtheory.org>

The Center for Self-Determination is a non-profit organization, operating as the primary clearinghouse, technical assistance source on Self-Determination in the United States. The Center is devoted to working within the public and private sector to move power and authority over resources directly to individuals with disabilities, families and allies.

Tomeo's Story

Tomeo loves coffee. He especially loves fancy coffee drinks from the local coffee shop. Sometimes he gets them hot and other times he gets a frozen whipped drink. The only problem is that the baristas can't take his order because his speech is hard to understand due to his disability. Ordering anything in a store or restaurant is almost impossible.

During his ISP meeting, Tomeo told his support team that, for one of his goals, he wanted to figure out how he could go to the coffee shop and order for himself. He knew he needed help right now but wanted to do it all by himself in the next year. His team added the goal to his ISP (Individualized Service Plan).

Tomeo and his team started with coffee choices. Tomeo showed them the things he usually ordered from the coffee shop menu and they made picture cards that had the coffee choices he liked best and some additional cards for extras like sprinkles and extra whipped cream. When the picture cards were complete, Tomeo practiced until he could match each card to the coffee drinks he wanted and he was ready to order his own drink for the first time.

On the first day, because he had practiced, Tomeo ordered the coffee he wanted with no help from anyone else. But the third time Tomeo came in to order, the place was packed. The baristas wanted to take his order but didn't have time or counter space for him to pull out his cards. They finally just asked someone else what he wanted and he got his coffee. But Tomeo was not happy. He really wanted to order his own coffee.

The support staff member who went to the coffee shop with him learned that there were apps called augmented communication apps that would allow Tomeo to make choices and the app would speak them. It was even free. The team thought that Tomeo could order using his phone instead of the cards, so they downloaded and set up the app..

Since Tomeo already knew the coffee pictures, he was able to learn the app quickly after it was installed. During a quiet time at the shop, Tomeo showed the baristas his new AC system. He had prepared his order before he entered the coffee shop and ordered his drink with no difficulty the first time and every other time he came in even when it was busy. Tomeo had taken the first step to reaching his goal for independence.

DOING MY WORK:

What's the Problem?

Before you can decide which AT might help you, you need to think about what you need help with now but want to do on your own. Your Individualized Service Plan (ISP) meeting is a good place to start. Your support team will help you set some goals for yourself.

In a book called *Take Charge for the Future**, the authors tell us that the steps for setting goals are

1. Look at what you are doing now.
2. Look at what you want to do better.
3. Choose one activity you want to work on.

Make sure that your goal is important to you and that you can really imagine meeting it. Some people have an especially hard time with tasks that have multiple steps. They may remember some of the steps but forget others that are really important. Even though you may be able to do a complicated task when someone is helping you, doing it on your own can be harder. Many people use AT to help them be more independent when they do difficult tasks like these. AT to help you remember steps in a task could be a book with pictures of each step, a written checklist, or even an app that reminds you what to do first and what to do next.

*Powers, L., Turner, A., & Westwood, D., (2001) TAKE CHARGE for the Future: A Controlled Field-Test of a Model to Promote Student Involvement in Transition Planning, Career Development for Exceptional Individuals 24(1):89-104



Paola's Problem

Paola had been working for four years at the car dealership near her home. Three days a week, she came in to do recycling, pick up the trash and put dealership stickers on the new car brochures. Paola loves being around cars. She loves them so much that she really wanted to learn to do a job working directly in the auto shop. She thought that she might be able to be a person who washes and details the cars to get them ready for customers.

She talked with her boss and her case manager about her idea but they both said that they thought this was a complicated job and she might have trouble remembering all the steps. Paola really wanted them to let her try. Her case manager suggested that there might be accommodations that would help Paola remember the things she needed to do. Paola was sure she was ready for more challenges!

What kind of problem are you having? Fill out Worksheet #1 and discuss it with your **support team**.

MY STORY:

1. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Things that are the hardest for me

- at work or school: _____
- in the community: _____
- at home: _____
- other _____

My goal is to be able to (examples: follow a schedule, understand directions, remember steps, etc.) _____

I deas I have about tools that might help me: _____

What I want to tell my team and others about my work and independence:

Questions I want to ask: _____

FIGURING IT OUT:

What's the Situation?

The best way to get help in figuring out what AT you need is to make sure that the people on your team know as much about you as possible. **They need to know your strengths.** They need to know about the things that are hard for you. And they need to know about the places that you do those hard things.

Now that you have talked about what you want to be able to do, you are ready to set a goal. If you are going to figure out how to meet this goal, you need to figure out what AT would do to make things easier for you. Maybe you want it to help you follow a schedule. Maybe you want it to help you read. It will help your team to know about things you use now. How do those things help? What else do you wish they could do? You probably even use some AT already! Some AT devices like calculators and timers are used by a lot of people. You may just need to use them in a different way or use them more often.

Another good thing to think about is the things you have seen others do. What tools have you seen your friends use that you might want to try too?

Finally, what have you tried already that did not work? What went wrong? If you could have changed it in some way, would it have helped more?



Paola's Situation

When Paola was in school, she had often used a book of pictures to help her learn the steps to difficult tasks. That strategy had worked for her before, but sometimes it was hard to remember which picture she should look at. She was willing to try a picture list again, but wondered if there were other ways for her learn and remember.

Her boss knew that Paola loved to watch YouTube videos on her breaks and wondered if she could learn about car detailing by watching some of those. Everyone thought that might be a good idea. The supervisor for the car wash department said "There must be an app for that" and the team agreed to find out if there was!

What kinds of things have you tried to help with you goal? What other things would you like to try? Fill out Worksheet #2 and discuss it with your support team.

YOUR STORY:

2. WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

What I want AT to do for me: _____

What I do now to help with this problem: _____

AT I already use: _____

What have I already tried that did not work? Why didn't it work? What would have made it better? _____

Things that other people use that might help me: _____

What I want to tell my team about what I want to try:

Questions I want to ask: _____

TRYING NEW THINGS:

Would I use this AT?

When you have tried a new tool to help you meet your goal, you probably found some things you liked about it and some things you didn't like. It is important that everyone knows how you feel about the tools you try. But sometimes, in a meeting, it's hard to say what you think.

What if you don't like AT? What if you don't like something about the AT that you tried? The hard part about telling people you don't like something or that you don't want to do what they suggested, is that you may have to stand up for yourself without **arguing**. This means that you have to be assertive. **Assertive does not mean getting mad**. It means being clear and honest in what you say and telling people what you want.

These are some keys to being assertive with people:

1. Look them in the eye.
2. Speak calmly and firmly.
3. If they disagree, repeat what you said and explain your reasons.



Paola's Look at Some Tools

Paola talked with her team and with her supervisor at work. They helped her make a list of tasks she needs to do in the new job and AT solutions that might make them easier. Here's the list they started with.

- *Pictures in a book to remember the steps*
- *A chart on the wall with pictures and written directions*
- *General videos on line about how to detail cars*
- *Apps that could help with remembering tasks*

After they talked more they made a plan. First they would make a step by step chart with pictures and post it on the wall of the carwash bay. Paola could look at it when she was unsure what to do next. Paola didn't think she'd use the picture chart because it was too babyish but she agreed that they could post it in the bay until she learned the steps.

The supervisor also agreed to make a short customized video of the steps of basic auto washing and detailing. He said he thought he'd put it up on YouTube because it would be a good training tool for other new employees who were learning the routine. But the team agreed that it would help Paola to load it directly to her phone for playback.

What do you want to try? Fill out worksheet #3 and discuss it with your team.

YOUR STORY:

3. WOULD THIS AT WORK FOR ME?

Things I like about the AT I tried: _____

Things I don't like about the AT I tried: _____

If there was more than one tool to try, the one I liked best was: _____

Why I liked it best: _____

If I was the only one using technology, how did that feel? Is it OK? _____

Things I want to tell my team and other people about the AT that I tried: _____

Questions I want to ask: _____

Making a Plan:

What will I use and how will I use it?

Now that you have tried some things, it's time to make a plan. That means you will have to decide exactly what you are going to do. A lot of people pick a goal like "Do better with my budget". That is an OK goal, but to make it a really great goal you need to make a goal that says exactly what you will do. One way to make sure that a goal is a great goal is to ask yourself what it will look like if you meet your goal. If you can imagine what it would look like, you can tell if you are there!

Here are some sample goals that you might be able to see.

- I'll be able to stay within my budget.
- I'll be able to get to work independently on the bus.
- I'll be able to find out about my football team's scores and the team schedule.

People don't always agree. Sometimes you may not agree with the plan that the rest of the people on your team want to make for you. When that happens, you need to negotiate. Negotiating means working out something you can both agree on. There are four main steps to negotiation.

1. Listen to what other people want.
2. Think about what you want.
3. Decide what you can live with.
4. Compromise - Make a plan together that everyone can live with.



Paola's AT Plan

Paola loved watching the video on her phone. She watched it over and over when she was not at work and soon was talking along with the narrator. She and her job coach were allowed to practice on one car every day, and she showed everyone that she really could do the job. But she still wasn't able to remember all the steps. When the job coach tried to teach her to use the picture chart, she still insisted that it was too babyish and refused to use it.

After a day or two of this, the job coach looked for an app and found one called "Next Steps" which was designed for planning complicated tasks. It let you make a list of steps and then add pictures and even spoken words to the list. It would work on Paola's phone and they could use the same photos that were on the wall chart to create the list. When it was set up and Paola saw it, she loved it. She thought that picture charts were embarrassing but an app on her phone was very grown-up.

The team added a car detailing goal to Paola's ISP. It said that in the six months until her next ISP review, she would be able to do all the steps for car washing and detailing independently and in 20 minutes or less.

If you think are ready to use some AT on an every day basis fill out Worksheet #4. Then discuss it with your team.

YOUR STORY:

4. WHAT WILL I USE AND HOW WILL I USE IT?

What will I do with this AT

- at home: _____
- at work: _____
- in the community: _____
- other: _____

How do I think AT that I have tried might help me meet my goals?

What problems do I see in meeting these goals? _____

What is my opinion about what we should do? Do I agree with the team?

Do I need to compromise? How am I willing to compromise? _____

Things I want to tell my team about AT: _____

Questions I want to ask : _____

USING AT:

What needs to be done?

Having an AT tool is not the same as being able to use it. Some AT tools are easy to use and don't take much to keep them going. Other tools, like **tablets and smart phones** are more complicated and you will need to know a lot about them to make sure they work correctly.

Here's some questions that might help you think about using your AT every day. Only you know the kind of help you need. That means only you can really answer these questions.

1. What do I need to do every day to make sure my AT is working?
2. What kind of help will I need from my **support team** and others?
3. What will I need to learn in order to use my AT?
4. What things do I need to have with me to use my AT?

You might want to consider asking one of the **people on your support team** to be your "coach" for your AT. It might be a **family member** or one of the other people who work with you that you can go to for help. No matter who you choose, it's a good idea to make your plan with that person and make sure he or she knows how it's going.



Paola Using AT

Paola was really excited about using her phone to help her do her job. She got off to a good start the first couple of days she used it and one day her job coach didn't need to give her any help at all to finish the car. But on the third day she couldn't figure out how to find and open the app before she walked into the car bay. She asked her supervisor for help and they made a simple set of picture directions that they put on a card and taped inside the door of her locker. She could cue up the app and tasks before it was time to go in to work.

There was another bigger problem with using the phone app. Paola's job washing and detailing cars involved a lot of water. Her parents were very concerned that she would drop it in a puddle and ruin the entire phone. Everyone, including Paola searched the Internet for waterproof cases and when they all compared notes, they found a case that was water resistant but they were not sure it would be enough. Then someone found a waterproof phone pouch developed to use in kayaks and canoes. It was inexpensive and Paola could use it even if her hands were wet. It even came with a neck strap so she would have her hands free.

If you think are ready to use some AT on an every day basis fill out Worksheet #5 Then discuss it with your team.

YOUR STORY:

5. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

What kind of help will I need to use my technology? _____

What will I need to learn in order to make my AT work? _____

What will I need to do every day to make my AT work? _____

What things do I need to have with me to use my AT? _____

Problems I am having with my AT. _____

Things I want to tell others about my AT. _____

Questions I want to ask. _____

REVIEWING THE PLAN:

How is my AT working for me?

You are learning things every day. If you've been using AT, you have probably been learning things about it too. You may have found some things you wanted it to do better. You may have found that you don't need it as much as you thought you would. You may have found that you want to use it more than you thought.

It's a good idea to sit down with your team and review how things are going. You should do this at least once a year but you might want to do it more often. When you meet with your team, you could talk about questions like these.

1. What have I accomplished?
2. How has my AT been helping me?
3. Do I still want to use this AT?
4. What else do I want my AT to do for me?
5. What's next?

When you talk about the answers to these questions, you might decide that things are going well and you want to keep using your AT in just the way you have been using it. Or you might find that you need a change. The most important thing to remember is that AT is a tool to help you. It's your job to say how it helps



Paola's New Goal

At her next ISP meeting, Paola's team asked her how it was going at work. Paola was proud to tell the team that she was now working in the car detailing for two mornings a week. This was in addition to the hours she was still working on her old clerical tasks. Paola had been able to meet her goal and increase her work hours as a result.

When the team asked Paola what kinds of goals she might set for this year, she said that she wished she knew how to take the bus to her job site and that her mom didn't have to drive her. After her success with Paola's car detailing goal, the team was enthusiastic about looking for ways to help Paola learn this new skill. Everyone knew it would take more work and more learning. Paola knew riding the bus by herself might be difficult. She hoped she could do it, but she wasn't sure. She was sure she knew the things she would need to do to find out!

If you think are ready to use some AT on an every day basis fill out Worksheet #6. Then discuss it with your team.

YOUR STORY:

6. HOW IS MY AT WORKING FOR ME?

How I use the AT now: _____

Things I like about the AT I use: _____

What isn't working for me: _____

Other tasks I wish I had help with: _____

My future plans: _____

Changes in my AT that will be needed because of my future plans: _____

Things I want to tell my team about my AT: _____

Questions I want to ask: _____

