



Tips for Finding and Buying Assistive Technology (AT)

So, you think you know what AT product you need, and you are going to buy it with personal funds. How can you be sure you are selecting the “right” product? How can you get the best price? Here’s a few hints to get you started.

AT Act Programs are a Good Place to Start.

A good way to think about AT is by identifying function – what is it the device will help a person do, like read text, type, hear the TV, dial the phone, rise more easily from a chair? [Contact your AT Act Program](#) for ‘information and assistance’ to help narrow down the appropriate AT category. Depending upon the cost and complexity of the device in which you are interested, a recommendation may be to explore a formal evaluation, and/or to borrow the item from their device lending program. The AT Act Program may also offer to arrange a device demonstration that provides individuals with ‘hands on’ experience with AT devices in order to make an informed decision. [AT Act Programs provide many free services.](#) Most often there is no charge for information and assistance or a device demonstration. There is sometimes a nominal fee associated with borrowing a device to help cover shipping costs.

Ask the AT Act Program for a demonstration of comparable products that have similar features but different prices.

If there’s a specific product, the AT Act Program may be able to introduce other device(s) with more (or fewer) features that better fit one’s needs and pocketbook! Or check out two or more similar devices from the lending library, ‘to try before you buy’, to ensure the purchased device meets the individual’s needs in the intended setting.

The AT Act Program may be able to help you find funding sources.

Even if paying “out of pocket” is the only way to get the needed AT, the AT Act Program may know of other possibilities – public programs, community organizations, or other sources for grants or cash loans. In addition, some

AT Act Programs administer projects that distribute specialized equipment such as telecommunication devices to eligible residents. Use the [Find Your AT Act Program](#) directory to identify program services (i.e. state financing options) and the appropriate contact person(s). Funding sources, programs, and services may vary from program to program.

Use credit cards with care.

Interest rates on credit card purchases not paid 'in full' each month could add costs to the device(s) being purchased. It may be better to use one of the "alternative financing programs" if one is available through your AT Act Program. Use the directory for more information.

Shop mainstream retailers' stores, catalogs, and websites.

Many products such as ergonomic keyboards or smart home systems are available for purchase at 'generic' retailers like Best Buy, Staples, Home Depot, CVS, or Walmart. Not all retailers recognize the term 'assistive technology'. AT devices may be listed under headings such as 'health and wellness', 'disability aids', and 'home health care'. Compare prices with other mainstream retailers, as well as with 'specialized' resellers.

Comparison shop among 'specialized' resellers.

Some AT companies compile items from a range of manufacturers or vendors. Depending on the size of the company and other factors, prices may vary considerably. For example, a recent search found variation of more than \$100 for a "Go Talk 20+" communication device among various vendors.

Factor in additional costs like shipping and handling.

Shipping and handling costs can add dollars to the purchase price. Consider whether the item is available at a nearby "brick and mortar" retailer, or whether free shipping is available through an online purchase.

Cheaper isn't always better.

Check for unsolicited product reviews on product websites. What do reviews say about the durability and functionality of the product? What about a warranty and customer service? Is there a return policy? Remember to reach out to the AT Act program in your state or territory if you have questions or need additional guidance about a specific piece of AT. It pays to do your homework prior to purchasing a new device that you may use for years to come!

How do I find out more about the Assistive Technology program and services in my state? Go to the webpage of the AT3 Center and find the program in your state or territory at <https://at3center.net/state-at-programs/>.

For more general information or if you have questions, please contact the AT3 Center at <https://at3center.net/contact-us/>.

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