Tech It Easy (Text only version. All pictures and special formatting has been removed)

Access Technologies, Inc

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Reading, Writing and Organization Apps: Built-in vs. Advanced

Mobile devices come with assistive technology (AT) that can help with reading, writing and organization tasks. While these built-in features vary among mobile brands, for our article, we will focus on iOS systems that are found on iPhones, iPads and iPod Touch devices.

With school just around the corner, now is a great time to explore these tools. So let’s get started. Most built-in AT tools can be activated on your iOS device through Settings > General > Accessibility. Advanced apps, both free or purchased, are available through your App Store icon. Once in the App Store, you can explore apps by Categories or if you know the name of the app, simply use the Search feature.

For reading difficulties iOS has two Text-to-Speech (TTS) options to consider. Speak Selections lets you select blocks of text to be read aloud, while Speak Screen reads entire pages of text. Both TTS options have the ability to highlight the words as they are spoken; providing reinforcement as the individual sees the words being read aloud. The reading speed and pronunciation of words can also be adjusted.

After exploring these built-in tools, you may wish to consider a TTS app with more advanced options, such as Voice Dream Reader. This is a purchased app ($14.99), but the added features may be worth it. Such as, Voice Dream Reader’s ability to display words smoothly with synchronized speech; designed to provide enhanced comprehension and knowledge retention. Some individuals find the auto-scrolling and full-screen, distraction-free view allows them to focus better when reading. More advanced features include the ability to pause, rewind and change the reading speed, as well change the font, size, spacing and color.

Prismo and KNFB Reader are two examples of scanning apps that are also designed to assist individuals with reading difficulties. Both of these purchased apps ($9.99 and $99.99 respectfully) are scanning apps; meaning they let you take a picture of what you want to read and then the app reads it aloud to you.

For writing difficulties there are several built-in tools to explore, such as Dictation, or speech-to-text. Simply press the microphone button on the bottom left of the onscreen keyboard and begin talking. Dictation quickly recognizes what you are saying. The iOS system also includes a word prediction tool, called QuickType; available in the onscreen keyboard. Both of these tools are turned on or off through Settings > General > Keyboard.

The following purchased apps provide more enhanced writing support. iReadWrite by textHELP ($19.99) includes Phonetic Spell Checker, Text-to-Speech, Word Prediction, Homophone and Confusables Checker.

Typ-O HD ($9.99) is designed with a powerful, by topic word prediction engine. Select from a list of 7 topics including math, biology, history, etc, to fine-tune the predicted words. Typ-O also allows you to have the suggested words in the prediction list read aloud before placing the words in your document; allowing individuals using iPads to write with more confidence.

For concept mapping on an iOS device, you may wish to explore Popplet Lite, a free concept mapping app designed to help individuals capture and organize their thoughts, then create a visual brainstorming board. The free version is limited to one concept board.

iCardSort is a purchased ($9.99) brainstorming app. Type each word, option or concept on a card. Add images or change the card color based on your project. Then, visually organize your ideas by dragging the cards to form groups or specify an ordering.

Inspiration Maps ($9.99) allows individuals to build diagrams, graphic organizers and outlines. Choose between built-in concept templates or design your own diagram.

 NOTE: Uncertain which app is right for you or your student? Schedule a free demonstration or borrow an iPad from our Library and give these apps a try.

Pages 2 – 6 of this edition of Tech It Easy contain listings of new durable medical and/or assistive technology devices that are available for sale through our Assistive Technology MarketPlace.

NOTE: Shop the MarketPlace on TWO DOLLAR OFF Tuesdays, and save two dollars off your purchase.

Page 7 - 9 of this edition of Tech It Easy contain our Bargain Basement. The Bargain Basement section is a listing of slightly used items which are also available for sale online in our Assistive Technology MarketPlace.

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Ask REMI!

Dear Remi,

My grandson uses switch operated toys. The toys and switches are expensive. Do you know of any DIY switch building and toy adaptation workshops? Thanks! DIY Grandma.

Dear DIY Grandma,

ATI has held annual DIY switch building workshops in the past, and our Specialists would enjoy bringing these activities back! Perhaps we could even develop a series of hands-on workshops.

We can start with switch building basics, then move on to adapting battery operated toys, but the projects don’t have to stop there. Some parents (and grandparents) have also expressed interest in 3D printed switches and other assistive technology building workshops. Let’s put our CREATIVE HATS on and get BUILDING

~ Remi.

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AT Make and Take Workshop

WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

creative minds to help shape the workshops

people interested in designing, modifying or repairing gadgets

ALSO LOOK FOR:

An individual who has a 3D printer and would like to assist in building some basic assistive technologies

Call 503-361-1201 or email info@accesstechnologiesinc.org

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Learn about a FREE Equipment Program

iCanConnect—Oregon

If you have significant combined hearing and vision loss, you know first-hand that sending emails or chatting on the phone can be difficult.

iCanConnect offers free communication equipment and training so you can keep in touch . . . and be more independent.

Contact ATI to learn about the program’s income and disability guidelines. Refer someone you know or apply for the program yourself.

Phone: (503) 361-1201

Toll Free: (800) 677-7512

Email: info@accesstehnologiesinc.org

Web: [www.accesstechnologiesinc.org](http://www.accesstechnologiesinc.org)