

Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. There is a wide range of assistive technology (AT) tools available to help students who struggle with writing. Some of these tools help students circumvent the actual physical task of writing, while others facilitate proper spelling, punctuation, grammar, word usage, and organization.

<http://www.washington.edu/accessit/articles?109>

<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/assistive-technology/960-writing-tools.gs>

Abbreviation Expanders

Used with word processing, these software programs allow a user to create, store, and re-use abbreviations for frequently-used words or phrases. This can save the user keystrokes and ensure proper spelling of words and phrases he has coded as abbreviations.

Products to consider:

- [EZ Keys for Windows, Words+, Inc.](#)
- [Gus! Access Keyboard, Gus Communications, Inc.](#)

Alternative Keyboards

These programmable keyboards have special overlays that customize the appearance and function of a standard keyboard. Students who have LD or have trouble typing may benefit from customization that reduces input choices, groups keys by color/location, and adds graphics to aid comprehension.

Graphic Organizers and Outlining Tools

Graphic organizers and outlining programs help users who have trouble organizing and outlining information as they begin a writing project. This type of program lets a user "dump" information in an unstructured manner and later helps him organize the information into appropriate categories and order.

Products to consider:

- [Inspiration](#)
- [Kidspiration](#)
- [Draftbuilder](#)

Portable Word Processors

A portable word processor is a lightweight device that is easy to transport (e.g., from classroom to home). It can be helpful to kids who may have trouble writing by hand and prefer to use a keyboard. Word processing allows the user to edit and correct his written work more efficiently than doing so by hand.

Products to consider:

- [Neo](#) (used to be AlphaSmart)
- [Fusion](#)
- [Quickpad](#)

Talking spell checkers and electronic dictionaries

Talking spell checkers and electronic dictionaries can help a poor speller select or identify appropriate words and correct spelling errors during the process of writing and proofreading. Talking devices "read aloud" and display the selected words onscreen, so the user can see and hear the words.

What type(s) of learning difficulty do these tools address?

This type of tool benefits people who struggle with: [writing](#)/spelling.

Products to consider:

- [Franklin Electronic Publishers](#) - spelling and reference tools
- [Clever Keys](#) - free dictionaries and thesaurus online
- [WordWeb Pro](#) - dictionary and thesaurus

Speech synthesizers and screen readers

These systems can display and read aloud text on a computer screen, including text that has been typed by the user, scanned in from printed pages (e.g., books, letters), or text appearing on the Internet.

What type(s) of learning difficulty do these tools address?

This type of tool may benefit people who struggle with: [reading](#) and [writing](#).

Products to consider:

- [ClassMate Reader](#)
- [Read and Write Gold](#) (integrates multiple AT techniques)
- [Read and Write Gold Mobile](#)
- [Write:OutLoud®](#)

Clicker 4

Clicker is a writing and multimedia tool. Designed for children of all abilities. It has a wide range of accessibility options for users who cannot use a mouse or keyboard.