



Assistive Technology Tools: Reading

By: Kristin Stanberry and Marshall H. Raskind (2009)

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There is a wide range of assistive technology (AT) tools available to help individuals who struggle with reading. While each type of tool works a little differently, all of these tools help by presenting text as speech. These tools help facilitate decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension.

AT tools that assist with reading fall into several categories:

Audio books & publications

Recorded books allow users to listen to text and are available in a variety of formats, such as audiocassettes, CDs, and MP3 downloads. Special playback units allow users to and search and bookmark pages and chapters. Subscription services offer extensive electronic library collections. This type of tool may help people who struggle with reading.

Products and services to consider

- **Audible.com**
- **Book Courier**
- **Bookshare**
- **Kurzweil 3000™ Literacy and Reading Programs**
- **Recorded Books on PlayAway**
- **Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)**
- Every state library acts as a distribution point for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which has a large collection of books in audio format. Visit **National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped** to search the catalog. Certification of disability is required.
- A growing number of local and university libraries are providing downloadable audio books through a service called NetLibrary. You have to have a compatible PC or MP3 player (Windows Media Player ready) in order to listen to them. Ask your library if they offer this service.
- **Unabridged** is a source of digital audio books for people in CA, CO, DE, IL, MA, NH, OH, OR, or Texas who are blind or visually challenged. Certification of disability by your participating local library is

required.

Resources to help you evaluate assistive technology for your child

- [Consumer Tips for Evaluating Assistive Technology Products](#)

Optical character recognition

This technology allows a user to scan printed material into a computer or handheld unit. The scanned text is then read aloud via a speech synthesis/screen reading system. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is available as stand-alone units, computer software, and as portable, pocket-sized devices. OCR may benefit people who struggle with reading.

Products to consider

- [WYNN™ Literacy Software Solution](#)
- [Kurzweil 3000™](#)
- [Kurzweil 3000™ USB Port/Flash Drive](#)
- [The Quicktionary Reading Pen](#)

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Paper-based computer pen

This technology records and links audio to what a person writes using the pen and special paper. It enables the user to take notes while simultaneously recording someone (e.g., a teacher) speaking. The user can later listen to any section of his notes by touching the pen to his corresponding handwriting or diagrams. This type of tool may benefit people who struggle with writing, listening, memory, and reading.

Products to consider

- [Pulse Smartpen by Livescribe](#)

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Speech synthesizers/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. This type of tool may benefit people who struggle with reading and writing.

Products to consider

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

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Variable-speed tape recorders

Tape recorders/players allow a user to listen to pre-recorded text or to capture spoken information (e.g., a classroom lecture) and play it back later. Variable speed control (VSC) tape recorders speed up or slow down the playback rate without distorting the "speaker's" voice. This tool may help people who struggle with reading and listening.

Products to consider

- **Independent Living Aids**
- **MaxiAids** (various recorders)
- **Handi-Cassette**

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The assistive technology products listed on this site have been compiled under the direction of Marshall Raskind, Ph.D. This does not represent a comprehensive list. The inclusion of any product is not intended as an endorsement. The information is provided to guide parents and educators in selecting products to meet children's specific needs.



http://www.Idonline.org/article/Assistive_Technology_Tools%3A_Reading?theme=print

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