

GUILFORD COLLEGE

ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Adaptive technologies (AT) refer to software and/or devices that enhance the ability of students to gather, manipulate, understand, and use information. Students with disabilities should consider the acquisition of adaptive technology skills as fundamental in securing equitable access. That being said, students with disabilities who strive for success at college need to become experts about their own disabilities and what strategies for accommodating those disabilities serve them best in the postsecondary educational setting. For some students the most promising accommodations involve the use of adaptive technologies that complement effective learning strategies and study skills. Students with disabilities who register with the Accessibility Resource Center can receive AT orientation and have access to AT devices and computer workstations throughout Guilford. The following sections provide a starting point for students seeking to enhance their skill set for college by employing adaptive tools.

I. ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY PREPARATION

Checklist For Adaptive Technology Use

Planning and preparation are keys to students benefiting from AT use. Adaptive technologies often require orientation plus practice for students to achieve results they desire. Students with that mind set should consider taking the following actions:

1. **Plan Ahead:** If you plan to succeed in college, plan way ahead. **TIME** is of the essence. It takes a significant amount of **TIME** to research computers and adaptive technologies. It may take quite a bit of **TIME** to find the finances to purchase the appropriate equipment. **TIME** will pass while you locate the proper vendor and/or orientation. Learning to use a computer is a process that takes **TIME**. Learning to use a computer with adaptive technologies is even more **TIME** consuming. It will take **TIME** to learn the unique computing environment on campus and how to utilize whatever adaptive equipment is in place.
2. **Learn to Use a Computer:** Even if you plan to study something non-technical you need to know how to use a computer, especially if your disability makes writing and/or reading difficult in some way. With the help of adaptive software and/or devices, computers can help you to do things that are essentially non-computing tasks, such as reading a book, doing math, or engaging in research. If you plan to study something that is even remotely technical, you can count on a computer being an integral part of your college experience. The following are basic computer skills that every SFC student (especially those with disabilities) should have:
 - a. **Keyboarding Skill:** These skills are especially important for students who are blind or have visual impairments, as much of the adaptive technology geared for visual impairments is operated via the keyboard. Students with manual and fine- finger dexterity disabilities should at the very least be familiar with the layout of the standard keyboard and how to use sticky keys and/or mouse keys.
 - b. **Internet and Email Skills:** There is an enormous amount of information available via the Internet, and many college courses today use the Internet to some extent. Learn what browsing is an how to do it, how to search and use the Internet for research, and how to use e-mail. Mozilla Firefox or Internet Explorer both have features which make them more accessible to those with disabilities.
 - c. **Windows Operating System:** Although the Graphical User Interface (GUI) of Windows has revolutionized computers for many people, it has made computers increasingly difficult for many people with disabilities to use, especially those with visual impairments and blindness. Some form of adaptive technology and special training will likely be needed to be able to learn and use Windows.
 - d. **Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) Navigation Skills:** SF expects students to use CANVAS for many course functions for lecture, hybrid and online classes.
 - e. **Banner Account Navigation Skills:** These skills are critical as Guilford expects students to use Banner a secure web-based system, to register for or drop courses, pay fees, browse for course availability, access student information over the Internet etc.
3. **Know Appropriate Adaptive Technologies for Disabilities:** Make it your business to find out what technology is appropriate to accommodate your disability.
 - a. What are your educational disability-related difficulties? Taking Class Notes? Reading? Writing?

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCE CENTER

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- Using a computer? Organization? Using equipment such as microscopes?
- b. What do you need to be able to overcome these difficulties? This can be an easy question or a hard one to answer. Often the answers don't become clear until you do the next step.
 - c. What adaptive technology exists that may help me? To answer this one, you need to do some research. It is an expensive, but very common mistake, to choose the wrong adaptive technology, either because the need is not clearly identified, or because the functions of the adaptive technology are misunderstood.
4. Consider Examples of Adaptive Technology for Specific Disabilities
- a. Learning Disabilities: Extra-large monitors, electronic note-taking devices, document reading software that converts text to speech output, typing echo software, spell-checkers, word-prediction software, concept mapping software, scanners and OCR software to convert hard-copy text to computer text, voice- recognition typing programs.
 - b. Visual Impairments: Extra-large monitors, screen-enlargement and screen-reading software, typing echo software, CCTV to print material, scanners to convert hard-copy text to computer text for magnification or use with text-reading software, talking calculators, large key labels on keyboards, Braille Note-taking devices, text-to-Braille conversion software, Braille printers, talking calculators.
 - c. Physical Impairments-Special keyboards and other input devices, voice- recognition software, word-prediction software, scanners to convert hard-copy text to electronic text.
5. Identify AT Resources: In moving through this checklist the number one concern for many students is money. Computers are expensive, and so are adaptive technologies, especially when you figure in the cost of training. As you research your options, keep funding sources in mind. The following are common sources of AT access, information and possibly funding.
- a. Local Library Internet Search: If you do not own a computer, you might use one at your local library. Use search engine keywords, such as "visual impairment " and "adaptive technology".
 - b. Vocational Rehabilitation: This federal-state agency has an office in Gainesville and regional offices around the state. It may be able to help identify sources of adaptive technologies and help with the cost of purchasing such technologies necessary to succeed in college.
 - c. National Federation of the Blind: This state agency works with individuals who have visual disabilities. NFB has an office in Greensboro and offices around the state. This agency may be able to help identify sources of adaptive technologies and help with the cost of purchasing such technologies to succeed in college.
6. Acquire and Learn the Adaptive Technology Appropriate to Your Disability
- To get to this point, you needed to:
- a. Gain access to or purchase a computer
 - b. Learn how to use the computer.
 - c. Find out what adaptive technology you should use.
 - d. Buy the technology, if possible, or find a source for access.

Congratulations! Now you are ready to spend time learning how to use your new tools!

II. Adaptive Technology Orientation

AT Orientations through the Accessibility Resource Center are available by appointment from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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