

Assistive Tech: Tools for Students Newly Transitioned to Online Classes

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As you spend more time learning technologically, it becomes more important to consider the benefits and supports assistive technology (AT) can provide in online learning. Even if you haven't used AT before, many students can and will benefit from these tools and resources.

The list below includes different types of assistive technology that may benefit you in online coursework. This list and the examples are not exhaustive but provide some guidance through the transition to online learning in the coming days and weeks.

Text-to-Speech or Literacy Support Tools:

You might be responsible for consuming an increased number of printed or digital readings, posted on a Learning Management System, assigned in textbooks, or available online or on websites. Some students may struggle with the increased volume or the online nature of the readings. Text-to-speech and literacy support programs provide support with reading content and also often increase comprehension. Built-in tools, such as dictionaries and translators, support student learning, while other embedded tools provide visual tracking support. Student with learning disabilities, ADHD, mental health diagnoses, concussions or traumatic brain injuries, physical disabilities, chronic health conditions, and visual impairments may all benefit from these types of tools.

Some technology companies are offering free access to a variety of AT tools for the remainder of the semester to support students during this challenging time. You can easily find this information by visiting technology companies' websites.

Text-to-Speech or Literacy Support Tools:

- [Read&Write](#) or [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#) by Texhelp
- [Kurzweil](#) by Cambium Learning Technologies
- [Microsoft Learning Tools within Office 365](#)
- [VoiceDream Reader](#)
- [Balabolka](#) (Windows Only)
- [VoiceOver](#) on Mac Operating Systems

Writing Tools:

While writing a paper using a computer doesn't change whether you are in an in-person or online class, instructors may assign an increased number of writing or projects because of the decreased time spent in class or in group work. As a result, you may benefit from tools that support you with your writing assignments. Tools such as dictation or speech-to-text, which will type out what you say, help get content into a

document, while grammar and spellchecking tools support the mechanics of writing. Both types of tools may be even more useful if a writing center or peer review/editing support is not available on campus. Mapping out what to write and organizing a paper are other areas where student may struggle. Tools such as mind mapping or brainstorming provide support in graphically creating and organizing a paper.

Dictation/Speech-to-Text:

- Talk&Type within [Read&Write](#) or [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#) by Texthelp
- [Google Voice Typing](#)
- [Dragon Naturally Speaking](#)
- [Dictate within Office 365](#)
- [Voice Control within Mac Operating Systems](#)
- [Windows Voice Recognition](#)

Grammar/Spell Checkers:

- CheckIt! within [Read&Write](#) and [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#) by Texthelp
- [Ginger Grammar and Spell Checker](#)
- [Grammarly](#)
- [Hemingway Editor](#)

Mind Mapping/Brainstorming Tools:

- [Popplet](#)
- [MindMeister](#)
- [Inspiration Maps](#)

Study Skills Tools:

You might need to synthesize additional information or consume content in methods and formats that are new to you. Support tools can help you retain information and this is another area of support AT can provide. Highlighters, annotation tools, and digital flash cards are all tools which can help you retain and understand information.

Highlighters and Annotation Tools:

- [Read&Write](#) and [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#) by Texthelp
- [Kurzweil](#) by Cambium Learning Technologies
- [Microsoft Learning Tools within Office 365](#)
- [Kami](#)

Flash Cards and Study Aids:

- [Quizlet](#)
- [StudyBlue](#)

Executive Functioning: Organization Tools:

While many students struggle with organization, being out of your routine might exacerbate these organizational struggles for anyone suddenly thrust into online courses. As a result, tools which can help you stay organized, plan your time, and stay on top of coursework and assignments are key in this time of transition.

Organization Tools:

- [Google Calendar and Tasks](#) and [Google Keep](#)
- [Microsoft Calendar](#) and [Tasks](#)
- [Todoist](#)
- [Trello](#)

Executive Functioning: Time/Task Management Tools:

Managing time effectively and staying on task can also be challenging in a new environment. Countless tools are on the market to support staying on task, focusing on assignments, and prioritizing work.

Time/Task Management Tools:

- [Pomodoro Technique](#) or Pomodoro Apps (search for these on the internet)
- [Cold Turkey](#) and [Cold Turkey Writer](#)
- [Priority Matrix](#)
- [Written? Kitten!](#)
- [Strict Workflow](#)
- [MinimaList](#)
- [Guided Access](#) and [Do Not Disturb](#) on iOS devices

Visual Support and Screen Masking:

The increased amount of time online might be a struggle for students with visual disabilities, disabilities that impact tracking, or concussions or traumatic brain injuries. Screen masking tools, which put a colored tint on a computer screen, or tools that support the tracking of a mouse or line of text support students impacted by cognitive or physical disabilities.

Visual Support and Screen Masking Tools:

- Screen Masking tool within [Read&Write](#) and [Read&Write for Google Chrome](#) by Texthelp
- Brightness level, night mode, reduced blue light features built into the operating system of a device
- [Screen Mask Chrome Extension](#)
- [Beeline Reader](#)

As you continue your learning during this unprecedented time, we hope you'll find time to explore some of the AT that could ease your transition.