

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology (AT) is any device that helps a person with a disability achieve a more independent and satisfying life. The federal definition of assistive technology under the Assistive Technology Act is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

Free/Low-Cost Assistive Technology

[Augsburg University website](#) contains one of the most comprehensive lists of assistive technology we've found. They provide products in the following categories: reading & literacy support, writing support, note taking support, dictation/speech-to-text/speech recognition, mind mapping & brainstorming support, study skills & aids, organization & task management support, time management & distraction free support, research tools, stress management and relaxation, vision, hearing and auditory support, communication and built-in accessibility.

[Techowl](#) and [Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation \(PATF\)](#) are great additional resources for learning about assistive technology services and funding resources available to PA residents. Students who are not from PA can locate information on resources in their state from the [National Assistive Technology Act Technical Assistance and Training Center](#).

Kurzweil 3000 Text to Speech Program

Kurzweil 3000 is a text-to-speech software that reads text aloud (to users) from most digital and print formats allowing users access to more advanced material while improving word recognition, comprehension and decoding. Kurzweil is available as a web-based software (Kurzweil Firefly), a downloadable application and an extension that allows information available on the internet to be read aloud.

Not only does use of this program benefit all users, it significantly improves access for persons with learning issues (learning disabilities) as well as English Language Learners (ELL). Kurzweil has many other features that may help users understand new information and study (highlighting, sticky/text notes, dictionary, translation). In addition, students may use the program to listen to papers they've written in order to hear issues with flow, grammar etc. Finally, this program has a Chrome extension, (Read the Web) that allows users to listen to information they can pull up using the Chrome browser. This program is available (at no cost) for use by all currently enrolled Cedar Crest students as well as faculty and staff members.

Students who are interested in using Kurzweil can follow steps to request an account on the [Cedar Crest IT webpage](#).

Kurzweil on Campus

You can find the desktop version of Kurzweil on these campus computers: Cressman Library, HBB 11, Blaney 8, Curtis Residence Hall Computer Lab, Butz Residence Hall Computer Lab and the Steinbright Residence Hall Computer Lab.

Laptops for Learners Accessibility

The HPX360 convertible laptop being provided to students through the Laptops for Learners program has several built in accessibility features. Information on using them is located in [this article on the Cedar Crest IT website](#).

Office 365 Allows Dictation (Speech-to-Text)

Instead of purchasing dictation software, Office 365 allows you to use dictation within its applications. To use this feature in Word:


- Sign into your Office 365 account
- Open Word and start a new document.
- Make sure your external mic is plugged in and working, or your internal computer mic is on.
- If the application hasn't already defaulted to the Home menu bar, click on Home in the top menu.
- At the right end of the menu, you will see the word "Dictate" next to a blue microphone symbol. Click on the arrow next to Dictate to make sure the appropriate dictation language is selected (English, U.S. - although French, German, Italian and Spanish are options).
- Select "Dictate" and wait for the red dot to appear.
- Start dictating your content, inserting punctuation into the document by saying the name of the punctuation mark you want to add. You can correct mistakes by moving your cursor to the mistake and fixing it with your keyboard. You do not need to turn off the microphone.
- When you are finished dictating, select "Dictate" again. For more information, check out Microsoft's "[Dictate Your Document](#)" article.

VoiceOver and Voice Control

Use Built-in Accessibility in Apple Products


VoiceOver is the built-in screen reader on your apple devices that describes aloud what appears on the screen and speaks the text in documents, webpages, and windows.

To open VoiceOver Utility on your Mac, do one of the following:

- When VoiceOver is on, press VO-F8.
- Choose Apple menu  > System Preferences, click Accessibility, click VoiceOver, then click Open VoiceOver Utility.


With Voice Control, you can use spoken commands to open apps, choose menu items, and more on your apple device. MacOS provides a standard set of commands, and you can create your own commands.

To turn on Voice Control:

1. On your Mac, choose Apple menu  > System Preferences, click Accessibility, then click Voice Control.

2. Select Enable Voice Control.

The first time you turn on Voice Control, files for the selected language are downloaded to your Mac (you must be connected to the internet) and the feedback window appears on the desktop. When

Voice Control is ready to use, the microphone icon  appears in the window and fluctuates to indicate the volume level

Use Built-in Accessibility in Android Products

Talkback, also known as voice assistant (depending on the version of the device being used) is the built-in screen reader on android devices that can be turned on from the settings menu with the following steps:

1. Navigate to and open settings and then swipe to and tap accessibility
 - A. For devices using Talkbalk: Select Talkback and then tap switch at the top of the screen
 - B. For devices using Voice assistant: Select screenreader and then tap switch next to the voice assistant
2. Read the information displayed and select allow