

BRIEF 5: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of how faculty can better meet the needs of students who use assistive technology (AT). In addition, suggestions are provided to assist faculty in making their materials more available to students who use AT.

Assistive Technology Defined

"Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities."

Importance of AT for the student:

Access to information: This may include screen reading software such as JAWS for students with visual impairments so they can use the Internet or read electronic files.

Access to physical environment: This may include wheelchair ramps, curb cuts, elevators, accessible doors (electronic are best), appropriate classroom seating, etc.)

Completion of common daily tasks: For example, large handles on eating utensils, phones that flash when ringing, electronic readers, etc.)

Facilitating Use of AT

Ask your students how you can facilitate their use of AT

Be open to the use of AT in class

Think about who is at the "other end" when teaching online

Present information in multiple ways

Think from the bottom up

Allow for flexibility in the way students access and convey what they know

Allow students to record or videotape lectures

Be aware of assistive listening devices and ensure all speakers are using them correctly

Provide hard copies and electronic text copies of PowerPoint presentations

Read all the text on PowerPoint presentations and all other information displayed.

This is particularly useful for students with visual impairments as well as those with learning disabilities

When showing videos/movies use the closed captioned/video description feature

Provide electronic transcripts of audio recording

Ensure books and audio recordings are available as electronic text

Post the syllabus online and make it available well in advance of the start of the course

Follow the guidelines for web design set forth by World Wide Web Consortium (WC3) see link <http://www.w3.org>

Ensure distance education tools comply with web accessibility guidelines

Post assignments online

When administering exams plan well in advance to allow for transcription into Braille, text, recordings or electronic versions

Please feel free to distribute with the following acknowledgement: Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, HI.

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