

# GAP TOOLKIT

## Assistive technology

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### What is assistive technology?

Every time you download an MP3 or put on your glasses, you are using an assistive technology. For some people with a disability, the ability to use assistive technologies such as text to speech or speech to text technologies is essential for their ability to engage with education and employment.

### In an education setting what are the most common assistive technologies?

Assistive technologies for students with sensory or learning disabilities fall roughly into three categories:

**Text to Speech assistive technologies.** These are mostly used by students with vision loss or those who have a disability such as dyslexia, which makes traditional reading methods difficult or impossible. The most common of these are [JAWS](#), [WINDOW EYES](#) and [DAISY](#). There are also text to speech technologies built into many mainstream devices e.g. all of the [Apple](#) products have text to speech features. There is also a freeware text to speech program called [NVDA](#). The difference in price with these different technologies relates to choice of accent and additional features such as different output modes.

(For a discussion on the pros and cons of different text to speech technologies, please see article by Tim Connell – [“What is the Cost of a Free Product?”](#))

**Speech to text technologies.** These are used by students who have a hearing loss, those who suffer anxiety, or those who find it difficult to write. IBM and

NUANCE are the world leaders in the development of speech to text technologies and along with the [Higher Education Consulting Group's Global Access Project](#), are the main industry partners in the [Liberated Learning Consortium](#). This consortium is working with universities globally to develop low cost and efficient transcription and captioning solutions.

[DRAGON](#) is currently the most well known speech recognition software for students to download on their own devices. There are also a number of programs that can be used to caption videos. Links to these can be found on the [Caption It Yourself – Described and Captioned Media Program website](#).

**Scanning and study technologies.** These are mostly used by students who have sight and are able to edit and correct errors . Two of the main products in this area are [WYNN](#) and [READ and WRITE GOLD](#). For students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, these programs offer quick access to websites, email, pdfs and electronic reading materials. In addition to the inbuilt text to speech facility, these programs have a number of features to assist students engage with their study.

## Where can we get these technologies?

Free trials are available for many of these assistive technologies. There are a number of distributors for assistive technologies in Australia. [Global Access Project](#) works closely with [Quantum Technologies](#), which is a leading provider to the education sector in Australia and New Zealand.

[Global Access Project](#) is able to organise seminars and demonstrations of assistive technologies for your institution. They are also able to assist in determining which assistive technologies are most appropriate for an individual student.

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