WVATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology System Newsletter
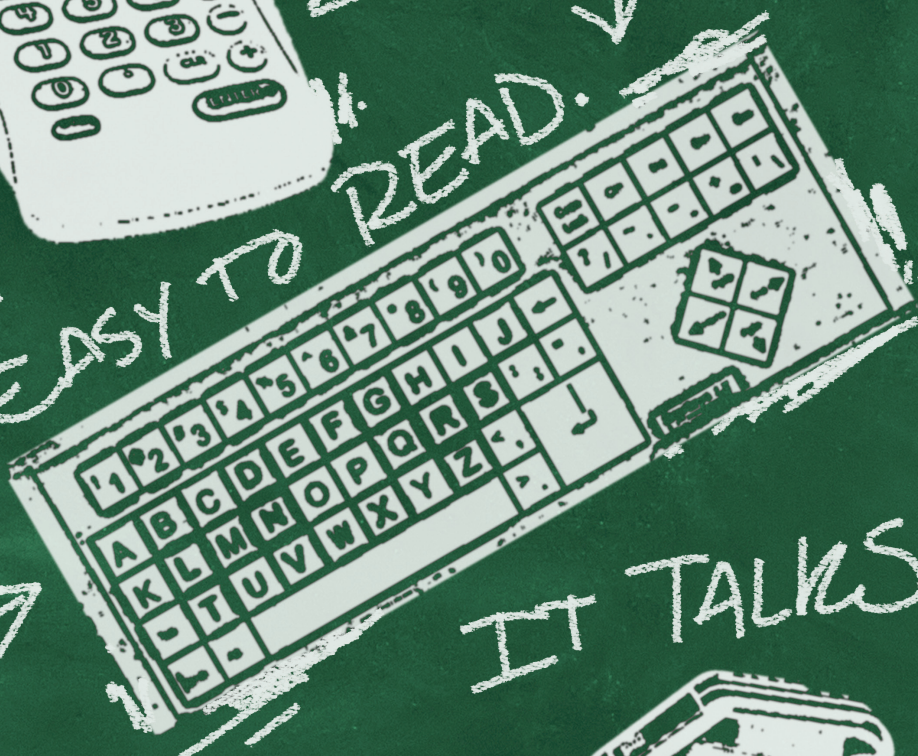
EASY GRIP

Big Buttons!

EASY TO READ.

IT TALKS

Assistive Technology for Reading, Writing and Math

In school, three of the main skills we learn about are reading, writing and math. People can have problems doing these tasks for a lot of different reasons. For example, a boy with dyslexia is having trouble reading a text book; a girl who is blind cannot access the text on a computer monitor; a woman with a head injury is having difficulty writing about her ideas; and a man with an intellectual impairment is having trouble counting items at work.

Here are some assistive technology solutions that can help:

Reading

- Color contrast overlays can be placed over a page to change the color contrast of what a person is reading.

- Audio books use either a digital voice or the recorded voice of a person reading the book aloud.

- Screen reading software and apps read back the text on your computer screen or tablet; some software also highlights the words as they are being read aloud.

- Screen magnification software enlarges the appearance of text and images on a computer screen or device, and may have other features like changing color contrast.

- Braille is a tactile method for people who are blind to touch raised dot symbols to read.

- Refreshable braille displays for computers and tablets have small pins that pop up to form braille symbols a person can touch to read Braille.

- Optical character recognition (OCR) devices scan a text document and read it aloud using a digital voice.

- Reading pen scans a word or line of printed text and reads it aloud.

Writing

- Writing aids are designed to help people with limited hand strength, dexterity or fine motor problems do writing and drawing tasks.

- Smart pen records audio while you are writing notes; information can be downloaded to your computer or tablet.

- Writing software can help organize your thoughts while typing.

- Word prediction software offers word choices based on the letters you are typing.

- Electronic and talking dictionaries spell and define words. Some dictionaries have voice output to speak the information to you.

Math

- Math software and apps, such as Math Magic and Basic Math Deluxe can help you do math problems at different levels, depending on what product you use.

- Simplified calculators can make it easier to find numbers and do basic math problems.

- Talking calculators, money identifiers and tape measures use voice output to speak numbers and amounts aloud.

For more information on assistive technology for learning, call WVATS at **800-841-8436**.

Fair Housing in West Virginia

The Fair Housing Act has protected the housing rights of people with disabilities for more than 25 years. The act did not include disability as a protected class when it passed in 1968. Disability was added in 1988 as part of the Fair Housing Amendments Act.

This helped protect people with disabilities from discrimination in sale, rental and financing of housing. It added design and construction rules so apartments would be more accessible. It also gave people with disabilities the right to request reasonable accommodations and modifications.

The point of the act is to provide more housing choices for people with disabilities. Finding a home can be hard for many people, especially if you have a special need. And, a lot of times, accessibility can be as important as the cost of the home. The location of the home can also mean access to services — close to work and schools, churches and shopping, especially if individuals need public transit or other services for transportation.

Having more housing choices is what the government means when it asks communities to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing Choice (AFFH). It is about having housing opportunity throughout a community. You cannot just cluster one group of people in one area or location.

No matter what your race, religion, national origin or sex is. No matter if you have children or are a person with a disability. You should have a choice of where you want to live, and the Fair Housing Act is helping to make that possible for millions of Americans.

If you think you have been discriminated against in your housing choice, contact the West Virginia Fair Housing Action Network. Talk to a housing advocate at **304-296-6091**.

WhiteSmoke

WhiteSmoke software is a writing tool that can check grammar, spelling, style and punctuation. It can be used to help people improve their writing style, tone and clarity. The product also offers a plagiarism checker. WhiteSmoke software works with both Windows computers and Macs. There is also an app version that works on most smartphones and tablets.

For more information, visit **www.whitesmoke.com** or call **888-741-7193**.
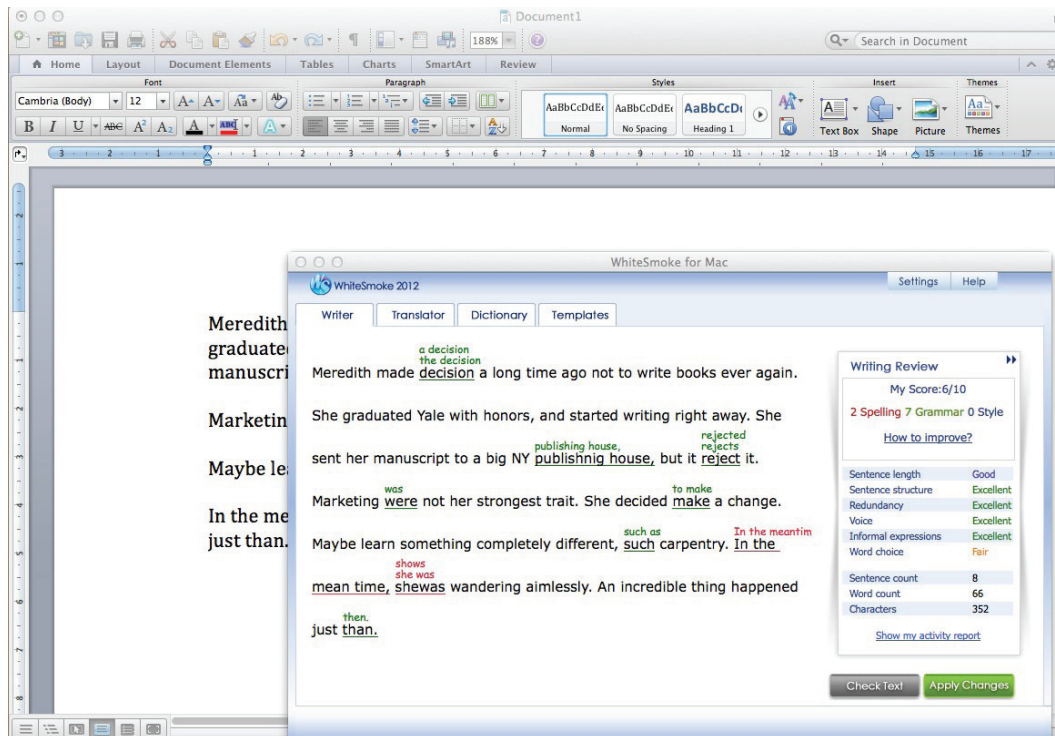

PenAgain ErgoSof Pen

The PenAgain ErgoSof Pen was designed to lessen writing fatigue and the need to squeeze a pen tightly while writing. The pen has a "Y" shape and an ergonomic finger cradle that allows you to use the natural weight of your hand to write, instead of just pressure from your fingers. This pen uses black ink. Black ink refill cartridges are sold separately in packs of two.

For more information, visit **www.thewritingpenstore.com** or call **877-810-4174**.

Big Keys LX ABC Keyboard

A Big Keys LX ABC Keyboard has the keys arranged in alphabetical order. The "ABC" setup can make it easier to type for people who have trouble using a standard "QWERTY" keyboard setup. The keyboard has a simpler layout with less buttons. The 1-inch-square keys are labeled in large print. The keyboard is available in either a white or multicolor style. An Apple "iPad Camera Connection Kit" can be used to plug a BigKeys LX Keyboard with a USB port into an iPad. For more information about the Big Keys LX ABC Keyboard, visit **www.bigkeys.com.**

Note: **ABC Keyboard Apps** for mobile devices are made by a variety of companies. You can learn more about Apple based keyboard apps at **www.apple.com**. You can learn more about Android based keyboard apps at **www.play.google.com.**
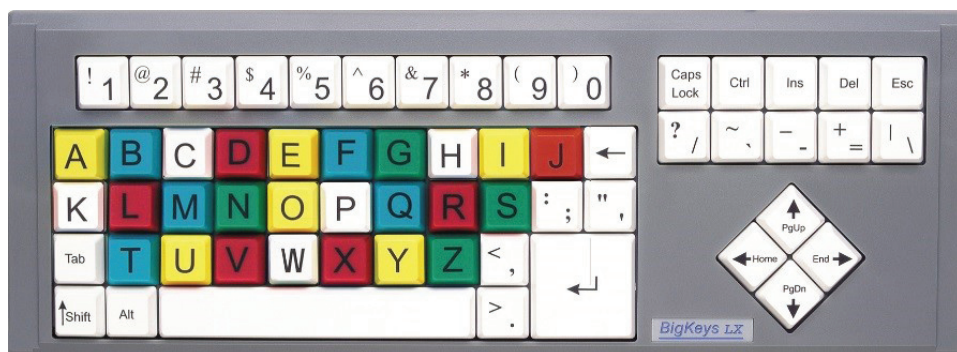
Dragon Dictation

Dragon Dictation is an app for mobile devices and tablets that writes out the user's speech into text. As users speak into the device, the app types the information. This voice-to-text app can be used for writing emails and text messages, as well as posting on social networking sites. Dragon Dictation also has an editing feature that provides users with a list of suggested words. This app is available for Apple and Android devices.

For more information, visit **www.nuance.com**.

See N Solve Calculator

The See N Solve Calculator shows the whole equation instead of just the last number you entered. This calculator has large buttons that are color coded for the numbers and four basic functions: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing.

For more information, visit **www.educationalinsights.com** or call **800-995-4436**.

Reading Rods

Reading Rods are word cubes you can use to learn how to build a sentence. The rods come in different colors for parts of speech, like nouns and verbs. The product comes in different kits to help you master skills, like grammar, sight words, usage, punctuation and sentence building.
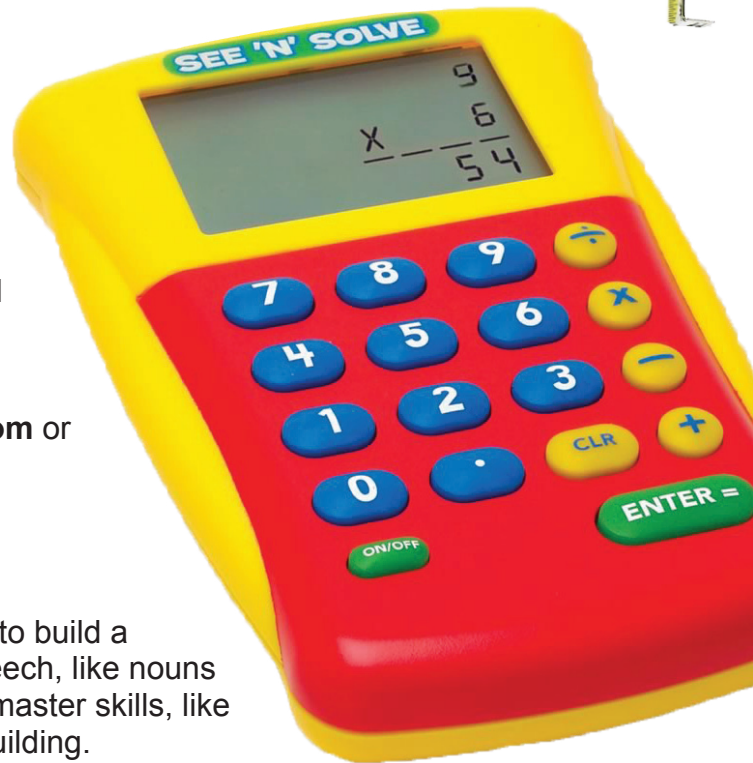
For more information, visit **www.hand2mind.com** or call **800-288-9920**.

Protape 16'

The Protape 16' Talking Tape Measure announces measurements in either u.s. standard units or in metric units. The tool, which requires a 9 volt battery, can also record and store measurements.

For more information, visit **https://shop.cnib.ca** or call **866-659-1843**.

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Farm and Garden

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is the practice of growing plants and raising farm animals within and around a city. Spaces like yards, decks, rooftops and unused lots are being used to grow herbs, flowers, fruits and vegetables in urban communities. The wish to buy locally grown, wholesome goods has made farmers markets a popular place to shop for many city dwellers too.

Many farmers and gardeners around the country are involved in urban agriculture. In response to the rise in urban farming and gardening in West Virginia, agricultural professionals in the state created a conference on the subject. The second annual WV Urban Ag Conference was held in September on the campus of West Virginia State University in Institute, WV. The event held workshops for home gardeners, urban homesteaders and urban farmers. To find out more about the WV Urban Ag Conference, visit **http://urbanagwv.com**.

Staff from WVATS, WV AgrAbility and WVU Extension teamed together at the conference to give a workshop about adaptive gardening. They showed ergonomic tools, and talked about how adaptive methods can be useful in urban farming and gardening. Vertical gardening, square foot gardening, container gardening and growing plants in raised beds can be great ways to make gardening tasks easier while making use of a small space.

Urban agriculture in your area may be subject to laws at the federal, state and local level. At each level, there may be laws about health and safety, processing and transporting produce. To learn more, visit Urban Ag Law at **www.urbanaglaw.org**.

At the local level, there may also be zoning laws or other rules. Charleston, Morgantown and other West Virginia cities have been working on passing rules and laws that address urban agriculture issues. Does your city restrict whether you can have chickens on your property and how many? Can you have three beehives to harvest honey? Contact your city council or planning committee to find about more about urban agriculture laws in your area.

WEST VIRGINIA
URBAN AG CONFERENCE

Photos: GTHJs projects at the Grafton Community Garden and the WV State Fairground

A Healthy Harvest for Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints

The Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints (GTHJs) program supported 15 accessible gardening projects in West Virginia during the 2015 growing season. The groups bought ergonomic tools, and used alternative planting methods to help make gardening more accessible for people with arthritis, osteoporosis and joint limitations.

The GTHJs program had a healthy harvest this year. The groups chose to grow a variety of herbs, flowers, fruits and vegetables. The projects shared feedback at the end of the season about some of the main benefits the participants reaped — exercising, growing healthy food together and eating the food they harvested.

Here are what some of the projects had to say:

"The participants had the opportunity to work outside and were able to exercise through movement of planting, weeding and attending the gardens. Many residents could be found working outside in the early morning and late evening around the garden beds."

"Not only did [the participants] get the exercise, but they gained support from being with other people and sharing their adventure."

"Participants were engaged in physical activity through the process of updating the green house, starting seedlings and maintenance of garden site."

"[The participants] worked in the garden beds in the mornings, allowing their hands to be used to help prevent arthritis as well as keeping them from being stiff."

"Being able to grow your own fruit and vegetables is a very powerful lesson as it teaches patience and is a source of healthy meal preparations."

"All vegetables produced from the project were used for lunch for all center participants."

"The seniors have been able to enjoy the vegetables and herbs harvested from the gardens. They are now enjoying fresh salads to go along with their lunches as well as being able to take the vegetables home to enjoy when they aren't at the Senior Center."

"Many residents enjoyed fresh vegetables in their summer diets."

"Participants with this project gained a location where they were able to produce their own fresh vegetables. Participants planted a variety of produce including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, corn, beets, and lettuce."

"Maintaining the gardens required the individuals to be physically active during the process, providing both benefits of fresh produce for eating and physical exercise."

"This raised garden project brought plenty of produce for fixed income individuals who can't go to the Farmers Market or pay the high price at the one grocery store located within walking distance of their homes."

Website address: www.wvats.cedwvu.org

WVATS
West Virginia Assistive Technology System

West Virginia University
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISABILITIES

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Reading Alternatives from the West Virginia Library Commission

LITERACY FOR ALL
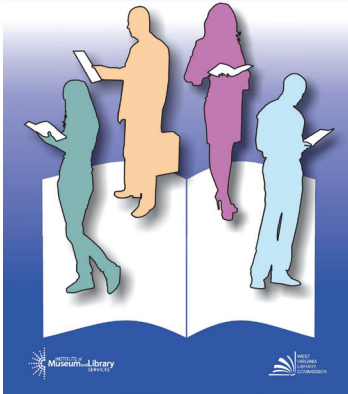
The West Virginia Library Commission has services that can make library materials more accessible to West Virginians with disabilities. The commission has a Special Services Library, which "loans recorded materials and Braille materials to state residents who are unable to read or use standard print due to impairment, visual or physical, or reading disability."

It has another service called WV-READS, which is an e-book loan program. WV-READS, or the West Virginia Regional Electronic Audiovisual Download Service, was formed by a group of public libraries in the mountain state. Its purpose is to provide West Virginians "with free and reliable access to electronic library materials".

With WV-READS, library users can check out digital items, and access them on a variety of e-readers, tablets, smartphones and laptops. The service supports Windows for PC or Mac, iPod, iPhone, iPad, Kindle, Sony Reader, NOOK, BlackBerry and Android devices.

The West Virginia Library Commission is located at the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston, WV. For more information about its services, visit **www.librarycommission.wv.gov** or call **800-642-9021**.