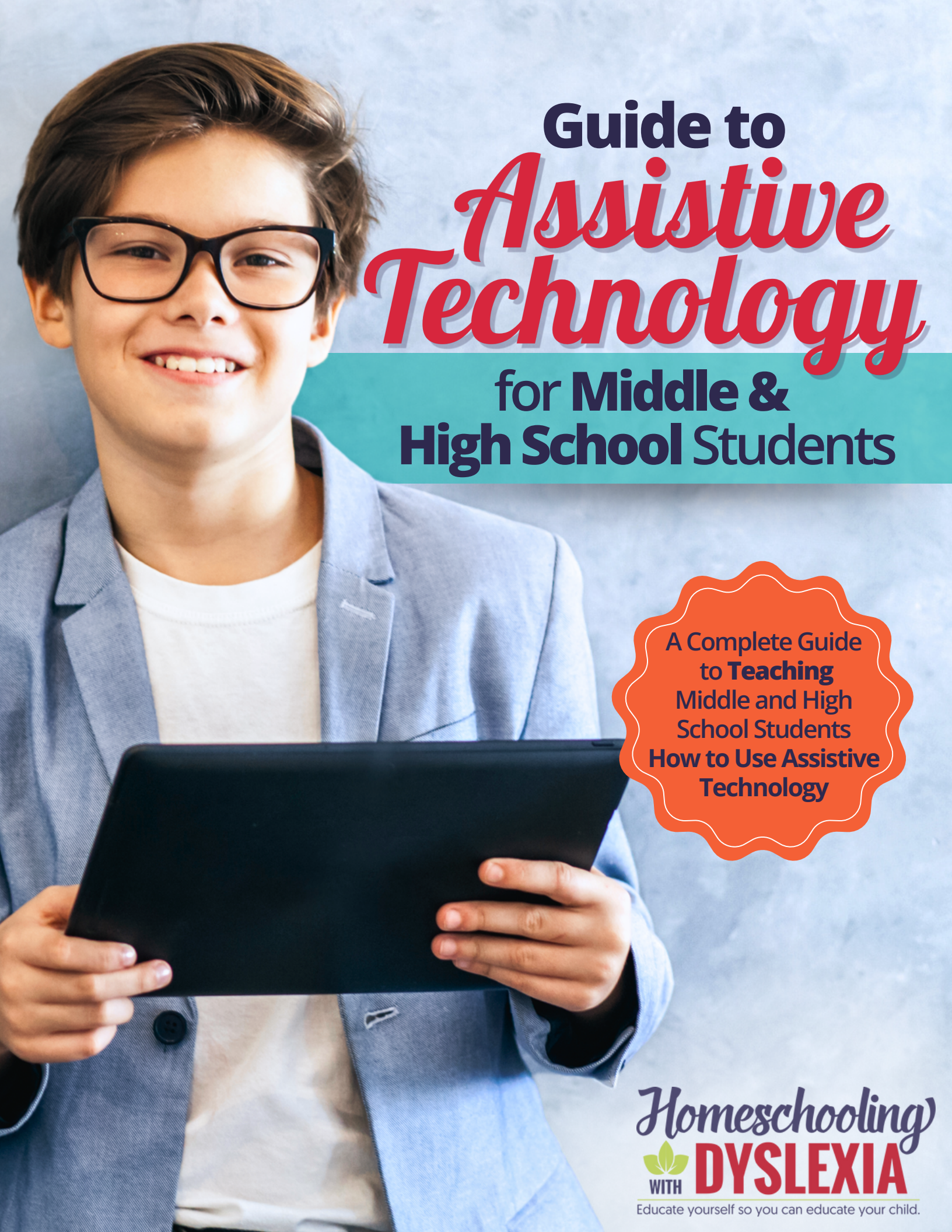


A young man with brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is smiling and holding a black tablet. He is wearing a light blue blazer over a white t-shirt. The background is a light blue textured wall.

Guide to *Assistive Technology* for Middle & High School Students

A Complete Guide
to **Teaching**
Middle and High
School Students
How to Use Assistive
Technology

Homeschooling
 **DYSLEXIA**

Educate yourself so you can educate your child.



Guide to Assistive Technology for Middle & High School Students

Assistive technology is a total game changer for people with dyslexia. There is an ever growing abundance of technology available today to help people who struggle with written language to express themselves confidently

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is the use of any device, piece of equipment, or system that helps students with learning difficulties work at their intellectual ability more independently. Remember, learning 'disabilities' are caused by a unique brain wiring – NOT a lack of intelligence! AT helps students to continue to learn at grade level even though their reading, writing, or spelling are below grade level.

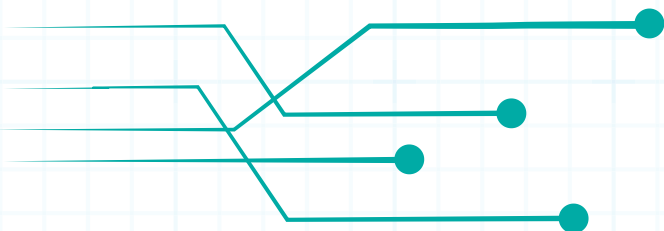
For example, my high school-aged daughter with dyslexia listens to an audio recording of her science book every week. She can read it but it would be slow and comprehension would be affected. Listening to science helps her to 'access the curriculum' in an efficient way.

Is Using Assistive Technology Cheating?

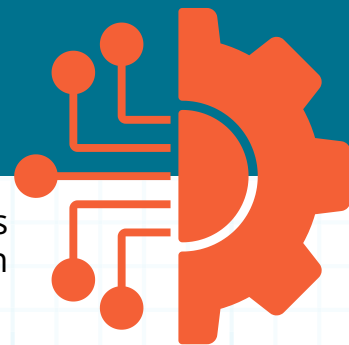
Many people have a misplaced belief that using AT is cheating. If other kids can't use spell checkers, mine shouldn't either, right? That belief stems from the many myths about dyslexia that are still widely believed.

We would never tell a student with a broken leg not to use a wheelchair or crutches. We wouldn't demand that a student with poor vision read print books. In the same way, students whose brains are wired to have language-based learning difficulties can and should be using these tools to help them with language-based learning.

People with dyslexia will definitely be using AT as adults in the 'real world' anyway. We may as well introduce them to these tools now. The use of AT helps students work more independently and increases confidence as well.



How to Get Started Using Assistive Technology



The following guide will walk you through the process of finding areas where assistive technology would be helpful for your students and then how to teach them how to master any app or program.



Step 1: Assess Individual Needs

Before introducing assistive technology, it's important to identify the specific needs of the student.

How to complete this step:

1. Conduct a needs assessment

- Meet with your child to discuss their learning challenges and strengths.
- Observe their reading, writing, and note-taking habits.
- Choose one area to focus on at a time.

2. Gather formal assessments (if available)

- Check for any existing IEP (Individualized Education Program) or 504 Plan accommodations. This is completely optional but could be a good starting point if you happen to have this documentation.
- Consult with your child's tutor or a dyslexia specialist for evaluations.

3. List the tasks that need support

- Identify specific struggles (e.g., difficulty reading textbooks, trouble organizing notes, spelling challenges).
- Match these challenges with potential assistive technology tools



Step 2: Start with a Positive Mindset

It's important that students see assistive technology as an advantage, not a weakness.

How to complete this step:

1. Reframe assistive technology as a success tool

- Share stories of successful people who use assistive technology. This is often a dyslexic parent or family member.
- Emphasize that these tools help **everyone**, not just students with learning differences.

How to Get Started Using Assistive Technology

Step 2: Start with a Positive Mindset (*continued*)

2. Use a strengths-based approach

- Highlight what the student does well and how technology can **build on** those strengths.
- Example: "You have great ideas; this speech-to-text tool will help you get them down faster!"

3. Normalize using technology

- Point out that many professionals use similar tools (e.g., journalists using dictation software).
- If possible, introduce assistive technology to **the whole family**, so it doesn't feel like a special accommodation.



Step 3: Introduce One Tool at a Time

Introducing too many tools at once can overwhelm students.

How to complete this step:

1. Prioritize the most needed tool

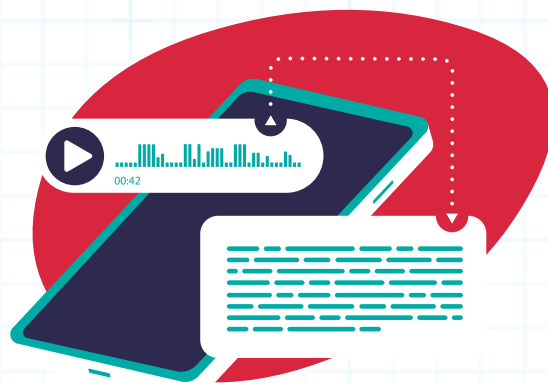
- Start with a tool that provides immediate relief, such as **text-to-speech for reading difficulties**.
- If the student struggles with writing, introduce **speech-to-text first**.

2. Demonstrate the tool in action

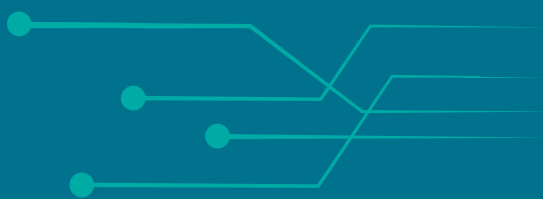
- Show the student how to use the tool with a familiar assignment.
- Example: Open an article and use a **text-to-speech app** to read it aloud.

3. Allow practice time

- Give students time to try it on their own with **low-pressure activities**.
- Example: Let them write a short paragraph using **speech-to-text** before requiring them to use it for assignments



How to Get Started Using Assistive Technology



Step 4: Provide Hands-On Training

Many students may not be familiar with assistive technology and need step-by-step guidance.

How to complete this step:

1. Break the learning process into small steps

- Show how to **open and navigate the app or tool**.
- Teach basic features before moving on to advanced settings.
- YouTube has lots of excellent tutorials on how to use different apps and programs.

2. Use real-life examples

- If using **text-to-speech**, have the student open an **assignment** and listen to it being read aloud.
- For **speech-to-text**, let them dictate a response to a simple question.

3. Provide troubleshooting tips

- Teach students how to adjust settings (e.g., voice speed for text-to-speech).
- Show them how to **undo mistakes** in speech-to-text tools.



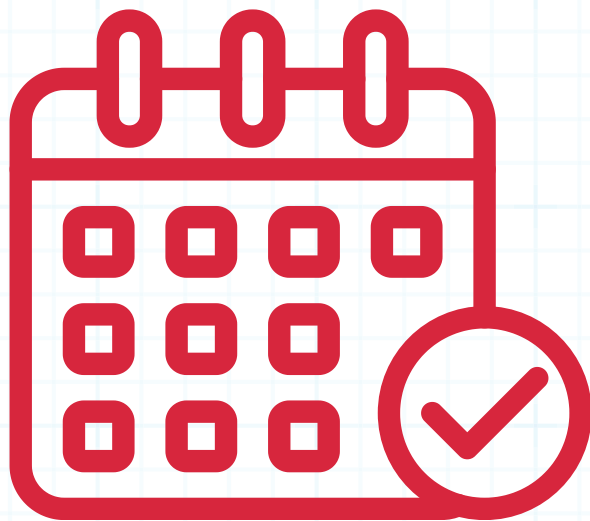
Step 5: Integrate into Daily Learning

For assistive technology to be effective, it must become a regular part of the student's routine.

How to complete this step:

1. Encourage daily use

- Have the student start **one assignment per day** using the assistive tool.
- Work with teachers to allow use in class, if applicable.



How to Get Started Using Assistive Technology

Step 5: Integrate into Daily Learning (*continued*)

2. Provide structured opportunities

- Example: Set aside 10 minutes for **note-taking practice** using a digital organizer.
- Encourage them to use **text-to-speech when reviewing their notes.**

3. Track progress

- Check in weekly to see if they are using the tool effectively.
- Adjust or switch tools if necessary.



Step 6: Encourage Self-Advocacy

Students need to feel comfortable using assistive technology independently.

How to complete this step:

1. Teach students how to explain their needs

- Role-play how they can ask a teacher for permission to use their assistive tool, if applicable.
- Example: "I use text-to-speech because it helps me understand reading assignments better."

2. Help them become independent users

- Encourage them to explore **settings and customization options.**
- Show them where to find **help guides or customer support** if they need assistance.

3. Build confidence

- Remind them that using assistive technology is a **smart strategy, not a sign of weakness.**
- Encourage them to share their success stories.



How to Get Started Using Assistive Technology



Step 7: Monitor Progress & Adjust as Needed

Assistive technology should evolve with the student's needs.

How to complete this step:

1. Check in regularly

- Meet regularly to discuss whether the tool is helpful.
- Ask what is working and what isn't.

2. Adjust as needed

- If a tool isn't effective, explore other options.
- Example: If **speech-to-text** is frustrating, try **word prediction software** instead.

3. Celebrate progress

- Acknowledge successes, no matter how small.
- Example: "Last month, you needed help setting up text-to-speech. Now, you're using it to read full chapters on your own!"



Final Thoughts

By following these steps, students will gain **confidence** in using assistive technology and **improve their academic success**. The key is to **introduce tools gradually, normalize their use, and provide continuous support**.



Assistive Technology Apps & Programs for Dyslexic Individuals

1. Reading Support

- **Speechify** – Text-to-speech app that reads documents, web pages, and books aloud.
- **Voice Dream Reader** – Reads text aloud from PDFs, Word docs, and eBooks with customizable voices.
- **Microsoft Immersive Reader** – Built-in tool for Microsoft Office and Edge that reads text aloud, highlights words, and adjusts spacing.
- **NaturalReader** – A text-to-speech program that supports various document types.

2. Audiobooks

- **Libby (by OverDrive)**
- **Librivox**
- **Project Gutenberg (Audiobooks Section)**
- **Spotify (Audiobooks Section)**
- **Audible**
- **Chirp Books**
- **Apple Books (Audiobooks Section)**
- **Google Play Books (Audiobooks Section)**
- **Scribd**
- **Audiobooks.com**

3. Writing Assistance

- **Grammarly** – AI-powered spelling and grammar checker.
- **Ginger Software** – Grammar and spell checker with text-to-speech.
- **Co:Writer** – Word prediction and text-to-speech for better writing support.
- **Dragon NaturallySpeaking** – Speech-to-text software for dictation.

4. Spelling & Word Prediction

Most word processing programs come with a built in spell checker, but these programs offer specialized support.

- **ClaroRead** – Offers word prediction, text-to-speech, and spell check.
- **Keedogo & Keedogo Plus** – Alternative keyboard apps designed for students who struggle with writing.
- **WordQ** – Word prediction tool with speech feedback to help with writing.

5. Note-Taking & Organization

- **Notability** – Allows users to take notes with audio recordings and handwriting recognition.
- **Evernote** – Organizes notes with voice memos, images, and text.
- **Glean** – Captures and organizes class lectures, transcribes audio, and highlights important sections.

6. Math Support

- **Equatio** – Digital math tool with speech-to-math and prediction features.
- **ModMath** – Helps students with dyslexia/dysgraphia organize and complete math problems on an iPad.

7. Study Aids & Learning Tools

- **Quizlet** – Flashcard app with audio features to help reinforce learning.
- **Read&Write by Texthelp** – Literacy support toolbar with text-to-speech, word prediction, and other features.
- **C-Pen Reader** – Handheld pen scanner that reads printed text aloud.

