

# Fashion an Easier Lifestyle with Assistive Technology

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## Letter to the leader

Assistive technology (AT) refers to a broad category of devices and strategies that can be applied to all aspects of life. Assistive technology is meant to make life easier and improve its quality. The Assistive Technology Act of 1998, signed into law by President Bill Clinton, defines an assistive technology device as “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.”

Assistive technology devices include everyday tools that can be found in stores in local communities. An electric can opener can be an assistive technology device for someone with arthritis. Assistive technology also might include specialized equipment, such as a motorized wheelchair with custom-built chair and back pads for someone who has had a stroke. It includes high-tech devices, such as computer programs that speak and environmental control units that manage household functions, and low-tech tools such as toothpaste-tube squeezers and magnifying glasses.

The following information focuses on low-tech tools that individuals may use to complete everyday tasks, such as attending to personal care, preparing meals, completing basic household chores, and participating in recreational activity. Assistive technology devices are designed to make life easier, and the possibilities are endless.

## Lesson objectives

Upon completion of the session participants will:

- Gain knowledge of different devices in the areas of personal care, food preparation, housecleaning, and recreation.

- Find out how to purchase assistive technology.
- Discover how assistive technology can help fashion an easier lifestyle.

## Audience

Kansans concerned with making everyday tasks easier for themselves or for someone in their care.

## Program resources

The demonstration toolkit is integral to the success of this program. Two toolkits are located in each K-State Research and Extension area office. Please reserve a toolkit in advance of your program and make arrangements to pick it up and return it in a timely manner. Should scheduling conflicts occur in your area, there are two more toolkits located in the Adult Development and Aging office of the main campus.

Each toolkit contains a packing list with the name, price, purpose, and where to purchase each item. You'll also find a CD containing program materials, including an evaluation form and a PowerPoint presentation with pictures. Reviewing this presentation before leading the program will increase familiarity with each device and prepare you to discuss its purpose and use. If a toolkit is unavailable for the scheduled program due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances, you can use the PowerPoint presentation in its place. Most computer systems will be able to open and play the presentation.

You can also find program materials on the K-State Research and Extension Adult Development and Aging Web site at [www.aging.ksu.edu](http://www.aging.ksu.edu).

## Required

- Fact Sheet (MF-2837) and Leader's Guide (MF-2838)
- Demonstration toolkit

## Optional

- Leader program evaluation form
- Participant program evaluation form
- PowerPoint presentation
- Three-panel poster set (MF-2840)
- Postcards (MF-2839)
- Promotional stickers
- Jar openers

## Preparation

- Become familiar with assistive technology by reviewing the fact sheet and leader's guide.
- Become familiar with the demonstration toolkit and packing list.
- View the PowerPoint presentation on the CD or via the Web site to become familiar with each item in the toolkit and its use.
- Visit the online resources listed in the fact sheet.
- Obtain copies of the fact sheet for lesson participants.
- If desired, obtain copies of the postcard to distribute to participants.
- If desired, obtain jar openers to distribute to participants.
- If desired, obtain the three-panel poster set to use as a marketing tool.
- If desired, obtain copies of the "Ask Me About Assistive Technology" stickers to use as publicity materials.

## Publicity Tips

- Prominently display program information through use of the assistive technology three-panel poster exhibit and postcards.
- Send program information to Deb Sellers, Ph.D. for inclusion on the Adult Development and Aging Web site.
- Use the assistive technology poster exhibit at health fairs and other community events. Hand out postcards and/or jar openers as gifts. Take the demonstration toolkit with you and display assistive technology examples on your table.
- Wear an "Ask Me About Assistive Technology" sticker at other community events.

## Talking points for conducting the session

**Welcome participants to the session and present an overview.**

### Introduction

Hello everyone, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and today we are going to learn about some practical tools for accomplishing everyday tasks. Assistive technology is a term that refers to a broad category of devices and strategies that can be applied to all aspects of life. Today we will focus on tools individuals can use to accomplish everyday tasks, such as attending to personal care, preparing meals, completing basic household chores, and recreational activities.

We'll talk about what kinds of tasks may be problematic for individuals, and share some ideas for making everyday tasks easier for everyone. We will learn how to look for and obtain assistive technology tools. Today's program should be fun and interesting for everyone.

### Activity 1. Brainstorming: What kinds of assistive technology do we already use?

To get us started, we are going to get into small groups and make a list of all the everyday tools we use to go about our daily routines. Think along the lines of personal care, meal preparation, housecleaning, or recreation. Think about items that we often take for granted. As an example, those of us who wear glasses or contacts are using assistive technology, although we might not think about our glasses in this way. Take 10 minutes to make a list, and then we'll get back together.

(After 10 minutes)

Was that hard or easy? What did your group come up with? What about:

Glasses or contacts  
Back scrubber  
Handheld shower  
Divided plate, or plate with rim  
Step stool  
Long-handled window scraper  
Rubber jar opener  
Electric can opener  
Velcro tennis shoes  
Gardening bench

## **Activity 2. Explore the Fashion an Easier Lifestyle demonstration toolkit.**

Today I've brought some assistive technology devices with me that we can try out and talk about. Let's see what's in here.

(Unpack the crate and demonstrate each item, or ask for volunteers to demonstrate. Pass items around the group for people to try. Note that the box has items for each of the four categories: attending to personal care, preparing meals, accomplishing basic household chores, and engaging in recreational activity. There are also items that could be used in several of these categories. See the demonstration toolkit packing list for the name, price, and where each item can be purchased.)

Ask participants: Who knows what this item might be used for? Have you ever used this item or one similar to it? What is the benefit of using it? What are the challenges? Could this item be useful to you or to someone you know? In what ways?

## **Activity 3. Note other resources available in the assistive technology fact sheet.**

Let's go through the K-State fact sheet and talk about costs, possible funding, where we can find assistive technology, and who might be able to help us find more information. (Use the fact sheet and the question format to talk briefly about these points.)

(Optional) We also have postcards available for those of you who wish to share the information you have received with others. Our jar openers will help make your life easier by conquering those difficult pickle jars!

## **Ask participants to complete an evaluation form.**

Now, I'd like to ask all of you to evaluate our program today. These evaluations are very important to us because we want to provide the best program that we can. Please take a moment and tell us what you liked and what you thought we could improve upon in terms of the program today. Your efforts are appreciated, and we really do use this feedback.

You'll note that there is a place on the form to indicate if you would like to participate in our follow-up activity in three to six months. Someone from the Adult Development and Aging office may call to ask you a few more questions about the program's helpfulness. If you would be interested in helping us

improve our program, please check the box "yes" and provide contact information. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate.

## **Summarize.**

It's been fun to share part of my day with all of you today. We've gained knowledge of different devices that are available. We've found out how assistive technology can be used and purchased. And we discovered that assistive technology can help us fashion easier lifestyles. Thank you.

## **Complete leader program evaluation form.**

Please complete the leader program evaluation form and include your perception of the overall quality of the program.

## **After the program**

Send participant program evaluation forms and the leader program evaluation form to Debra Sellers, Ph.D., 343 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS, 66506.

## **Contact information**

Debra M. Sellers, Ph.D., Kansas State University, 343 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-5773, [dsellers@ksu.edu](mailto:dsellers@ksu.edu).

## **References**

Assistive Technology Act of 1998, 29 U.S.C. § 3001 (1998).



Financial assistance provided by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Arthritis Program; The Arthritis Foundation, Kansas Chapter; and the Assistive Technology for Kansans Project. This publication was supported by KDHE through U58/CCU722793-05 from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC.

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