

Guiding Questions to Identify Features

This document contains guiding questions to identify the features the student will need from Assistive Technology. After identifying the features the student needs you will be able to match those features with the features of various types of Assistive Technology.

Begin identifying student features by relating the framed (focus) question to:

- input methods
- processing strategies
- output forms
- other student needs and abilities

Input methods:

This is the term used to think about how a student will write, speak, or access a computer or other Assistive Technology device. For example, a student's motor ability may interfere with writing efficiency and quantity. The INPUT method might include an alternative to paper and pencil, such as keyboarding or word processing using an onscreen keyboard. Questions to ask include:

- How is the student able to input information?
- In what environments does the student need to be able to input information?
- Will the student need training in order to use a particular input method?

Processing strategies:

How students process incoming information is often important, but may not be applicable to all students. Auditory learners require different solutions from visual learners or tactile learners. For example, someone with a strong musical intelligence may benefit from using music to help memorize history facts.

Questions to ask include:

- Does the student experience difficulties in processing information? If so, what are those difficulties?
- What is the student's preferred learning style?

Output forms:

Text, speech, Braille, auditory feedback for word processing, large print, amount of text on page, color of text, and/or background are all different types of output. Any one or more of these may be more effective than others based on the student's abilities and needs. Questions to ask include:

- Can the student see/read standard print?
- Does the student need any type of special output?
- Has special output been tried in the past?
- If yes, what was it and did it help?
- Does the student show a natural preference for amount or size of print on a page or different colors of ink or background?

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Other student needs:

Portability of an AT device can be an issue for a student, especially if the student changes environments throughout the day, or if he needs access to it at home.

Questions to ask include:

- Does the student need to do the task in more than one place?
- Does the AT device need to be moved from place to place? If yes, can the student move it independently?
- If no, is assistance available?
- Does the student have any particular needs for light versus heavy, soft versus hard, smooth versus rough, loud versus quiet, etc.?