

THE AFFORDABLE ACCESS GUIDE FOR SENIORS



Why do seniors use digital technologies?

Seniors have told us that the most popular reason to use digital technologies, such as computers and mobile devices, is for keeping in touch with family, especially children and grandchildren, by:

- Viewing photos
- Sending and receiving emails
- Using video chat such as Skype
- Casual web browsing for things like travel



How does disability affect you using technology?

There are many age-related issues that affect seniors:

- You may have trouble seeing photos of grandchildren on a computer screen.
- You may need captions to watch video if you have difficulty hearing.
- You may have difficulty using the mouse or touch gestures on a mobile phone to write messages to family.

Which technologies can help seniors?

Popular computers and mobile phones have accessibility features that can help you. These include:

- **Screen reader:** A text-to-speech application that reads out computer and internet-related information to assist people who are blind or vision impaired.
- **Screen magnifier:** A magnification tool for enlarging screen content.

- **Themes:** High-contrast themes allow people with vision impairments to change the colours to a more comfortable setting (such as white-on-black), and increase the size of mouse pointers and text.
- **On-screen keyboard:** Enables people with mobility impairments to 'type' by using a pointing device to select letters and words on the screen.
- **Alerts:** Visual messages can appear in place of audible sounds to help people who are Deaf or hearing impaired.



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Which products are affordable and accessible?

With accessibility features built into most popular computers and mobile devices, you can buy products that are accessible for under \$250.

Windows mini-PCs and tablets

Features:

- A Windows-based computer is generally the most familiar to seniors.
- Accessibility features include the Narrator screen reader, magnifier, and on-screen keyboard.
- The accessibility features can be used with a traditional mouse and keyboard or by touch if using a Windows tablet.
- Most third-party accessibility software runs on Windows, increasing its accessibility.
- A Windows tablet can also be used like a desktop computer by connecting a keyboard and mouse.

Affordable Windows-related products include:

- A 'TV box' mini-PC which can work as a simple desktop computer, with mouse and keyboard able to connect through the USB ports or Bluetooth, and the monitor connected through HDMI. Prices start at round \$140.
- A 'PC stick' which looks similar to a USB stick but is a full desktop computer such as the Intel Compute Stick. Prices start at around \$140.
- Touch-screen tablets which may be easier to use, and are more portable, such as the Hewlett-Packard Stream models. Prices start at around \$200.

- USB buttons: an accessory that allows you to do a number of keyboard commands at once by pressing one button. These buttons cost about \$50-65.

Smartphones

Features:

- They generally run the Android operating system at this price point.
- Accessibility features include the Talkback screen reader, zoom features, captioned video playback, switch key support and colour inversion.
- Very customisable – you can change the way the phone works to make it easier to use.

Products:

- Android-based smartphones are approximately \$200 for a good quality phone such as the Moto G but generic Android-based smartphones can be much cheaper. Make sure the phone runs at least Android version 4.4 so that you get good accessibility features.
- BIG Launcher app: many seniors find the features on a smartphone initially confusing. This app can be installed on virtually any Android smartphone to change the interface into six big buttons that show you how to call, how to send and receive messages, how to take photos, share pictures and put in an emergency contact. This app costs \$12 and can be



Where can I buy these products?

Many of these products can be purchased from popular retail stores such as Target, Harvey Norman and Myer. Online retailers also stock a variety of products. For more information on what questions to ask when shopping and details on other great products, visit the Affordable Access website.

Note: The Affordable Access website was put together by Media Access Australia with support provided by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN). The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.