



## Making the Most of Technology

Technology is constantly around us in smart phones, tablets, gaming devices, and computers. Children are given more information and in a variety of ways, but how can you make the most of technology?

**1. Choose the Right Mode** – Children often are very motivated by the sights and sounds of technology devices. There is an abundance of technology and something for every age and ability. Some children have the motor skills and attention to find and click icons on smartphones while other children need larger interfaces. Some children will instantly catch on to be the most complex form of technology while other children need additional tools and instruction. If you aren't sure if a child has experience with a technology, 'Ask then try'. First, ask their parents, teacher or therapists if they have tried or if they are using any technology independently. Some schools have iPads and use them on a regular basis. Some classrooms have adaptive computer equipment such as a screen overlay (e.g. TouchWindow), a switch, or a modified mouse (e.g. single button or large rollerballs). If these aren't available or haven't been tried, some area organizations lend equipment. Ask teachers, therapists, or members of local organizations if there are resource or lending libraries in your community. This is a way to try technology and make sure it is a fit before purchasing it. Some children will need instruction and practice with new equipment so be sure to give them time before excluding an item.

**2. Find Learning Opportunities** – Handing a child an iPhone or letting them play on the computer will entertain them, but working with them is an opportunity for learning. Technology frequently is used purely for entertainment when it actually holds many possibilities for learning. Language, social, and academic skills all can be taught through fun videos or games. Children can have fun while working on a variety of skills.

*Language Skills:* When watching videos or playing games, ask children questions about what they see or hear or what happened first, second, third. Use this as an opportunity to work on answering questions or to expand sentence length.

*Academic Skills:* Discuss colors, numbers, and prepositions. Choose videos or games that incorporate new concepts. Science, geography, history, and the arts are just a few examples of the many topics that can be found in videos and games. Expose children to new topics through technology to engage and motivate them.

*Social skills:* When playing games, interact with children. Take turns and talk about what is happening in the game. This is a great opportunity for interacting, not just entertaining.

**3. Combine with Real World Experiences** – Modern video and graphics are increasingly life like but should not replace real world experiences. Learn about science, art or history through video games and videos but bring materials into the classroom or go to exhibits to get a comprehensive view of the subjects. Teach daily living skills through technology but provide materials for real world practice. Learn about social interactions from video models but then practice these skills with peers and adults. Use technology to enhance education but not replacement hands on learning.