

## AbleData Facebook Blogs

### Table of Contents

AT for Entertainment and Leisurely Activities .....	3
Kicking Off Summer and Outdoor Activities with the Help of AT .....	3
Indoor Summer Activities You Can Do with AT.....	3
AT to Support Your New Year’s Resolutions .....	4
Socially Assistive Robots for Companionship .....	5
AT for Writing & Journaling .....	6
Educational AT .....	8
Assistive Technology at School .....	8
Going Back to School with Assistive Technology .....	8
AT for Money Management.....	9
Awareness Days, Weeks and Months .....	11
Assistive Technology (AT) and Autism .....	11
Occupational Therapy (OT) and Assistive Technology (AT) .....	11
May is #StrokeMonth.....	12
October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month .....	12
A Resource for Seniors and Caregivers .....	13
Low Vision Awareness Month.....	14
Today is American Diabetes Alert Day.....	15
Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness Month .....	16
Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month .....	17
Low Vision Awareness Month: Helpful Assistive Technology.....	18
Celebrating World Health Day: AT with a Global Perspective .....	19
AAC Apps for Children with Autism .....	19
Emergency Preparedness .....	20
Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness.....	21
Falls Prevention & AT.....	22
National Disability Employment Awareness Month .....	22
National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month .....	23
Older Driver Safety Awareness Week.....	24
Celebrating World Braille Day.....	25
Age Related Macular Degeneration and Low Vision Awareness Month .....	26

Exercising during Older Americans Month .....	27
AT Gift Ideas .....	30
AT Gift Ideas for People with Autism .....	30
AT Gift Guide for the Cook .....	31
AT Gift Ideas for Communication.....	31
AT for Being at Home .....	33
New Blog Series: AT for Being at Home .....	33
Exercising .....	33
Sewing.....	34
Gaming.....	35
Gardening.....	35
Educational Games and Activities.....	36
Reading .....	36
Cycling.....	37
Hiking .....	38
Games and Puzzles.....	38
Tending Indoor Plants .....	39
Staying in Touch.....	41
Do It Yourself.....	41
Fidgets.....	42
Home Cooking & Baking .....	44
Pizza .....	44
Grilled Cheese .....	45
Peach Cobbler .....	46
Eggs Benedict.....	47
Pineapple Upside Down Cake .....	49
Jelly Beans.....	50
Zucchini Bread.....	51
Bubble Tea .....	53
Orange Ricotta Pancakes .....	54
Coconut Cream Pie.....	55
Vanilla Pudding .....	58

## **AT for Entertainment and Leisurely Activities**

### **Kicking Off Summer and Outdoor Activities with the Help of AT**

June 21, 2017

Today is the official first day of summer. With more hours of daylight and the kids out of school, you might be looking forward to some of your favorite summer activities! The summer months are great for spending time outside.

If you love gardening but find it difficult because of limited mobility, there are many assistive technology (AT) products and solutions available to assist you. Have you seen our guide to gardening on AbleData yet? It includes a number of tools and options that will make gardening more enjoyable-including accessible gardening beds, like the Rustic Elevated Gardening Bed and the 3-Tiered Cedar Raised Garden Bed. The guide goes on to include products for planting (check out the bulb-bopper planter or a battery-operated hand planter), watering (like the Adapted Outdoor Plant Watering Wand Holder), and weeding (try the Homegrown Ergonomic Hand Weeder or Easi-Grip Long Reach Garden Tools).

Or read our guide, [How AT Can Help You at Play](#), to help you navigate some other outdoor activities, as well as some indoor ones.

Do you like cycling? There are a number of adapted bikes available. An adult tricycle (like the Haverich 27 Racing Tricycle, the Freedom Adult Tricycle, or the MICAH Special Needs Tricycle) can be used if you have balance, mobility or neurological disabilities. You can also try a hand-propelled cycle if you have lower extremity disabilities or prefer pedaling with your hands-take a look at the Hand and Foot Powered Cycle or the Hand Powered Cycle.

If you're more interested in water-related activities, give fishing a try! There are a number of adapted fishing rods and accessories available, like a fishing pole holder for wheelchairs or a strong arm rod holder.

Looking for something on land? You can enjoy golfing with products like a golf grip for amputees, or a golf walker that allows you to push the walker across the course while carrying the clubs in the walker.

What are some of your favorite outdoor activities to do during the summer? You can always search for products to help you with these activities on [AbleData.com](#), or browse for recreational products [here](#).

### **Indoor Summer Activities You Can Do with AT**

June 28, 2017

You may have seen the blog I posted to celebrate the first day of summer on outdoor activities you can do with the help of assistive technology (AT). If you haven't, check it out [here](#)!

In this blog, I'm focusing on some great indoor activities because-let's face it-the weather isn't always perfect in the summer. Sometimes you have to take your activities inside. Our guide, [How AT Can Help](#)

You at Play, which I mentioned in my blog for outdoor activities, also offers a look at many indoor activities.

If card games and board games interest you, there are a number of adaptive and accessible options, including large print playing cards, Braille playing cards and a Giant Monopoly Deluxe Game.

If you're a gamer of the non-board variety, AT offers many options in the area of video games. There are many adapted controllers, one-handed controllers and joysticks that you could check out. Be sure to also read through our AT For Video Gaming guide for other options.

If you're more musically inclined, there are plenty of instruments and musical accessories adapted to fit almost any need. We have a guide for music-lovers who are blind or have low-vision. It talks about products like "Who's Afraid of Braille Music," which is an introductory handbook designed to help you learn how to read, write, play and sing music in braille. And the Lime Lighter is a music reading aid to help you sing or play a keyboard or another instrument.

If it's an instrument you're in need of, there are numerous adaptations available as well as DIY instructions-products like the Band Jam and the DIY Adapted Musical Instrument. You can also search AbleData.com for your specific needs.

What are your favorite ways to play indoors during the summer?

## **AT to Support Your New Year's Resolutions**

January 11, 2018

We are now into the second week of January, and people around you are probably still talking about their New Year's resolutions. Setting resolutions can be easy, but keeping them throughout the year can be a hard task.

Finding a support system to hold you accountable can certainly help. And setting yourself up for success with the right assistive technology (AT) to support your goal is another way to ensure sticking to those resolutions. Whether your resolution is health-related or focused on personal growth and development, here are some guides from AbleData that can help you.

**Are you trying to be healthier in the New Year?** Take a look at our guide for Working Out with AT, or AT for Swimming. Our Guide to Walking Aids: Canes, Crutches, and Walkers is also a great place to look if you are in need of more options in helping you move more. The guide on how AT can help you Manage Diabetes is another useful one to help you live a healthier 2018. If you're focused on hygiene, the guides AT for Safe Bathing and AT for Self-Grooming offer some resources, products, and tips for you.

**Are you looking to spend more time outdoors?** Our guide on AT Weather Gear can help you make sure you are properly outfitted, no matter the weather. Our guide on AT for Gardening: Cultivating Produce & Flowers with Mobility Limitations can also help you to get outside. Aside from being a popular hobby, gardening can have a positive impact on your health and wellness. The guide on Wayfinding AT for People Who are Blind, Deaf or Have a Cognitive Disability is also a great place to start to help you feel more comfortable navigating outside.

**Is your resolution to get in touch with your artistic side?** The guide on the AT for the Would-Be Virtuoso Who is Blind or Has Low Vision can offer you some information on AT to help support you in your musical endeavors.

**Maybe you're thinking of a new job in the new year?** Be sure to check out Job Accommodations and AT Support Workers with Autoimmune Diseases. You might also find the guide How AT Can Help You in the Workplace to be of help.

No matter what you're choosing to focus on for this coming year, AbleData's guides and product listings can help you meet your goals. Let us know below what your New Year's resolution is!

## **Socially Assistive Robots for Companionship**

May 1, 2018

According to the World Health Organization, 450 million people worldwide are currently affected by mental health conditions, and one in four people ultimately will be in their lifetime. Companionship has been shown to help alleviate many types of mental health conditions and discourage health-damaging behaviors. However, finding companionship may be difficult, especially if you are managing a mental health condition.

According to this [recent article](#), "social isolation-feeling lonely and cut off from the world-may accelerate many diseases, such as heart disease, and impair immune systems, according to research from the University of York in the United Kingdom and the University of Chicago. Researchers at Utah's Brigham Young University have suggested that the heightened risk of dying from social isolation is on par with smoking 15 cigarettes every day and being an alcoholic."

That's one of the reasons why many researchers and manufacturers have been developing socially assistive robots (SARs) over the past decade. The article also highlights the current development and use of devices, and the potential impact. And AbleData has a guide on Socially Assistive Robots that highlights some of the following types of robotic companions. Here are some of the examples:

### **Animal Companions**

- If you are a dog-lover, the Genibo Robot Dog may be a good animal companion for you. It is designed to act like a real dog. It recognizes voice commands when you instruct it to do something after touching its head, and it makes sounds and expresses emotions when its back is patted. It can even take photos.
- Another option, WowWee CHiP Interactive Robot Pet Dog, is a smart, affectionate and trainable robotic dog that responds to you through touch, gestures, and even a mobile app.
- For cat lovers, the Dream Cat is touted by its manufacturer, Sega, as being an "interactive feline friend." The Dream Cat has sensors in the head and both sides of the face, as well as in the back and stomach. When you pet the cat in these places, it will purr and meow.
- Another option for cat lovers is the Joy for All Companion Pet Cat, which is designed to look, feel, and sound like a real cat. It responds to petting, hugging, and motion using built-in sensors.
- PARO Therapeutic Robot is an advanced interactive robot that has the look and feel of a stuffed animal seal. PARO responds to your interactions as if it is alive-it moves its head and legs, makes sounds by imitating the voice of a real baby harp seal, and learns to behave in accordance with your preferences.

- Another similar product is a baby otter robot, Ollie, which was designed as a therapy robot to help with anxiety and depression.

### **Humanoid Companions**

Humanoid companions are a great alternative to an animal. They have many of the same features and mannerisms that a real person expresses.

- Reeti is a communicative and expressive robot with the ability to express emotions through facial expressions. It can also recognize your voice and is capable of text-to-speech communication.
- Pepper is an autonomous talking humanoid robot that perceives emotions like joy, anger, sadness and surprise based on the tone of your voice, facial expressions and body movement. It responds to you through its own voice and body movements in an appropriate manner. Pepper's ability to identify different emotions and respond appropriately is designed to make its interactions with you natural and intuitive.
- Buddy is another humanoid companion option. Buddy's brain is an integrated 8- inch tablet with built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth. Its 3D vision lets it easily track and interpret hand, arm, and head movements; distinguish among objects, faces, animals, plants, etc.; and gauge the depth of objects in its sight.
- Nadine is a social companion with very humanlike features. Nadine can look you in the eye, recognize you, converse with you, remember the last time you talked to each other, read you stories, and play games with you.

If you'd like more information, contact us at AbleData and be sure to read this [article](#) to see how these devices are helping people.

### **AT for Writing & Journaling**

June 18, 2020

With so many computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones inundating our homes, offices and schools, it's hard to believe, let alone remember, there was a time when letters were written by hand, journal entries were scribbled down on paper, and postcards were delivered by mail. Even though this may seem like a lifetime ago, you can't help but recall those times with fondness and a touch of nostalgia. There's just something about having a clean sheet of paper in front of you, holding the weight of a pen in your hand, and feeling it scratch across the surface of the paper as you write. Composing a letter with pen and paper evokes a deeper, personal connection to what you are writing and to whom you are writing to-far more than any stylus or touch screen ever could.

Perhaps, this is why, more and more people are spending their time writing, not with electronic devices and high-tech gadgets, but with their trusty old paper and pen. And did you know that writing by hand offers [five psychological benefits](#) as well? It can help you retain information better; improve your communication skills; sharpen your concentration; relieve stress (especially when journaling); and heighten your overall cognitive abilities.

So, if you are eager and ready to confront the digital age by hand, it's time to equip yourself with the essentials: Paper, pen, and a few helpful assistive technology (AT) products. Here are a few AT tools to help get you started:

- Writing paper - let the bold or raised lines marking these papers guide your hand as you compose your next letter or journal entry.
- Pen and pencil holders - it's time to put pen to paper! Maintain a firmer, longer grip on your pen/pencil with the aid of these adapted holders.
- Ergonomic pens and pencils - approach your next letter or journal entry with these weighted, ergonomically designed writing tools. For you know what they say-the pen is mightier than the sword (or in this case, a stylus)!
- Writing boards - now that we have the writing tools squared away, it's time to tackle the next piece-your work station. After all, how beneficial will those papers and pens be if you don't have the proper platform on which to use them? Let these writing boards come to your aid-they are designed to help you write with greater comfort and ease.

You can learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently at AbleData.

With these writing tools in hand, you can:

1. Compose a personal letter to a family member or friend. Ask how they're doing and share with them how you've been spending your days-who doesn't love sending and receiving personal letters?
2. Write down your favorite moments from past vacations on the back of a postcard. Send it to a family member or friend-what better time is there than now to reminisce about fun, memorable events with your loved ones?
3. Jot down your day-to-day happenings in a journal. This can include funny moments, keen observations, baffling inquiries and reflective musings-your journal is yours to fill as you will! After all, today's experiences and insights will soon become a part of history's tales, and perhaps even shape the narrative of the future. So crack open a journal and start documenting your day-to-day goings on, from minor occurrences to profound insights and everything in between. For who can record your life's story through your eyes better than you?

Don't think that just because you are equipping yourself with pen and paper that all you've learned from the digital age is gone, for we too can swipe, click and tap along with the rest of them. Swipe away any and all spelling errors with your eraser, click your pen to get it ready to start writing, and replace the tappity-tap-taps of your finger pads with the tapping beat of your pen as you contemplate your next sentence. Who ever said that the art of letter writing is lost?

## Educational AT

### Assistive Technology at School

October 16, 2017

Now that it is officially fall, you probably find yourself back in your routine-you're back at work and the kids are back at school. This fresh start is a great time to assess the assistive technology (AT) that kids have, or don't have but might benefit from.

AT can be used in the classroom to help deliver instruction and to encourage practice at home. AT won't replace the children's capabilities, but it can help maintain them and make it easier for children with learning disabilities to be a part of classroom activities. On AbleData, we've published a guide about how AT can be used in the classroom-take a look at our guide on AT for Students with Learning Disabilities in Elementary School that explain low-tech, medium-tech and high-tech options for different disability types.

For a student with dyslexia, the Edmark Reading Program might be helpful. This software provides a repetitive sight word approach for students and is designed to teach children 350 words. The Learning Sensations Play with Letters Desk is a medium-tech option you could look into. The desk allows children to "roll" alphabetical letters across the surface of the desk to hear their phonic sounds, form words, and create musical alphabet songs. For a low-tech option, the Picture Symbol Lotto Game is a perceptual training game to assist children with association and vocabulary acquisition.

The guide also offers some AT suggestions for students with dysgraphia. Write Now and Wordq Writing Aid are voice output word prediction software programs that can be used with Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Google Docs. Forte is a self-contained, battery-operated portable word processor with a built-in speaker and headphones. The Livescribe 3 Smartpen is a premium ball point pen compatible with iPad, iPhone and iPod, and converts written text into a readable version. It also takes recorded notes.

If you're in need of some AT devices for Dyscalculia, Dyscalculator is a talking calculator that provides calculations in words and symbols to help the students more easily understand mathematical operations. There is also the Coin Abacus device, where children slide a coin or dollar bill over the device and it speaks back the total value.

For more information about AT in the classroom, be sure to check out the guide. You can always search for products to help you with these activities on AbleData, or browse the educational products here.

### Going Back to School with Assistive Technology

August 27, 2018

As the kids are gearing up to go back to school, this is a great time to take a look at our guide on how assistive technology (AT) can be used to support learning. AT for Students with Learning Disabilities in Elementary School explains low-tech, medium-tech and high-tech options for different disability types that can be used both in the classroom and at home!

AT can be used in the classroom to help deliver instruction and to encourage practice at home. AT won't replace the children's capabilities, but it can help to maintain them. It can help make it easier for children with learning disabilities to be a part of classroom activities. Below are a few useful products.

**For dyslexia:**

- The Edmark Reading Program is software that provides a repetitive sight word approach for students, and is designed to teach children 350 words.
- The Learning Sensations Play with Letters Desk is a medium-tech option that allows children to "roll" alphabetical letters across the surface of the desk to hear their phonic sounds, form words, and create musical alphabet songs.
- The Picture Symbol Lotto Game is a perceptual training game to assist children with association and vocabulary acquisition.

**For dysgraphia:**

- Write Now and Wordq Writing Aid are voice output word prediction software programs that can be used with Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Google Docs.
- Forte is a self-contained, battery-operated portable word processor with a built-in speaker and headphones.
- The Livescribe 3 Smartpen is a premium ball point pen that is compatible with iPad, iPhone and iPod. It converts written text into a readable version and takes recorded notes.

**For dyscalculia:**

- The Dyscalculator is a talking calculator that provides calculations in words and symbols to help the students more easily understand mathematical operations.
- The Coin Abacus device speaks back the total value when children slide a coin or dollar bill over the device.

Other guides worth checking out include Fidget AT, AT for Eating, and AT for Toileting. Each guide features products and solutions that can help a child throughout the school day. You can also search for specific products at [AbleData.com](http://AbleData.com), or browse the educational products [here](#).

## **AT for Money Management**

January 25, 2019

Acquiring money management skills and learning to use them in the community can help you gain confidence and self-esteem and build independence. If you are a young person or a parent of a child with a cognitive disability or who is blind or has low vision, check out this guide which provides you with a sampling of assistive technology (AT) products on the market for identifying, counting and managing money. Some of the AT products features in this guide include:

**Money Identifiers.** These tools will be helpful to identify paper bills.

- The iBill Talking Banknote Identifier is a small, rectangular, voice output and vibrating paper money identifier that recognizes all U.S. banknotes in circulation with 99.9 percent accuracy.

- The EyeNote app works with one touch. It recognizes either the front or back of a portion of the bill, provides a voice or buzzer vibration to describe the value, does not require any modification to the phone or special lighting, and all the processing occurs on the device (so no data connection is required to perform the scan).

**Counting Money.** These tools will assist you in learning how to count your money and keep track of how much money you have.

- The Coin Abacus is an electronic device designed to help you learn basic money-counting skills.
- The Coin-U-Lator looks like a handheld calculator with an LCD screen and keys that resemble actual money (a \$1 U.S. banknote, penny, nickel, dime, and quarter) rather than number keys.

**Money Management.** These tools will teach money management through engaging games.

- Moneywise Kids is a board game designed to teach money management skills to children ages seven and up with cognitive or learning disabilities.
- Money Skills is a money management training system in a board game format designed to teach you how to handle true-to-life money management situations.

For more products and suggestions to help you manage your money, be sure to check out our money management guide. You can also search for specific products on [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov).

## Awareness Days, Weeks and Months

### Assistive Technology (AT) and Autism

April 6, 2017

April is National Autism Awareness Month to promote autism awareness, inclusion and acceptance. People with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often have difficulties with social skills, behaviors and communication. Since it is a spectrum condition, it affects everyone in different ways and to different degrees. According to the [Autism Society](#), it affects one in every 68 children in the United States.

If you or someone you know has autism, you can use assistive technology (AT) products to help perform daily tasks that you find difficult. AbleData provides information on an array of AT products that may assist you. I started by doing a quick search using the keyword, “autism,” and found a number of AT products that can help with a range of needs such as:

- Communication aids - check out the Autism Myvoice Communicator, Autism Xpress, and Autismate.
- Education aids - check out the Autism Tracker Pro and Autism Core Skills.
- Relationship skill aids - check out Expressions for Autism.

The organization, [Autism Speaks](#), also provides information on a number of [autism apps](#) that you might find useful. Also, check out their post on [Technology and Autism](#).

Do you have any AT resources related to autism that you’ve found helpful? Share them with us and our Facebook friends by commenting on this post!

### Occupational Therapy (OT) and Assistive Technology (AT)

April 25, 2017

You might initially think that occupational therapy (OT) only helps with job-related tasks, but it goes far beyond that! Occupational therapists enable people of all ages to live life to the fullest and prevent or live better with injury, illness or disability. Basically, they can help you do all the types of activities you want and need to do, but need help in figuring out how you can do them because of a disability, weakness or similar impediment.

So how does OT relate to assistive technology (AT)? OT can focus on everything from helping a child with disabilities participate in school, assisting a person recovering from injuries to regain skills, and helping an older adult stay as independent as possible, and all of these tasks can be enhanced by using AT. For even more information, check out this past post: [Occupational Therapists: What They Do and How They Use Assistive Technology](#).

April is Occupational Therapy Month. This is a great time to take a look at your own daily tasks, and consider ways to make them easier. For example, now that the weather is warming up, you might want to get outside and spend time in your garden. If you find it difficult to garden because of a mobility limitation, I recently wrote a guide about AT for Gardening that may help you. Aside from being a popular hobby, gardening can have a positive impact on your health and wellness!

Another example is taking a look at your job tasks. Read our guide on how AT can help you in the workplace, as well as job accommodations and AT for autoimmune diseases for some ideas. AbleData has a number of other guides on how AT can help with a variety of everyday tasks, such as:

- Voting Success for People with Disabilities
- AT for Students with Learning Disabilities
- AT for Safe Bathing
- Parenting with a Disability
- Playing, Video Gaming and Playing Music
- AT for Housekeeping

If you're interested in more information and additional resources about Occupational Therapy, visit the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org), or on Facebook at [American Occupational Therapy Association - AOTA](#). Or you can use these hashtags [#OTMonth](#) and [#occupationaltherapy](#).

Have you had successes with AT and OT? Let us know in the comment section.

## **May is #StrokeMonth**

May 19, 2017

Have you or someone you know had a stroke? More than 800,000 strokes occur each year in the United States alone-according to the [National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke \(NINDS\)](#). Strokes cause more serious long-term disabilities than any other disease. Having a stroke can often result in a host of disabilities, such as weakness on one side of the body, trouble with talking, difficulty thinking or problems with moving. Assistive technology (AT) can help.

Just this week we posted an AT guide on AbleData about canes, crutches and walkers that could be useful in dealing with movement and balance difficulties post-stroke. Other AT products can also help with the aftereffects of a stroke. Here are just a few examples:

- Communication problems? Search for communication devices on AbleData. A common communication problem, which affects around one third of stroke survivors, is aphasia. Some products that can specifically help address aphasia are the C-Speak Aphasia or SmallTalk Aphasia app, or a Clamp-On-Adjustable Mirror.
- Swallowing problems? Check out the Swallowing Problems: A Guide for the Patient and Family or the Dining Out: A Guide for The Adult with Swallowing Problems.
- Continence problems? Search some of these Aids for Daily Living for incontinence products like Incontinent Pants or the Quilted Plaid Incontinence Pad.

May is [National Stroke Awareness Month](#). You should know that 80% of strokes are preventable-high blood pressure is the most important, controllable risk factor for stroke. Check out these [resources](#) from the [American Stroke Association](#) for more information.

## **October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

October 25, 2017

Did you know that October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month? The annual celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month heightens awareness while recognizing the contributions of Americans with disabilities to both our workforce and our society.

This is a great reminder to assess the assistive technology (AT) that you have at work, or AT you don't have, but might need. Using AT in the workplace can help facilitate equity among employees so that all employees can perform their job tasks and achieve the same results. However, many pieces of AT can have benefits to everyone, regardless of disability status. On AbleData.com, we've published a guide on [How AT Can Help You in the Workplace](#). This guide would be a great place to start in considering AT for your office. Below are some examples of AT that are useful in the workplace with links to examples on the AbleData database. As always, you can do a keyword search on AbleData to find more.

- Ergonomic keyboards are designed to minimize strain and discomfort in your hands, wrists, shoulders and back. Alternatively, an adapted keyboard can be designed to meet your specific needs, such as a one-handed keyboard if you only have the use of one hand.
- Screen readers are software programs that you can use if you are blind or have low vision. A screen reader identifies what is on your computer and reads it aloud in a computerized voice so you can hear it.
- Screen magnifiers make screen text larger if you have low vision. You could also use a larger computer screen.
- Voice recognition software can be great if you have limb loss, limited muscle control or hand-use, or conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome. This software allows you to speak commands to operate your computer.
- Screen clips hold paper in place to decrease neck strain while you type information from printed documents.
- Microphone headsets help to reduce neck strain and back pain while talking on the phone by allowing you to hold your head in an upright, neutral position.

Check out the complete guide for more information about workplace AT, and search through our workplace devices on AbleData's website. For more information about National Disability Employment Awareness Month, you can visit the [Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy](#). And let us know below what AT you find helpful in the workplace.

## **A Resource for Seniors and Caregivers**

November 28, 2017

We touched base with Oliver Hersch, Chief Executive Officer of [Seniors Blue Book](#), in recognition of [Caregiver's Awareness Month](#). Seniors Blue Book offers seniors, caregivers, and senior professionals a comprehensive database of resources for services, housing, home health, and other topics of interest. They also provide these resources by U.S. market in their regional, printed guides. We spoke with Oliver to find out more about what Seniors Blue Book has to offer seniors and caregivers.

1. How long has Seniors Blue Book been around and what do you offer seniors?

The Seniors Blue Book was first published in Denver in 1983, and now serves 27 markets through the U.S.-printing over 2.6 million guides annually. [Seniorsbluebook.com](#) not only offers information for the 27 printed edition markets, but for the rest of the country as well. The Seniors Blue Book offers over 70

categories of information covering almost anything a senior, caregiver, or senior professional may have an interest in.

2. What topics or areas do you find that seniors are most interested in from your website?

Beyond the 70+ categories of information offered, we also provide activity calendars for seniors and professionals as well as a robust article library offering over 1,500 editorials.

3. What types of resources do you have for seniors who are looking for technologies to help them with their everyday tasks?

Every day, more and more technology is being made available for seniors to access. It is a very exciting time for seniors in technology. In addition to our categories focused on technology, our calendars consistently offer events that provide training and education on technology.

4. What is currently happening at Seniors Blue Book that users of AbleData would be interested in?

In January 2018, we will be launching local home pages for each of the printed editions we serve. This will make it easier for AbleData users to locate and identify programs and opportunities in their local markets that are beneficial.

## Low Vision Awareness Month

February 16, 2018

February is Low Vision Awareness Month. Currently, 4.2 million Americans ages 40 and older are visually impaired, according to the [National Eye Health Education Program](#). They predict this to reach 7.2 million by 2030.

If you are blind or have low vision, you may find our newest guide helpful-especially if you have a love for the kitchen! Below are some of the tips and products from our guide, AT for Chefs Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision.

**Setting up your kitchen.** If you are blind or have low vision, there are many AT solutions that can help you set up your kitchen so that you can cook independently.

- Tactile markings such as Bump-Dots, which are raised dots with adhesive backing, may be a good option for labeling and identifying items in your kitchen.
- A voice-output labeling system, like the Reizen Talking Label Wand, may make identifying ingredients in your pantry more manageable.

**Measuring.** There are a number of tactile and audible tools that may help make measuring and weighing your ingredients easier.

- Measuring spoons, like the Braille Measuring Spoons, feature the measurements clearly marked in raised print and Braille on the handle. The Classic set comes with 1/4 teaspoon, 1/2 teaspoon, 1 teaspoon, and 1 tablespoon.
- If larger measurements are what you need, try the Speaks Volumz Talking 3-Cup Measuring Cup. It is a battery-operated measuring cup that reads aloud the volume and weight of the ingredients.

**Prepping.** Regardless of whether you are a seasoned chef or a rookie cook, you probably have experienced the sharp sting and slicing pain of a knife blade at one time or another. Here are some devices that will make the prep work easier.

- Knives like the Cutting Board with Pivot Knife may help you chop and/or slice fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients with extra safety and precision.
- For chopping, the Chef'N VeggiChop or a similar product may be helpful. The hand-powered food chopper can easily chop a wide variety of ingredients, including fruits, vegetables, boneless meats, herbs, and nuts.
- A peeler may also come in handy. The Chef'N PalmPeeler is a contoured peeler that fits in the palm of your hand, which gives you greater control as you peel.

Check out the full guide on AT for Chefs Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision for more AT products that will help you in the kitchen, including appliances and other cooking accessories. If you are looking for something more specific, you can always search the AbleData database.

And for more useful information about staying safe in the kitchen, you may want to check out Safe Cooking Techniques for Cooks Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision from the American Foundation for the Blind.

## Today is American Diabetes Alert Day

March 27, 2018

Today, March 27, is Diabetes Alert Day. The [American Diabetes Association](#) observes Diabetes Alert Day as a day to inform the public about the seriousness of diabetes-especially when it is left undiagnosed. Did you know that diabetes affects about 30.3 million people, and an estimated 7.2 million have diabetes and don't know it?

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your blood glucose, or blood sugar is too high. Over time, having too much glucose in your blood can cause [health problems](#). Although diabetes has no cure, you can take steps to [manage your diabetes](#) and stay healthy. (You can visit the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#) for even more information).

Diabetes Alert Day is a great day to assess your risk for diabetes. Do you know your family history? How physically active were you today? You can take the free [Diabetes Risk Test](#) to get a better idea about your risk of diabetes.

If you do have diabetes, there are many resources available to help you manage the disease, including many assistive technology (AT) devices:

- Blood glucose meters - most people with diabetes regularly monitor their blood glucose levels. Blood glucose meters, which measure the amount of glucose in the blood, detect and keep track of changes in glucose levels. There are many types available-including meters that track results over time, allow you to download or email results, or have voice output capabilities.
- Insulin syringes, pumps and pens - if you need to take insulin to manage your diabetes, these devices will help you. The syringe allows you to self-administer your insulin as needed, where the pump can be programmed to release insulin through a catheter.

- Automatic pill dispensers - you may be required to take multiple medications, and a pill dispenser will make this easier. Depending on the type of dispenser you choose, you can organize your pills in advance by day and time, set audible alarms, reminders, and program your device so that the correct medications are dispensed.
- Blood pressure cuffs - you can monitor your blood pressure at home using one of these cuffs. There are many variations, including a digital cuff that displays the pressure reading on a screen. There are also options available with voice output for people who are blind or have low vision.

There are also a number of mobile apps available that can help you manage your diabetes. Here are some examples:

- Fooducate - scan barcodes to find the pros and cons of packaged foods (e.g., the nutritional value, sugar, trans fats, additives and preservatives) with this app, which is available for Android and iOS devices.
- Glooko - download readings from multiple blood glucose meters and see how often your readings fall within or out of the target glucose range with this app, which is available for Android and iOS devices.
- Diabetes Buddy - record your daily carb intake, log and monitor glucose levels, track your blood pressure, and log insulin injections and/or medications with this iOS app.
- OnTrack - keep track of your daily, weekly, and monthly average glucose levels; generate detailed graphs and reports to share with your physician; and set reminders as needed with this Android app.

AbleData's guide on how AT can help you manage diabetes has a number of other suggestions and resources that you might find helpful. You can also search AbleData's database for any product you might need to help manage diabetes.

## **Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month**

June 25, 2018

In light of June being [Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month](#), we thought it would be a great time to highlight some of the resources that are available, especially for caregivers of someone who is struggling with Alzheimer's Disease.

Alzheimer's is a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells. It causes a loss in memory, thinking and language skills as well as changes in behavior. According to the National Institute on Aging's Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center, Alzheimer's Disease occurs in three stages. These include mild, moderate and severe. Each stage is characterized by physical and behavioral symptoms that intensify from one stage to the next. So, as a caregiver, you are relied on more heavily as your care recipient (e.g., patient, family member, or friend) progresses through the stages.

If you are a caregiver of someone with Alzheimer's Disease (AD), we have a guide, Caregiver's Guide to AT for Alzheimer's Disease, that provides information about some common symptoms of AD and an overview of several type of assistive technology (AT) products that may help you and your care recipient manage them. There is also a wide selection of AT products that are available to help you and your care recipient.

The Aging Mastery Program also has blog post that you might find helpful, especially as a caregiver. Did you know that 1 in 6 millennial caregivers-at an average age of 27-is caring for someone living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia? Be sure to check the blog post: [It's Time to Support Young Caregivers](#) for more information and other resources.

From [National Rehabilitation Information Center \(NARIC\)](#), check out these resources:

- [Alzheimer's Association \(AA\)](#)
- [Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center \(ADEAR\)](#)
- [Alzheimer's Foundation of America \(AFA\)](#)

For even more information on Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness month, and things you can do to support it, visit <https://www.alz.org/abam/#takeAction>.

## **Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

October 26, 2018

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This annual celebration recognizes the contributions of Americans with disabilities to both our workforce and our society. It is also a great reminder to assess the assistive technology (AT) that you have at work, or AT you don't have, but might need.

Using AT in the workplace can help facilitate equity among employees so that all employees can perform their job tasks and achieve the same results. However, many pieces of AT can have benefits to everyone, regardless of disability status.

On [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov), we've published a guide on How AT Can Help You in the Workplace. It would be a great place to start in considering AT for your office!

Here are some examples of AT that are useful in the workplace:

- Ergonomic keyboards are designed to minimize strain and discomfort in your hands, wrists, shoulders and back. Alternatively, an adapted keyboard can be designed to meet your specific needs, such as a one-handed keyboard if you only have the use of one hand.
- Screen readers are software programs that you can use if you are blind or have low vision. A screen reader identifies what is on your computer and reads it aloud in a computerized voice so you can hear it.
- Screen magnifiers make screen text larger if you have low vision. You could also use a larger computer screen.
- Voice recognition software can be great if you have limb loss, limited muscle control or hand-use, or conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome. This software allows you to speak commands to operate your computer.
- Screen clips hold paper in place to decrease neck strain while you type information from printed documents.
- Microphone headsets help to reduce neck strain and back pain while talking on the phone by allowing you to hold your head in an upright, neutral position.

## Low Vision Awareness Month: Helpful Assistive Technology

February 8, 2019

February is Low Vision Awareness Month. According to [The Vision Council](#), 1 in 28 Americans 40 years and older have low vision-and this number is expected to increase as the baby boomer generation continues to age. Low vision is defined as a visual impairment that cannot be corrected (i.e. not with eyeglasses/contact lenses, medication, or surgery). Low vision can impact you at any age. Some common causes are: Optic nerve damage, glaucoma, cataracts, age related macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy.

If you are experiencing low vision, you may not be able to perform daily activities such as reading, writing, paying bills, or using an electronic device like your computer or mobile phone like you used to. You may want to find ways to maximize your current visual acuity or find alternative ways to perform these activities. Fortunately, there are many assistive technology (AT) products on the market that can help:

- Magnifiers may be beneficial. Magnifiers can be handheld or desktop, portable, or stationary. They can be low-tech such as a handheld pocket magnifier or high-tech such as one that will perform character recognition and read out printed text. Some even provide an accompanying light so you can use them in dim lighting.
- Large print keyboards may provide a simple solution if you have difficulty seeing standard keyboard keys. They come in a variety of color combinations. You could also opt to stick large print letter stickers on the keys of your current keyboard.
- Games for people with low vision-including popular ones like Uno and Monopoly-may help you participate in all your favorites with friends and family!
- Large print and tactile clocks and watches may help you-so you'll never lose track of time!
- A variety of low vision cooking products are on the market in case you are a novice or, even a professional, cook. You can find everything from talking thermometers to large print recipe books. Read AbleData's guide on chefs who are blind or have low vision for more AT products.
- There are countless products on the market if you enjoy hobbies such as hiking, gaming, and sewing. For more information, read the AbleData guides that best fit your interests or needs.
- Most computers, tablets, smartphones and even some TVs have magnification or narration applications built into the device settings. Check your device(s) for options.

The [National Eye Health Education Program](#), part of the [National Eye Institute \(NEI\)](#) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has published a [collection of articles, educational tools, infographics and videos on low vision](#) in honor of Low Vision Awareness Month. These resources provide information on vision rehabilitation, managing medications, facts and figures on low vision in different communities, leading an active life with low vision, and more. The collection includes an educational module and speaker's guide to living with low vision, shareable content for social media, and a video series on living with low vision that shares stories of hope and independence. Many of these resources are also available in Spanish.

Visit [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov) for a complete list of low vision AT options. Try searching for "low vision" in the search box or browsing by Blind and Low Vision products by category to see a full range of products.

## **Celebrating World Health Day: AT with a Global Perspective**

March 29, 2019

World Health Day is coming up on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Since 1950, this worldwide awareness day, which was started by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), has spread international focus on various health areas of concern and barriers for those with disabilities, seeking to achieve health for all. According to the WHO, about 15% of the global population has a disability-this number is expected to rise.

The aim to bring international attention to health issues also provides an opportunity to look at health-related disabilities and Assistive Technology (AT) to help break down barriers around the world. Whether you are traveling and are unsure how to navigate new countries, or are curious about AT implementation worldwide, below are some AT products that traverse the global:

- Sign language translators can help bridge communication gaps worldwide-for those that speak different languages or communicate using different methods, or both!
- Multi-lingual text to speech applications or bilingual products can be used in a multi-language classroom, in the workspace, or to communicate in different languages.
- Wayfinding is important for everyone. There are many products available depending on need and environment. Read more on AbleData's guide on Wayfinding.

In some parts of the world, high-tech options may not be feasible- perhaps due to a lack of power, cell service, funding, or general remoteness of the location. There are many do-it-yourself and low-tech options available:

- Canes and walking aids can help with mobility and navigation. Some are easily foldable-and portable-while others provide durability in rough terrain.
- There are a number of do-it-yourself projects that can alter, modify, or improve everyday objects, usually at no or low cost.

Visit the [world health day](#) website to see a list of events that you can participate in, and use the hashtag [#WorldHealthDay](#).

## **AAC Apps for Children with Autism**

April 18, 2019

April is National Autism Awareness Month, and aims to increase awareness, acceptance and understanding for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). According to a 2018 [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) report](#), around 1 in 59 children are diagnosed with ASD. This spectrum disorder impacts children differently and to varying degrees. Children with ASD may have developmental delays and could face challenges with repetitive behaviors, social skills, speech, nonverbal communication, and may have sensory aversions.

If your child or a child you know has difficulty communicating, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) may be an effective Assistive Technology (AT) tool to increase communication. This class of AT provides ways to communicate without talking; it can be as simple as writing on a piece of paper or as high-tech as an application (app) on a mobile device. Mobile apps provide powerful, portable communication tools. Below are three common types of AAC mobile apps that may help children communicate:

- Picture-based apps, such as TalkTabletUS and Sono Flex for iOS, convert pictures on screen into text that is read aloud.
- Text-based apps, such as Predictable 4+ and Handyspeech, read text-based messages that a child types or writes out loud.
- Picture and text-based apps, such as Able AAC and TouchChat-AAC, provide the ability for a child to communicate through both pictures and texts.

Some apps also support multiple languages. You may find AbleData's guide on AAC Mobile Apps for Children with Autism worth a look. [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov) also has a robust list of products-try typing "AAC" in the search field. [Autismspeaks.org](http://Autismspeaks.org) has a number of resources related to AT, such as AAC, to help increase communication for people with ASD. Speech-Language pathologists can also assist with identifying the right AAC product(s) for each child.

## Emergency Preparedness

May 21, 2019

Do you have an emergency preparedness plan? Have you made an emergency kit with enough supplies to last several days? National Hurricane Preparedness Week is this month and brings awareness to one of the most damaging natural phenomena; hurricanes not only bring heavy rain and destructive wind, but can cause storm surges and flooding days after the storm has dissipated.

According to the [World Health Organization](http://WorldHealthOrganization.org), people with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by natural disasters. People with disabilities and older adults may not be able to evacuate, they may lose or not be able to use their Assistive Technology (AT) devices or medication, and may face additional challenges to activities of daily living during an emergency or in an evacuation shelter.

FEMA recommends four basic principles for preparedness to ensure you are not caught in an emergency situation without a strategy:

1. Get informed.
2. Make a plan.
3. Assemble a kit.
4. Maintain your plan and kit.

Below are some AT products that can assist in an emergency situation, and may help as you are making a plan and assembling your kit.

- Evacuation chairs assist people with an array of mobility limitations and lower extremity disabilities to evacuate safely when stairs are the only exit method.
- Smoke detectors provide early warning of a fire so you have time to safely exit the building. Make sure your smoke detectors are working properly and check batteries regularly.
- First aid kits are available in braille, talking versions, and kits developed for children with sensory aversions. Ensure you have a first aid kit in your home and vehicle.
- An emergency alert system may be beneficial for use in any emergency. Ensure that if power is out, you have a backup option to use to call for help (such as a cell phone, generator, or extra batteries).
- Flashlights are a must in any emergency kit. There are a number of flashlight options that can be attached to wheelchairs, cars, or canes, or can be handheld. Make sure you have extra batteries.

- Ensure that you have enough medication to last. There are a number of medication reminders, dispensers, and pill holders on the market that may help you prepare.

When developing a plan, you may want to ask about special assistance programs available in your area. You may be able to register with the local fire or police department, or the local emergency management office so necessary help can be provided quickly in an emergency.

Visit the [hurricane preparedness](#) website for additional information. [FEMA](#) also provides a booklet to help people with disabilities prepare an emergency plan to protect themselves and others in the support network in the event of an emergency. You can also check out this [resource from the National Council on Aging](#).

Visit [AbleData.gov](#) for a full list of AT products when developing your plan and kit.

## **Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness**

June 27, 2019

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month. According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), 47 million people worldwide are living with some form of dementia, and this number is projected to rocket to 76 million people by 2030. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia and it is a progressive disease, meaning it develops slowly before worsening over time.

Some common misconceptions are that Alzheimer's is a natural part of the aging process -it is not- and that dementia only impacts older adults-it can impact anyone. Symptoms include challenges with activities of daily living, memory, thinking, carrying on conversations, and responding to the surrounding environment.

Currently, there is no cure, and as the disease progresses, individuals with Alzheimer's have an increased potential for harm within the home. Assistive technology (AT) can provide necessary and precautionary devices to ensure a safe environment:

- Pill boxes, dispensers and timers help ensure the correct pills are taken at the correct time.
- Locators allow caregivers and family members to track the individual with Alzheimer's, and can also be used to find misplaced items.
- Household safety devices like an anti-flood plug or stove fire prevention solutions help prevent emergencies if a faucet or stove is left unattended.
- Wandering patient solutions help prevent individuals from accidentally leaving through a door or window and can alert caregivers if the individual leaves their bed or chair.

If you are a caregiver, we have a guide, [Caregiver's Guide to AT for Alzheimer's Disease](#), that provides information about some common symptoms and an overview of several type of assistive technology (AT) products.

Visit the [Alzheimer's association](#) website for more information on brain health, research, local resources, and how to get involved in the fight against Alzheimer's today. Spread the word using the hashtags [#ENDALZ](#) and [#GOPURPLE](#).

## Falls Prevention & AT

September 27, 2019

We are wrapping up Falls Prevention Month. According to the [World Health Organization](#), 37.3 million falls occur each year that are severe enough to require medical attention. People with balance or mobility disabilities may be at a greater risk of falling. We wanted to highlight some different types of assistive technology (AT) products that might help you protect yourself.

Environmental adaptation products can help you maintain your balance and prevent you from falling.

- Bed rails offer balance and support. Some options include the Standers Bed Rail Advantage or the AbleRise Bed Rail.
- Stair Rails are helpful if you have a balance or mobility disability, especially when ascending and descending stairs, like the 1200 Handrail or Norfolk Stair Rail Support.

Poor lighting can increase your risk of falls. One solution is motion sensor lights. This is a lighting system that turns on whenever it detects movement, and can help illuminate your path.

- The First Alert Motion-Sensing Light Socket and the LightIt Led Sensor Light are great potential options. These lights may help by providing illumination so you can better identify and avoid obstacles in your path.

Fall Detection Monitors may also be something to explore. These are designed to help after a fall if you are unable to get up on your own. These wearable emergency alert devices can connect you with someone to assist you.

- The Bay Alarm Medical's In-Home System is a personal emergency response system that can connect you to outside assistance.
- The NextAlert II is a mobile medical alert system with automatic fall detection.

Be sure to check out our full guide on AT for Preventing Falls. We also have some other guides in AbleData that can be useful in preventing falls:

- Guide to Walking Aids: Canes, Crutches, and Walkers;
- Take a Seat: Adaptive Posture Support Seating & Positioning Chairs; and
- AT for Safe Bathing.

The [National Council on Aging](#) also has some other great resources, tips and guidance to help you prevent falls. To learn more about these and other fall prevention AT products, please visit AbleData.

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October 23, 2019

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This annual celebration recognizes the contributions of Americans with disabilities to both our workforce and our society. It is also a great time to assess the assistive technology (AT) that you have at work, or AT you don't have but might need. Using AT in the workplace can help facilitate equity among employees so that all employees can perform their job tasks and achieve the same results. If you want to read more about the importance of accessibility, check out this blog from [New Edition's Consulting](#).

Additionally, there are many pieces of AT that can benefit everyone, regardless of disability status. In an [article from American National Standards Institute \(ANSI\)](#) on their observation of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, they refer to The New York Times article on [how to create an ergonomically correct office space](#). This article focuses on preventing work-related musculoskeletal injuries. And if you're interested in assessing your workstation to make it more ergonomically correct, here is a [workplace ergonomics checklist](#) from Cornell University.

On AbleData.acl.gov, we've published a guide on How AT Can Help You in the Workplace, which can be a great place to start in considering AT for your office. You could try screen clips, which hold paper in place to decrease neck strain while you type information from printed documents. Ergonomic keyboards are designed to minimize strain and discomfort in your hands, wrists, shoulders and back. Alternatively, an adapted keyboard can be designed to meet your specific needs, such as a one-handed keyboard if you only have the use of one hand.

You might find additional software helpful. There is software available to help you write, such as the Ginger Software. This software offers a grammar checker that analyzes context to determine any errors or misspellings and can be useful for people with cognitive disabilities, developmental disabilities, or learning disabilities. Screen readers are software programs that you can use if you are blind or have low vision. A screen reader identifies what is on your computer and reads it aloud in a computerized voice so you can hear it. Voice recognition software can be great if you have limb loss, limited muscle control or hand-use, or conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome. This software allows you to speak commands to operate your computer. And apps, like Seeing AI, can be used to describe people, text, and objects around you.

Some other examples of AT that are useful in the workplace include:

- Scanners and digital recorders, like the Echo Smart pen. This is a functioning pen that uses a high-speed infrared camera to record everything it writes. It also has an embedded microphone that can record audio notes.
- Screen magnifiers - make screen text larger if you have low vision.
- Microphone headsets - they help reduce neck strain and back pain while talking on the phone by allowing you to hold your head in an upright, neutral position.

You can search AbleData.acl.gov or browse our Workplace product listings. And for more information and to learn how you can participate in National Disability Employment Awareness Month, visit <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/>.

## **National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month**

November 21, 2019

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan designated November as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), 50 million people worldwide are living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, with the majority of people living with Alzheimer's disease ages 65 and older. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease that is a type of dementia impacting cognition, memory, and behavior. One of the earliest symptoms is forgetting information, such as an important date, an answer to a question, where you have placed an item, and not being able to recall the information later. Other [signs and symptoms](#) according to <https://www.alz.org/> are:

- Challenges in planning or solving problems, such as paying bills or balancing a checkbook.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks, such as driving to a common destination.
- Confusion with time or place, such as being confused as to how you got to a destination.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships, such as difficulty in judging distances or maintaining balance.
- New problems with words in speaking or writing, such as trouble remembering how to spell words, mispronouncing familiar words, or using the wrong words.
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps, such as misplacing keys or a wallet without being able to recall where you last saw them, or accusing someone of stealing items.
- Decreased or poor judgement, especially when it comes to money management or maintaining personal grooming.
- Withdrawal from work or social activities due to difficulty with other aspects of daily activities, such as challenges with keeping a conversation.
- Changes in mood and personality, especially when outside of a comfortable environment, leading to increased upsettendness, anxiety, anger, or confusion.

Caregivers also play an enormous role as the disease progresses. According to the [2019 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report](#), more than 16 million Americans provide unpaid caregiver support for people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, with the majority of caregivers providing care so that the care recipient can stay at home. If you are a caregiver and are looking for assistive technology (AT) products to help you and your care recipient, visit AbleData's Caregivers Guide to AT for Alzheimer's Disease. For a full list of AT products that can help caregivers and individuals living with Alzheimer's disease, visit Alzheimer's Disease AT or visit AbleData.

Other Alzheimer's disease resources can be found at <https://www.alz.org/> and support can be found at <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving>.

## **Older Driver Safety Awareness Week**

December 6, 2019

This week, we have been focused on [Older Driver Safety Awareness Week](#). The aim of Older Driver Safety week was to promote an understanding of the importance of mobility and transportation to ensure older adults remain active in the community-shopping, working or volunteering-with the confidence that transportation will not be the barrier to strand them at home.

To wrap the week up, we are sharing some of the resources, topics and tips that might help you or an older driver in your life.

- If you are an older driver, an adult child, or a caregiver, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) encourages you to talk about driving safety before it becomes an issue. [Here are some helpful resources to help understand how aging can affect driving and how to recognize and discuss changes in driving](#). These materials can help you understand how aging can affect driving, what you can do to continue driving safely, and how to talk to family members.
- Things like parking too far from the curb, trouble changing lanes, vision, minor crashes, getting lost on familiar routes, or improperly leaving or entering expressways may be early signs that an older adult is unsafe to drive. Hanging up the keys isn't always the answer; there are options to

enhance skills, adaptations to vehicles, etc. Here are some tips from [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#) for friends and family members to [help older drivers remain safely on the road for as long as possible, and to maintain their independence if driving is no longer an option](#).

- Keyless entry, adjustable steering wheels, parallel parking assistance, back-up cameras, GPS and power locks and windows-these are just a few of the features we're seeing pop up in more and more vehicles. These additions are particularly useful for older drivers or drivers with disabilities as they boost accessibility throughout the vehicle. Many of these features can also be added to older or used models, or installed by the professionals at your [local NMEDA dealership](#).
- [Check out these resources from NHTSA for more information on Adapted Vehicles](#). New and existing adaptive technologies continue to broaden opportunities for people with disabilities to drive both comfortably and safely. Some of these adaptive technologies are as simple as swivel seats for more convenient access. Others, such as hand controls, may be necessary for a driver to safely operate a vehicle. Whatever your requirements, chances are good that adaptive equipment is available to support your special driving needs and allow you to maintain the freedom offered by the open road.
- AbleData's guide on AT For Driving: Paving the Way for Smoother Journeys provides you with a sampling of a range of driving aids on the market that are designed to help you drive safely and independently.
- [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#) shared some [resources, interventions and equipment](#) that can empower drivers and families to keep drivers safe.
- Here are some [simple products that can help to transport the elderly or those with partial disabilities](#) from [National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association \(NMEDA\)](#).
- Changes in vision, flexibility, strength, range of motion and even height are all part of the aging process, and they can affect senior drivers behind the wheel. That's why it's so important to educate yourself about how to choose or make alterations to ensure it's the right vehicle for you, one that will optimize your driving performance and safety. These [resources from AAA can help](#).
- Our AbleData Pinterest page and AbleData database are both resources that can help you if you are looking for products related to transportation, such as keyless entry.
- These [resources from AARP](#) offer some safety tips and resources.

Let us know what other tips you might have, or products you think would be helpful!

## **Celebrating World Braille Day**

January 3, 2020

Tomorrow, January 4th, the world will be celebrating World Braille Day. Corresponding with Louis Braille's birthday, World Braille Day is a day to celebrate his invention, [braille](#)! Braille is a writing code consisting of a series of raised dots contained within a braille cell. Each braille cell can hold 6 raised dots, in two parallel rows of three dots. The position of the dot(s) correspond to a [letter, number, punctuation mark](#), or whole word.

An early form of braille, referred to as "Ecriture Nocture" or night writing code, was created by a French army captain so his officers could read commands in the battlefield without light. Then, along came Louis Braille, born in 1809, who, after a childhood accident, became blind. He took the night writing code and perfected it at the age of 15, creating what we know today as [braille](#).

According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), at least 2.2 billion people worldwide have a vision impairment. In the United States alone, at least [3.4 million Americans](#) are legally blind or visually impaired. In a 2009 [National Federation of the Blind](#) report, it was found that fewer than 10% of people who are legally blind are Braille readers, with 10% of children who are blind learning.

Today, numerous braille assistive technology (AT) products are available on the market. Some examples are:

- AT to learn braille, such as flash cards, tutorials and training programs.
- Software to convert text to braille, and braille embossers (braille printers) which print braille and tactile graphics.
- AT to keep track of time, such as braille calendars and tactile/haptic watches.
- AT to learn or play music, such as how to read music notes, braille sheet music and tutorials for how to play instruments like the guitar and piano.
- Notetakers and refreshable braille displays to take notes and read braille.
- Braille books such as *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Cat in the Hat*, and *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone*.
- Braille signage to alert individuals to locations such as the appropriate restroom, where the exit is located, number signs, and elevator level buttons.
- Recreational AT such as braille Legos, Monopoly, Braille Uno, Checkers, playing cards, Deluxe Scrabble and puzzles.

For a full list of Braille AT, visit [AbleData](#).

## **Age Related Macular Degeneration and Low Vision Awareness Month**

February 24, 2020

February is Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Low Vision Awareness Month. According to [www.brightfocus.org](http://www.brightfocus.org), 11 million people in the United States alone have some form of AMD, and it is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans 60 years or older. This number is expected to double by 2050.

*What is AMD?*

[AMD](#) is a disorder of the macula, the central area of the retina which controls color and visual acuity, in which degenerative proteins and lipids start to deposit under the retina. AMD is usually a progressive disease and early signs include shadows in the individual's central vision or fuzzy/distorted vision. As the disease progresses, the structural support of the retina begins to deteriorate, further decreasing central visual acuity and causing blind or dark spots in one's vision when looking straight ahead. This can impact activities of daily living such as reading, writing, driving, and perceiving faces and color.

*What Assistive Technology (AT) can help?*

1. Magnifiers, offered in both portable and larger, stationary versions, provide enlarged text, higher color contrast of text, and convert printed material to speech so that text can be read out loud.
2. Electronic talking kitchen devices such as the Thermoworks Digital Talking Thermometer and the Liquid level indicator can help the chef easily measure, while cutting aids such as the Etac Cutting Aid can help ensure safe slicing.

3. Audio Book applications, which converts print to audio, create talking books. There are also several apps such as Kindle that offer an audio option. You can also purchase audio books directly from vendors.
4. Mobile apps enable everyone to identify items on the go, such as the object identification app, Tap Tap See, and the money identification app, Eynote.
5. Voice input options allow users to use their voice to create text, rather than typing. This may prove to be useful as AMD progresses. It can be used on a wide range of devices-from mobile phones to computers, tablets and voice recorders.

*Additional guides and resources:*

Check out AbleData's guides on a variety of different topics related to low vision and AT. Guides like AT for Money; AT for Sewing; Smart Home Devices Bring Independence; AT for Chefs Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision; Wayfinding AT for People Who are Blind, Deaf or Have a Cognitive Disability; and AT for the Would-Be Virtuoso Who is Blind or Has Low Vision can be found at [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov).

You can find additional resources at [Brightfocus.org](http://Brightfocus.org) if you're looking to learn more about AMD. For AT recommendations, you can visit [Preventblindness.org](http://Preventblindness.org). You can also visit [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov) for a complete list of low vision AT options. Try searching for "low vision" in the search box or browsing by the Blind and Low Vision product category to see a full range of products.

## **Exercising during Older Americans Month**

May 26, 2020

We know that exercise is critical for improving our overall health and vitality, but often times, we manage to scrounge up an excuse not to do it. "I would if I had more time," "maybe I'll get to it this weekend," "I had a long day and I'm just too tired to exercise," or "I can't make it to the gym today" are just some of the excuses we tend to fall back on when we hear the word "exercise." But what if we told you that there are a number of exercises you can do in the privacy of your own home, in the comfort and convenience of a chair?

Before we delve further into effective chair exercises, let's debunk a few [myths about exercise](#) and rediscover all of the reasons why exercise is so beneficial for us.

- Myth: Aging is inevitable, so there's no point in exercising.
  - Fact: Regular physical activity helps you look and feel younger and stay independent longer. It can help improve immune and digestive functioning and build muscle mass. Exercise can also help lower the impact of illness and chronic disease including Alzheimer's and dementia, heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers, high blood pressure, and obesity.
- Myth: Exercise puts me at greater risk of falling down.
  - Fact: Regular exercise builds strength, bone density and stamina, and enhances mobility and flexibility. This, in turn, can help improve your balance, posture and coordination; thereby reducing the risk of falls.
- Myth: I'm too weak to exercise; I have too many aches and pains.
  - Fact: Regular physical activity can not only help slow down the decline of strength and vitality, but it can actually improve them, helping you manage pain better. The key is to start off with gentle activities and build up from there.
- Myth: It's too late for me to start exercising.

- Fact: It's never too late to become active and improve your health! In fact, adults who become active later on in life tend to show more physical and mental improvements than younger adults. If that's not enough motivation to get you started, how about this? In addition to providing you with physical benefits, exercising can help relieve stress and reduce feelings of sadness, depression and anxiety, while boosting your mood and feelings of self-confidence.

Now that we have debunked the myths and highlighted the benefits of exercise, it's time to tackle another key component: Exercise equipment. Assistive technology (AT) developers have created and modified exercise equipment to meet a wide range of needs. Here are a few examples of exercise AT equipment that can help you on your journey to better health!

- Dumbbells- let these lightweight dumbbells help you enhance your exercise routine and increase your overall strength and endurance. They'll be worth their weight in gold!
- Resistance bands - these stretchy bands, which offer [varying degrees of resistance](#), are designed to help stretch, strengthen and tone your muscles as you push and pull against their resistive force. This is when resistance can work in your favor!
- Ankle and wrist weights - strap on these wearable weights around your ankles and/or wrists to supplement your exercise routine with greater resistance. And if you have difficulty maintaining a firm grasp around dumbbells, wrist weights can be an alternative option.
- Water bottles - during and in between your exercise sessions, keep these cups and water bottles close at hand and remember to hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!

To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

If you're wondering how you can incorporate these AT products into an exercise routine, here is what we promised-examples of [simple chair exercises](#) you can do in the comfort of your own home. Before getting started, please consult your physician to select the routine that best fits your needs.

**Seated Hip Marches** - this cardiovascular exercise can help improve your flexibility and mobility through your hips.

1. Sit tall on a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor, hip-width apart. Grasp the edges or armrests of the chair with both hands and engage your abdominal muscles to help keep your torso tall.
2. Lift your right leg with your knee bent, as high as you comfortably can, as though doing a high-knee march.
3. Lower your right foot to the floor with control.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with your left leg.
5. Do at least 20 alternating marches in succession. Then repeat the exercise 2 to 3 more times, taking a break if needed.

**Seated Shoulder Press** - this strength-training exercise, which requires overhead lifting, helps improve the flexibility of your shoulders and their range of motion.

1. Sit tall in a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the ground, about shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold a light dumbbell in each hand at your shoulders, with your elbows bent and your palms facing away from you-this is the starting position.
3. Press your arms straight up overhead, extending your elbows.

4. Carefully lower your hands back to the starting position.
5. Complete 2 to 3 sets of 10 to 12 repetitions.

**Band Pull-Apart** - ideal for those with more rounded backs, this posture-correcting exercise works your posterior chain to help keep your chest open and your back strong.

1. Hold a mini resistance band in front of you with both of your hands-this is the starting position.
2. Draw your elbows out wide and pull the band.
3. As you pull the band, squeeze your shoulder blades together to engage your lats and rhomboids.
4. Slowly return your arms to the starting position.

For more chair exercises, please visit [11 Chair Exercises for Seniors](#), and [Seated and Standing Chair Exercises for Seniors](#).

Are you ready to exercise your way to improved strength, increased self-confidence and better health? With AT equipment in hand, pull up a chair and let's get started. There is no more room for excuses here!

## AT Gift Ideas

### AT Gift Ideas for People with Autism

December 12, 2019

It's inevitable - the holiday season is coming. Before you know it, jingle bells will be rocking, lights will be twinkling, chestnuts will be roasting, and gifts will be unwrapping. But before any gift can be wrapped, it has to be bought. And before it can be bought..., it has to be chosen!

Often times, coming up with the gift idea is harder than buying the gift itself. This may be especially true if you have someone in your life who has a disability, such as autism. If you are among the many holiday shoppers scratching their heads, wondering what the ideal gift would be for that special someone in your life with autism, let us help you. From toddlers to teens/adults, here are gift ideas for each age group:

#### **For the toddler in your life with autism...**

Teddy Wear is a stuffed animal decked in clothes the toddler can use to practice buttoning, zipping, snapping, fastening and tying. The clothes are brightly colored and come in A variety of textures with different fasteners, offering sensory exploration and fine motor skill development.

#### **For the preschooler in your life with autism...**

The Alphabet Sound Puzzle is a game that teaches letter recognition and cause and effect through brightly colored puzzle pieces and audio feedback. For each letter-shaped puzzle piece the preschooler inserts into the correct slot, he or she is immediately rewarded with the board pronouncing the name of the letter.

#### **For the grade schooler in your life with autism...**

Smart Kids Social Skills Games contain a set of six different board games-each of which focuses on preparing the grade schooler for a variety of challenging social situations. Through this interactive game design, the grade schooler can explore the importance of making good choices, manners, empathy, friendship, emotional expression, and emotional management.

#### **For the teen or adult in your life with autism...**

Kanoodle Duplexity is a magnetic puzzle game designed to get the player thinking about patterning, problem-solving, critical thinking, and spatial reasoning. The player has to pick a challenge card and then use the two-tone magnetic block pieces to recreate the pattern on the card. With Kanoodle Duplexity, the player will have 100 double-sided challenge cards, 28 two-tone magnetic pieces, a card case/carrying case, a game guide, and 200 unique puzzle challenges!

These are just a few gift ideas to get the ball rolling! You can purchase these items and search for other great gift ideas for the people in your life with autism at [National Autism Resources](#). To learn more about assistive technology (AT) products for various disabilities, please visit AbleData.

## AT Gift Guide for the Cook

December 17, 2019

This is the second guide in our gifting series, and we're focusing on the person in your life who loves to cook. There is a wide variety of Assistive technology (AT) that can help make cooking easier, more enjoyable, and less stressful!

- The ütensil automatic pot stirrer is a battery-operated cooking aid. With the push of a button, the ütensil's legs start to rotate and move the entire stirrer around the pot/pan independently. Another press of the same button will increase the ütensil's stirring speed (three different speeds are available with each press of the button), and one final press will turn the stirrer off completely. The food-grade nylon legs are dishwasher-safe and heat-resistant (up to 248 degrees Fahrenheit), and safe to use on non-stick pots and pans.
- The Folding Pan Holder is a sturdy, plated steel pan holder designed to keep a pan or pot from turning or moving when cooking on the stove. The pan holder has rubber suction feet that adhere to the user's stove, and this tool is adjustable and can hold a pan up to 1 quart. One leg can fold in for easy storage in the kitchen drawer.
- The Oven Rack Push Puller is an oven aid. This wood device resembles a ruler with a U-shaped notch at one end and a long handle at the other so that the user can push in a hot oven rack without being burned. It also has a hook-shaped notch on one side that can be used to pull a hot oven rack out of the oven. A magnet allows the device to be stored on a refrigerator or oven. The Oven Rack Push Puller also has ruler markings along its length in inches and centimeters to measure items up to 12 inches or 30 centimeters.
- The Stove Knob Turner (long model) is a cooking aid for people who cannot grasp or turn the stove knob or reach over the hot pots. This stove knob turner features a lightweight, scratch-free aluminum rod with a no scratch epoxy coating and a large comfort grip for easy twisting action. The knob turner also helps users who are unable to grip the small knobs.
- The Kitchen Roll About Cart is a wooden trivet that assists in moving hot pans and dishes. It has ball bearing wheels that roll with minimum effort, and a rubber stopper that helps prevent accidental movement.
- The Jug Kettle Tipper is a pouring aid designed for use by individuals with the use of only one hand, arthritis, or other upper extremity disabilities. This wire-coated cradle accommodates pitchers, juice bottles, etc., and an elastic strap with a hook-and-loop closure secures the container in the device. A built-in stop aids in cup positioning, enabling the user to pour liquids simply by tipping the cradle forward.

For more information, visit [AbleData](#), and check out the products found in the Food Preparation and Cooking category and our Informational guide on AT for Chefs who are Blind or have Low Vision.

## AT Gift Ideas for Communication

December 19, 2019

For our third gift guide, we're focusing on Assistive Technology (AT) devices that can help with communication. Depending on what type of communication assistance is needed, there's an AT device that can help! Here are some options that include everything from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices to games that can help build communication skills and understanding.

- The 4-Choice Sequential Scanner for the Visually Impaired is a communication device with illuminated icons so they are easier to see. It includes twelve levels, four fields, and 300 seconds of total recording time. This device provides four modes of scanning: Inverse, Automatic, Two Switch, and Step. It also includes an adjustable scanning speed (1-12 seconds), on/off auditory cueing, volume control, and an articulated arm that expands from 14 inches to 24 inches with a clamp.
- Talk with Teddies Communication Kit is a kit to help children with autism spectrum disorder, speech delays, or difficulty regulating behavior. This kit includes 4 plush teddy bears that have printed symbols attached to their stomachs. The symbol cards include emotions such as sad, angry, happy, and sorry. The symbol cards also include praise symbols to reinforce good behavior such as well done, or helper symbols. The kit also contains 6 mini dry wipe boards to make custom symbol cards. The bears can be used to help children understand social rules, boundaries, make choices, know what is happening next, or simply to play games.
- The MiniTalk™ is an augmentative and alternative communication device designed for individuals with communication or speech disabilities. The MiniTalk's icon-based language system includes more than 4,400 adult-appropriate graphic icons and animations that represent 9,000-plus words. Through this pocket-sized, tablet-style device, users can express their thoughts and feelings by creating customized icons and phrases. Portable and lightweight, the MiniTalk™ comes with a protective carrying case, and users can interact with the device using multiple input methods including a touchscreen or a stylus. MiniTalk™ provides access to the FastTalk page (frequently used messages), a specialized news source, and whiteboard. It also offers emailing capabilities, multiple voice options, a built-in camera and photo viewer, and unlimited support and training.
- Abstract Categories, a game for children with disabilities who have trouble with communication, teaches abstract thinking and sorting by categories. Children learn that although items may be different, they still have a common base. A child may be able to name concrete categories such as animals, shapes or colors. However, abstract categories, such as things that are noisy, things you find at birthday parties or things that have bristles, are equally important for understanding the world around us. This game features over 28 categories, and each abstract category has three cards in a set (e.g., a hat, coat and gloves are all things that keep us warm). Other categories include things that are huge, things that are sticky, things that are sharp, things that are hot, and many more. All cards have clear and simple descriptions on the back. Children can learn sorting, categorizing, making connections and associations, and abstract concepts skills.

Check out [AbleData.acl.gov](http://AbleData.acl.gov) to browse more communication devices. Also check out our guides on Find the Right Channel - Communication Aids for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and AAC Mobile Apps for Children with Autism.

## AT for Being at Home

### New Blog Series: AT for Being at Home

March 25, 2020

If you find yourself stuck at home for an indefinite period, you might be asking yourself: Now what? You may be able to fill a portion of that time at home by working remotely, sleeping, and eating. But what about all those times in between?

That is when assistive technology (AT) products may come in handy. Some people might assume that AT refers only to high tech electronics and complex machinery, but that is a misconception. While AT does cover those types of devices, the term AT encompasses so much more than that; it also covers entertaining products and tools designed to help you participate in various leisurely activities.

So even though you may now find yourself spending the majority of your time at home, perhaps AT products can help you fill in those in-between times with enjoyable, at-home activities. Make sure to check out AbleData's new series on helpful AT to keep from going stir crazy! For the next few weeks, we will upload a different post every few days, and each new post will highlight a different activity and how AT products can help you participate in that activity.

Here are some topics we'll cover:

- Sewing
- Exercising
- Gaming
- Reading
- Cycling
- Socializing
- Gardening

And let us know if there is something specific you'd like to see!

### Exercising

March 26, 2020

Here is the situation: You are at home and starting to feel restless, wondering what you can do to release all that pent-up energy. Need a solution? Exercise!

Exercising is not an activity that you have to do only at the gym or yoga studio. Assistive technology (AT) products make it possible for you to exercise in the comfort and convenience of your own home. Here are a few examples:

- Resistance bands - these stretchy elastic bands can be used in various ways to target different muscle groups. Each band offers a different level of resistance so pick the one that best fits your needs.

- Pedal exercisers - an alternative to a stationary bike, a pedal exerciser is a set of pedals you can cycle using either your hands and arms or feet and legs. So either place them on top of a table to exercise your arms or lay them on the floor to give your legs a good workout-it's up to you!
- Yoga - learn yoga poses by following tutorial DVDs or illustrated cards that provide step-by-step instructions. And if you use a wheelchair, there are tutorial DVD's for you as well that offer adaptable yoga routines that have been customized to accommodate both you and your wheelchair.
- Weights - cuff weights, barbells and dumbbells-oh my! Strap on cuff weights to your arms and legs or add barbells and dumbbells to your routine to intensify your workout.

Want to step it up another notch? Learn more about AT exercise equipment in our informational guide, [Working Out with AT](#).

Whether you want to increase your stamina, improve your overall strength, or bulk up your muscles, let these AT products help you channel all of your pent-up energy into an effective workout. To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Sewing

March 30, 2020

"I'll fix it when I have more time." Has that thought ever crossed your mind when you unexpectedly find a small tear in your shirt or a ripped hem in your pants? Sewing just tends to be one of those chores that gets pushed further and further down the to-do list. But now that "more time" has finally come, here is your chance to mend those broken stitches! If you are blind or have low vision, or have arthritis, fine motor disabilities or the use of only one hand, let assistive technology (AT) products help you patch, repair and restore those pesky tears. Here are a few examples to help get you started:

- Sewing needles - while some have larger than average eyes and others have eyes with slits you can pull the thread down into, these needles are designed to make threading a breeze.
- Needle threaders - take the guesswork out of threading needles; these handheld devices will thread them for you.
- Magnifiers for sewing machines - let these magnifiers enlarge your field of view so that you can place less strain on your eyes and greater focus on what you are sewing.
- Sewing machines - check out these high-tech sewing machines-most of which can be operated and controlled by an external switch. Needless to say, these aren't your grandma's sewing machines!

If you'd like to delve even deeper into the AT world of sewing, let our informational resource, [AT for Sewing](#), be your guide.

With modified needles and high-tech sewing machines, AT products can help you mend those pesky tears and re-stitch those loosened buttons and empower you to put your best foot forward. To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Gaming

April 1, 2020

Games do not just help us pass the time; they challenge our minds, encourage witty banter, fuel friendly competition, and offer barrels of fun entertainment. And if you throw assistive technology (AT) products into the mix, you can join in on the fun as well-increasing the fun by tenfold! If you are blind or have low vision, or have grasping disabilities or the use of only one hand, there are a number of AT products that can help you play card games, board games and video games independently. Let the good times roll!

- Automatic card shufflers - with a simple press of a button, these automatic card shufflers will shuffle a deck of cards for you in seconds, giving you more time to play (and win).
- Playing cards - with these large print or braille playing cards, you will never have to show your hand to know what you have.
- Card holder - you can keep your playing cards close to your chest with card holders. These devices will prop the cards up and hold them for you from one move to the next.
- Board games - games in braille, games with tactile markings, games with audio feedback, what will it be? With these board games, you will be anything but bored!
- Video games and controllers - check out these accessible video games and modified controllers that allow you to play using alternative methods such as mouth operated controllers.

You can learn even more about accessible video games in our informational guide, [AT for Video Gaming](#).

This is just the tip of the iceberg-there are so many more games and accessories that can help you play more independently. Let these AT products help you get ahead of the game! If you would like to learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Gardening

April 3, 2020

The sun is shining, birds are chirping, flowers are blooming, bees are buzzing, and your garden is.... If you finished that sentence with anything other than "fresh as a daisy," it's time to do something about it. You do not have to have a green thumb to have a pristine garden; all you may need is time, patience and assistive technology (AT) products. If you have difficulty grasping or reaching, or bending and kneeling for extended periods of time, there are AT tools that can help make gardening and yard work more of an enjoyable task and less of a taxing chore. Ok, let's stop beating around the bush; it's time to dig deep and start exploring what gardening AT tools are out there!

- Gardening hand tools - whether you need to dig, weed, plant, water, rake or prune, these tools have modified handles such as larger grips and extended handles to help take the strain out of your hands and wrists.
- Garden stools and knee pads - rest your knees on these padded mats that are suitable for the outdoors, and take a seat when you need to. These low stools allow you to tend to your garden from a seated position-all while keeping you close enough to smell the roses!
- Raised garden beds - these small garden beds are elevated on stands so you do not have to kneel or bend to tend to your vegetables, flowers and plants.

If you would like to dig even deeper with more AT, check out our informational guide, [AT for Gardening](#).

Let these gardening AT tools help make the grass on your side of the fence a little greener! To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## **Educational Games and Activities**

April 9, 2020

It's happening-your children are starting to get tired of playing the same games over and over again. You can hear their muffled complaints of boredom, sense their restless energy, and see their pleading eyes looking up at you for a new fun activity. Running out of ideas?

Before you hit that panic button, let's consider another possible option-assistive technology (AT) products. These products are not only designed to entertain your children, but ALSO offer them instructional guidance and educational feedback. So before you start to think that you've run out of fun ideas for your children, let's consider what AT products have to offer.

- Educational games for children with learning disabilities - check out these games designed to capture your child's attention and help them learn important skills through engaging activities. Who said learning can't be fun?
- Educational games for children who are blind or have low vision - let your child get immersed in these games with tactile markings or a voice output functionality.
- Educational games for children with fine motor disabilities - let your child play using an external switch or with the included larger, easier-to-grasp pieces.
- Educational games for children with autism - from learning social skills to identifying facial expressions, check out these interactive games that are designed to help make the learning process a lot more fun.
- Do-it-yourself (DIY) educational games - create these games right at home using what materials you have. Now's your chance to get in on the fun!

Please [click here](#) for a complete listing of educational AT products found on [AbleData](#).

Whether it's the weekend, a day off from school, or a rainy day spent at home, AT games can help you chase away the gloom and bring a smile to your children's faces. To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## **Reading**

April 21, 2020

When is the last time you sat down and got lost in a really good book? Maybe you haven't because you just have not have the time, or perhaps you have not because it is difficult for you to hold up a book for extended periods or are unable to independently turn the pages.

If you have arthritis, fine motor disabilities, or limited use of one or both hands, there are a number of different assistive technology (AT) tools-such as book holders and page turners-that can help. Book holders will prop the book open and hold it upright for you as you read, and page turners will flip to the next page at the pace you choose via an external switch or a rubber-tipped device.

Hardcovers and paperbacks are not the only way to access printed materials. If you are blind or have low vision, you can listen to a wide array of books through digital talking book players. These devices allow you to access, download, navigate, and listen to audiobooks and electronic books (eBooks) via voice output readers. If you prefer to read books in braille, check out electronic refreshable braille displays, which convert text into braille.

Regardless of which format you choose, let AT products help you get lost in a new literary adventure! To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit AbleData.

Looking for new reading material? There are several places you can turn to such as the [Little Free Library](https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/) book box. Visit their website's map to find the book box closest to you: <https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/>.

There are numerous online resources as well, including:

- [Bookshare](#) - provides both free and paid reading material options;
- [NASA](#) - provides 189 free, online books;
- [Project Gutenberg](#) - hosts over 45,000 free e-books;
- [Bookboon](#) - offers over 1,000 educational textbooks;
- [International Children's Digital Library](#) - has children's books from all over the globe; and
- [National Emergency Library](#) - has a collection of books that supports emergency remote teaching, research and independent reading-even while universities, schools, training centers and libraries are closed. For more information, check out this article: [National Emergency Library' Lends A Hand - And Lots Of Books! - During Pandemic](#).

And here are a few subscription-based options, each of which offers a free 30-day trial:

- [Audible](#) - provides audiobooks, newspapers, magazines and more;
- [Scribd](#) - offers e-Books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers and more; and
- [Audiobooks.com](#) - gives you access to audiobooks and podcasts.

## Cycling

May 1, 2020

You are inside your house, looking out the window on a bright sunny day, and you can't recall the last time you took your bike out for a spin. Can you relate? If so, it's time to change gears! Assistive technology (AT) developers have created a wide array of bicycles to meet a wide variety of needs, including bicycles for individuals with mobility disabilities or lower extremity disabilities. If you miss or have never experienced the exhilaration of riding a bicycle firsthand, here's your chance to explore what's out there. What better time is there than now? Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Hand-propelled cycles - crank the gears and pedal the cycle with the power of your arms and hands with these hand-propelled cycles.
- Adult tricycles and powered tricycles - designed to provide you with additional stability and extra support, check out these 3-wheelers!
- Tandem bicycles - let your friend or family member join you on your next loopy loop around the block with these tandem bicycles.

If you would like to see what else is out there, check out our informational guide, [Cycling with AT for Adults with a Mobility Disability](#).

Now that you have explored the bicycle in all its shapes and forms, the sidewalk beckons. Let AT bicycles take you out for your next spin! To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Hiking

May 7, 2020

When it comes to combating restlessness, many people have found taking a brisk stroll around the neighborhood a great remedy for keeping restlessness at bay. But are you starting to grow restless from your anti-restless activity? If so, perhaps it's time to leave the frequently-traveled sidewalks of your neighborhood behind, replace your worn sneakers with hiking boots, and venture out to explore new trails and pathways.

So many different types of assistive technology (AT) products are available to help you, well, take a hike. Here are just a few examples to get you started:

- Talking compasses - let these voice output navigational aids point you in the right direction as you explore new grounds!
- Water bottles - regardless of whether you're hiking down new trails or strolling down well-traversed paths, you have to stay hydrated! So make sure to take a filled water bottle with you on each of your journeys.
- Shoe insoles - cushion the soles of your feet and let these inserts absorb the impact of each footfall so your feet don't have to.
- Canes and cane tips - let these mobility aids help steady your gait and provide you with extra stability and traction as you trek through uncharted paths.
- All-terrain walkers and wheelchairs - you'll be all good with these all-terrain mobility aids, sturdier-than-average walkers and wheelchairs designed to help you conquer bumpy trails and gravelly paths.

If the adventurous hiker within you is already beginning to stir, you can learn more about hiking AT in our informational guide, [AT for Hikers with a Mobility or Lower Extremity Disability](#).

It's time to hike up your boot straps, don your gear and go! To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Games and Puzzles

May 14, 2020

When you hear the word "game," or "puzzle," what comes to mind? "Fun," "entertaining" and "challenging" may top the list. But did you know that they offer numerous [cognitive benefits](#) as well? In fact, games and puzzles can help:

1. Improve memory - a study found that adults aged 50 and older who regularly challenge themselves to word or number puzzles had sharper brain function than those ten years younger than them. Talk about getting ahead of the game!
2. Enhance problem-solving skills - playing games and solving puzzles requires strategizing, testing out different methods, changing tactics and finding adaptable solutions-all of which can help hone your problem-solving skills.
3. Boost your mood - when you solve a puzzle, your brain releases one of its happiness chemicals called dopamine, which can account for the joy and sense of accomplishment you feel after a major win. Besides, who doesn't love feeling triumphant over a challenging task?
4. Encourage attention to detail - the difference between winning a game and losing it may depend heavily on how attentive you are to details. So it comes as no surprise that strategizing how to win the game or solve the puzzle can help you sharpen your focus and attentiveness, and improve your overall cognitive health.

At this stage of the game, you might be thinking, "yes, I love word puzzles and games, but the print is so small that it makes playing the game somewhat difficult and not as enjoyable." If that's the case, we have a possible solution for you: Games and puzzles with larger print! Many assistive technology (AT) developers have taken classic, beloved games and enlarged the text to make them easier to see and decipher. Games, after all, should challenge your mind; not your eyes! So the name of the game is large-print. Here are a few examples of adapted games and puzzles that can help bring the fun and enjoyment back into playing.

- Playing cards - with these large-print, jumbo-sized playing cards, you won't have to second guess your hand or spend extra time scrutinizing each card. So sit back, relax, enjoy a snack or two, and flush out the competition and play your hand with confidence!
- Board games - the large-print on these board games put a new spin on old favorites, such as Scrabble. With these in hand, V-I-C-T-O-R-Y can be yours!
- Word search puzzles - these games are a classic for a reason! Try to find each word among the scramble of letters, and who knows, perhaps you'll finally find what you're searching for-a fun and engaging activity. Let these large-print word search puzzles renew your love for an old classic game!
- Sudoku - if you're more of a numbers person than a words person, you'll definitely have to check out sudoku. Try to figure out which number fits into each cell to complete the puzzle. Who ever said you can't have any fun with numbers?
- Crossword puzzles - now you don't have to wait for Sunday's paper for a new crossword puzzle. These booklets are filled with numerous mind-puzzling puzzles, and each one is in large print! So are you ready to put your trivia knowledge to the test? Answer: 3 letters, starts with Y and ends with S!

To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Now, with all of this information at hand, the ball's in your court. What do you say, are you ready to play?

## **Tending Indoor Plants**

May 21, 2020

After reading the title of this blog, if you're thinking, "this blog isn't for me; my houseplants have already gone to seed," or "I just don't have a green thumb," it's time to nip that train of thought in the bud! While we can't deny that tending plants do take time and commitment, what we can assure you is that the results-not to mention the process required to get there-will be far more rewarding, fulfilling and worthwhile in the end.

With their warm, inviting presence and fresh, aromatic scents, indoor plants have the ability to spruce up the aesthetics and comfortability of any home. What's more, indoor plants, along with the task of tending them, can produce a plethora of other [benefits](#) as well. For example, indoor plants:

1. Help purify the air inside your home - plants absorb and remove potentially harmful toxins in the air through their porous leaves and convert them into oxygen.
2. Are more accessible and easier to care for - indoor plants have the added benefit of growing up in a more controlled, temperature-regulated environment. So, not only are you protecting them from scorching hot summers and blisteringly cold winters, but you are increasing their longevity and protecting yourself from those harsh elements as well.
3. Can be therapeutic - the simple, repetitive tasks of caring for a plant (e.g., trimming and watering) and watching it grow can be quite soothing, which is why caring for plants have been linked to lessening stress levels, reducing anxiety and lowering blood pressure.
4. Can help improve memory and concentration - because it requires [learning](#), consistency and commitment, caring for plants can also help improve your memory and attention span.

Just as there are many types of indoor plants such as houseplants, flowers, succulents, fruits, vegetables and herbs, there are many types of assistive technology (AT) products that can help you effectively and independently care for your plants. Here are a few examples:

- Hand tools - from lightweight, ergonomically designed tools to short or long-handled implements, let these gardening aids help you dig, trim, prune and rake your indoor plants with ease.
- Watering cans - let these adapted watering aids help you water your plants with more precision and less strain.
- Elevated plant containers - take the bending, squatting and kneeling out of the plant-tending equation with these helpful aids. These plant containers can be positioned at varying heights, making them far more accommodating and kinder to your back, neck and knees.
- Reminders - need a little nudge to remind you to water your plants or till the soil? Let these reminders give you the nudge you need to help you remember to do just that!

To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

From health benefits to available AT products, we've unearthed a lot of information about caring for plants. So, now that we've planted the seed, it's time to cultivate all of this information into action-don't let the grass grow around your feet by dilly dallying! Just think of the ways you can spruce up your home-and your mood-with indoor plants. You can place a large potted plant in the corner of your living room, liven up your dining room with a flowering centerpiece, line the windowsills in your kitchen with herbs, grow your own fruits and vegetables on your countertop-the possibilities are endless!

## Staying in Touch

May 29, 2020

Many people are still staying inside and practicing social distancing in an effort to stay healthy and keep others healthy. With the use of assistive technology (AT), this doesn't mean you have to give up being social with your friends, family and coworkers. One of the simplest ways to stay in touch is to pick up the phone. The Amplified Photo Phone is a large button, voice amplifying telephone that allows you to place a photo of the individual whose phone number you stored in the button, directly on the button. For example, if you press the button containing the photo of your best friend, the Amplified Photo Phone will automatically start dialing your best friend's number for you.

If you have a smartphone or a computer with a camera, there are some apps that can help you connect with family members and friends. What'sApp, Skype and Google Hangouts (which are all available for download on the app store for iOS and Android devices) can be used to create group chats. Skype, Facetime and Google Hangouts also allow you to call and connect with each other face-to-face and share images, articles, and pictures directly through your screens.

Here are a few more ways AT can help you stay in touch with family members and friends:

- The Brookstone PhotoShare Smart Frame is a picture frame that allows you to share photos and videos with family members and friends who also have the frame. You can send them pictures and videos using a computer or smartphone, and receive pictures and videos from them on your Brookstone PhotoShare Smart Frame. There is also a setting that allows you to create a virtual slideshow of your images.
- Virtual Photo Walks is a free service that allows you to use smartphones and video conferencing to see the world with others, in real time. Through your smartphone, you can connect online with a Virtual Volunteer Guide and with other participants who are going on the same adventure as you- like a hike through a safari. You can ask questions or make suggestions to your guide, and experience the adventure together in real time. This service is secure and moderated, making it a great way to experience the world. You can learn more about Virtual Photo Walks or participate in one by visiting: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/virtualphotowalks/>.

## Do It Yourself

June 5, 2020

Looking for some activities while you're at home? Here are some do it yourself (DIY) assistive technology (AT) projects!

**Horizontal Stylus** - Are you finding yourself logging more screen time while at home? Ease the strain on your hands with this easy DIY stylus! It can be used on a mobile device, a keyboard, a communication board and more. To make this stylus, you will need:

- 4 inches of a 1-inch in diameter PVC pipe;
- A pencil;
- Glue; and
- Velcro (optional).

To make the Horizontal Stylus: Drill a ¼-inch hole in the PVC pipe (a local hardware store can do this for you.). Insert the pencil into the hole in the PVC pipe, and glue it in place. Once the glue has dried, loop the Velcro through the PVC pipe and wrap it around your hand for extra stabilization.

**Children's DIY 2D Shape Activity** - Is Play Dough getting stuck between your couch cushions? Try having kids use it to learn shapes instead! With this DIY, kids can use Play Dough to connect popsicle sticks to form different shapes. You will need:

- Play Dough; and
- Popsicle sticks (or sticks from the garden).

To make this Children's DIY 2D Shape Activity: Ask the child to pinch the Play Dough into small pieces and roll them into balls. Demonstrate how you can make a shape such as a square out of the popsicle sticks and use the Play Dough to connect them. Then have the child create different two-dimensional (2D) shapes as you name them. This activity can be useful in introducing toddlers and preschoolers with fine motor disabilities to math and stem-like learning.

**DIY Remote Control Grip** - Don't let your remote control slip away; upgrade your remote with this recipe! This remote control grip will allow you to comfortably hold a remote control in your hand and prevent it from slipping off smooth surfaces. To make this grip, you will need:

- A remote control;
- A foam block (or a household sponge or two); and
- Rubber bands.

To make this DIY Remote Control Grip: Carve a contour out of the foam so that a hand can easily rest there. Secure the foam to the underside of the remote control, with the cut-out facing out, by wrapping rubber bands around the foam and the remote control. Position the rubber bands so that they do not interfere with the buttons on the remote control. Now you can flip through channels effortlessly!

To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

## Fidgets

June 10, 2020

Fidget toys, gadgets and accessories are a great way to help those with busy hands as a result of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), sensory integration needs, autism and other cognitive disabilities. They can also help children and adults pay attention to a task that requires concentration by providing them with an outlet for their energy.

Traditional fidgets often take the form of a toy that provides sensory feedback, such as zippers, switches, Velcro and different textiles. Here are a few examples of fidgets:

- The four pack of pencil toppers has fidget aids that top pencils and can be used in the classroom or at home.
- The Fun Fidget Ball Set is a sensory stimulating ball that can be squished and held in one hand while concentrating on a task.

- Chewigem Chew Necklace Geo Tags is a chewable piece of jewelry for individuals with sensory processing issues who enjoy chewing and fidgeting.
- The Champion Sport FitPro Ball Chair is an ergonomic ball chair designed for both children and adults. This exercise fitness ball promotes active sitting and fidgeting while strengthening the individual's back.

Fidgets may have started as a small, handheld item, but they have evolved to benefit an assortment of disabilities and needs. With that growth, they have expanded into a category of their own with many traditional and novel options available on the market.

## Home Cooking & Baking

April 5, 2020

More time at home means more time to engage in at-home activities. And this might include enjoyable activities you had previously tucked away in the far “will-do-when-I-have-more-time” recesses of your mind. If that’s the case, it’s time to untuck those long-held back activities and bring them to light.

The at-home activity many people are finding great comfort and solace in these days is home cooking, including baking. This explains why, according to [Global News](#), baking-related search terms are popping up more frequently in Google, why flour products are selling like hot cakes in grocery stores, and why sugar and flour manufacturers are working overtime to keep up with the rise in demand. In support of this growing trend, we will post a new recipe every few days along with assistive technology (AT) products that can help you create your next tasty masterpiece!

### Pizza

April 5, 2020

The first batter up to bat? Pizza dough! It’s simple, versatile, and delicious. Plus, what better way is there to celebrate [National Deep Dish Pizza Day](#) on April 5th than with your very own pizza?

Why do we love pizza? The reasons are as numerous as its toppings! And with a [pizza dough recipe](#) at hand, there is another reason to love home baked pizza: It doesn’t come with a delivery charge.

#### Ingredients:

- 3½ to 4 cups bread flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 envelope instant dry yeast
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1½ cups water, 110 degrees Fahrenheit
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus 2 teaspoons

#### Directions:

1. Combine the bread flour, sugar, yeast and kosher salt in the bowl of a stand mixer and combine.
2. While the mixer is running, add the water and 2 tablespoons of the oil and beat until the dough forms into a ball.
  - If the dough is sticky, add additional flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the dough comes together in a solid ball.
  - If the dough is too dry, add additional water, 1 tablespoon at a time.
3. Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured surface and gently knead into a smooth, firm ball.
4. Grease a large bowl with the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil, and add the dough.
5. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and put it in a warm area to let it double in size, about 1 hour.
6. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and divide it into 2 equal pieces.
7. Cover each with a clean kitchen towel or plastic wrap and let them rest for 10 minutes.

Rest assured you have the correct measurements of ingredients with these measuring cups and measuring spoons. While some are marked with braille or large print, others are color-coded to provide you with greater contrast between the cookware and the ingredients. To learn more about these and other AT products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Now that you have a delicious pizza crust, the only question left to ask yourself is: What toppings do you want?

## Grilled Cheese

April 12, 2020

“Say cheese!” It’s no coincidence that cheese has been linked with happy grins and beaming smiles. It’s distinct taste and gooey texture can umph up the flavor profile of any dish. So it’s no wonder that the grilled cheese sandwich is a sandwich beloved by many, from the very young to the young at heart. So let’s gather our favorite cheeses and sandwich fixings in celebration of [National Grilled Cheese Sandwich Day](#), which is on April 12th! Here is a [grilled cheese recipe](#) you can try:

### Ingredients:

- 2 slices ½-inch thick Pullman or other white bread
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 ounces thinly sliced American cheese or cheddar (about 4 slices)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Campbell’s Tomato Soup (for serving; optional)

### Directions:

1. Place bread on a cutting board and spread mayonnaise over the top side of each slice (this is key to a golden, delectable crunch).
2. Heat a small skillet (ideally a nonstick skillet) over medium heat.
3. Slide in half of the butter (½ tablespoon).
4. When the butter melts, place 1 slice of bread, mayonnaise side down, inside the skillet.
5. Top the bread slice with cheese and season it with pepper.
6. Top the cheese and bread with the second slice of bread, mayonnaise side up.
7. When the underside is golden brown, about 4 minutes in, turn the sandwich over and add the remaining butter to the skillet.
8. Gently press down on the sandwich to encourage even browning of the bread and to help melt the cheese (be careful not to smash the bread and cheese together).
9. Cook until the second side is golden brown and the cheese is melted.
10. Eat immediately, with soup (if preferred).

Cut, slice, and spread condiments-including mayonnaise-on your bread with greater ease and precision using bread boards, which are designed to hold your bread slices in place. And don’t forget about the cheese! With a cheese slicer, you can slice your cheese into smooth, even slices with far less strain on your hands and wrists. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

We hope that grilled cheese sandwiches and AT products can help put a smile on your face as well. Say cheese!

## **Peach Cobbler**

April 13, 2020

It's the early 1800s, and [American settlers](#) are traveling westward, further away from their preferred pie-filling fruits that are typically found on the east coast-peaches, plums and cherries. So, during their travels, the settlers had to make do with what they had using preserved, canned, or dried fruits; clumps of biscuit dough; and an open fire. When cooked, they found that the clumps of golden brown biscuits looked a lot like [cobble streets](#), which is why, many believe, this dish was dubbed the cobbler!

In the 1950s, the Georgia Peach Council declared April 13th as [National Peach Cobbler Day](#). How else can we celebrate this historical dish but to create a peach cobbler of our own? Here is a [peach cobbler recipe](#) you can use to test out your cobbling skills.

### **Ingredients:**

- 4 cups peeled, sliced peaches
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- ½ cup water
- 8 tablespoons butter
- 1½ cups self-rising flour
- 1½ cups milk
- Ground cinnamon (optional)

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Combine the peaches, 1 cup of sugar, and water in a saucepan and mix well. Bring this mixture to a boil and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat.
3. Put the butter in a 3-quart baking dish and place it in the oven to melt.
4. Slowly mix the remaining 1 cup of sugar, flour, and milk together to prevent clumping. Pour this mixture over the melted butter - do not stir.
5. Spoon the fruit on top, gently pouring in the syrup.
6. Sprinkle the top with ground cinnamon, if desired.
7. Bake for 30 to 45 minutes. The batter will rise to the top as it bakes.
8. To serve, scoop a slice of cobbler onto a plate and serve it with your choice of whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Peel away the fuzzy peach skin with these fruit peelers, and then let these modified cutting boards keep those slippery peaches in place so you can slice them with greater ease. No fresh peaches on hand? No problem! Raid your reserve of canned peaches and pop them open using these handy dandy can openers. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Now's your chance to cobble together a great peach cobbler of your own! With a delectable cobbler in front of you and the sweet aroma of peaches filling the air, we can imagine just how the settlers felt delving into their first peach cobbler. In a word? Peachy!

## Eggs Benedict

April 16, 2020

Imagine this: It's the weekend, and you've woken up after a night of restful sleep with the warmth of the sun on your face to the tune of merrily chirping birds in the background. You decide to treat yourself to a scrumptious brunch of warm coffee and eggs, but not just any eggs..., eggs benedict.

Eggs benedict has been around since the 19th century, but there are [varying accounts](#) of its origin. Some believe that this long-favored dish originated in the 1860s, when Mrs. LeGrand Benedict, a regular patron of Delmonico's Restaurant (the very first restaurant ever opened in the United States), consulted with the chef and requested he create something new for her to eat. Others believe that eggs benedict originated in 1894, when Lemuel Benedict, a Wall Street broker, ordered "some buttered toast, crisp bacon, two poached eggs, and a hooker of hollandaise sauce" at the Waldorf Hotel in New York. The chef, struck with inspiration, made a few minor adjustments to the combo and began including this tasty dish on his breakfast and lunch menus.

Even though we are not sure which account captures the true origin of eggs benedict, there is one thing we know with absolute certainty: Eggs benedict is delicious, hands down. So in celebration of [National Eggs Benedict Day](#) (April 16th), why not treat yourself to something special as well? Here's an [eggs benedict recipe](#) to get you started.

### Ingredients:

- 8 English muffins, toasted and halved
- 8 slices Canadian bacon, julienned
- 8 poached eggs:
  - 8 large eggs
  - 4 quarts water
  - ¼ cup white vinegar
  - 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Hollandaise sauce:
  - 3 large egg yolks
  - 1 tablespoon water
  - ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
  - ½ teaspoon ground cayenne, divided
  - 3 to 4 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice strained, divided
  - 8 ounces cold unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-sized pieces
  - ¼ teaspoon sugar

### Directions:

*To make hollandaise sauce:*

1. Whisk together the egg yolks, water, salt and ¼ teaspoon of the cayenne for 1 minute in a 2-quart saucier pan.
2. Put the saucier over low heat and whisk the mixture vigorously, moving the pan on and off the heat every 10 to 15 seconds. Bring the mixture to 140 to 145 degrees Fahrenheit (this will take approximately 3 minutes).
3. Add 1 piece of butter to the mixture, every 30 seconds, while continually whisking and moving the saucier on and off the heat. Maintain the temperature around 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the remainder of the cooking process.
4. Once half of the butter (8 pieces) have been added, add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice.
5. Add the remaining 8 pieces of butter, 1 at a time, to the mixture every 30 seconds, while continuing to move the saucier on and off the heat and maintaining 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit.
6. After the last piece of butter has been added, add the remaining 1 tablespoon of lemon juice, the remaining ¼ teaspoon cayenne, and the sugar and whisk for 1 to 2 minutes.
7. Taste and add more lemon juice, as desired. Move immediately to a short, wide-mouthed thermos to hold for up to 2 hours.

*To poach eggs:*

1. Put 4 6-ounce custard cups in a 6-quart deep, straight-sided sauté pan.
2. Add 4 quarts of water or enough to cover the cups by at least ¼ of an inch.
3. Add the vinegar and salt to the water and put the pan over high heat. Heat just until the water begins to boil and the cups start to clatter against the bottom of the pan (this will take approximately 20 to 25 minutes). Adjust the heat to maintain a water temperature of 205 degrees Fahrenheit outside the cups.
4. Break the eggs, 1 at a time, into another custard cup or ladle.
5. Slowly pour 1 egg into each cup inside the pan, timing the eggs about 10 seconds apart. Cook for 5 minutes each.
6. Remove the cups from the pan, and remove the eggs from the cups.

*To cook the Canadian bacon:*

1. Place the julienned Canadian bacon in a 10-inch sauté pan set over medium heat.
2. Cook, stirring frequently, until the Canadian bacon is heated through and begins to turn lightly brown around the edges (this will take approximately 4 to 5 minutes).

*To build eggs benedict:*

1. For each serving, put 2 small dollops of hollandaise sauce on a plate and place half of a toasted English muffin on top of the dollops, with the cut-side facing up.
2. Put a small amount of Canadian bacon on top of each English muffin half. Top each with 1 warm poached egg and drizzle with hollandaise sauce.
3. Repeat with all of the remaining ingredients and serve immediately.

Please [click here](#) for the complete eggs benedict recipe-including the recipe for English muffins.

Separating egg yolks from the egg whites can be as taxing as trying to separate two different colored Play Doughs after they've been smooshed together. So leave that cumbersome task to these nifty egg separators! Need some lemon juice for your hollandaise sauce? Check out these juicers that will squeeze the juice right out of those lemons, and whisk your ingredients together using modified whisks-they're

sure to make mixing a breeze! To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

The long ingredients list and the even longer list of directions might make this recipe for eggs benedict seem like a tough egg to crack, but we know you've got it in you. So let's get cracking!

## **Pineapple Upside Down Cake**

April 20, 2020

You can't judge a book by its cover, nor can you judge a fruit by its skin. With its tough, prickly exterior and sharp, menacing spikes, the pineapple appears, at first glance, a little intimidating. Who would have thought that hidden underneath its hard exterior was a deliciously sweet, addictively tangy and mouth-wateringly juicy fruit? It's no wonder, then, that the pineapple has a cake that has been and continues to be loved by many: The pineapple upside down cake.

It all began in the 1800s when people were making [upside down cakes](#) in a cast-iron skillet on top of a stove. Back then, upside down cakes were known as skillet cakes, and they were typically topped with seasonal fruits such as apples and cherries. But this all changed in 1901 when Jim Dole established the canned pineapple manufacturing company, the Hawaiian Pineapple Company (now known as Dole Company). In 1925, they sponsored a contest calling for pineapple recipes, and out of the 60,000 recipes they received, 2,500 of them were for pineapple upside down cake. The company ran the recipe in an ad, and the rest, as they say, is history.

So, in celebration of [National Pineapple Upside Down Cake Day](#) (April 20th), let's try creating a pineapple upside down cake of our own. Here is a [recipe](#) you can try.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup light brown sugar, packed
- 9 slices canned pineapple in juice, drained
- 5 maraschino cherries
- 1 ½ cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup solid vegetable shortening
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅔ cup milk

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Place the butter in an 8 x 8 x 2-inch square baking pan and set it over low heat to melt.
3. When melted, sprinkle the brown sugar over the butter.
4. Arrange the pineapple rings in a single layer on top of the sugar, making 3 rows.

5. Cut the maraschino cherries in half, and place one half, cut-side up, in the center of each pineapple ring. Set the pan aside.
6. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt, then sift once more. Set aside.
7. Using an electric mixer, mix together the shortening, granulated sugar, egg and vanilla.
8. Blend in the flour mixture alternately with the milk, beginning and ending with flour. Stir only enough after each addition to combine.
9. Pour the batter carefully into the pineapple-lined baking pan and bake for 40 minutes.
10. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the center or by pressing the cake lightly with a fingertip; if the impression springs back, the cake is done.
11. Run a knife around the edges of the pan and place a serving dish on top.
12. Invert the cake onto the serving dish. Leave the pan inverted over the cake for several moments to allow the syrup to soak into the cake.

Don't let the mixing bowl wobble away from you or wriggle out of your grasp. With non-slip bottoms, these mixing bowls will stay put as you whisk, mix and blend, helping to ensure that the only thing turned upside down on your countertop is your cake! And as soon as it's done, you can slice and serve the cake using these handy cake/pie servers. So why not slice a generous piece for yourself? You deserve it! To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Sweet and tangy, this pineapple upside down cake is sure to flip your day right side up!

## Jelly Beans

April 22, 2020

From sweet to tart; sugary to sour; and interesting to downright strange, jelly beans cover a wide range of flavors, colors and curiosities. Trying out different flavors and searching for your favorite ones amid the hodge-podge of jelly beans only add to the fun. But as enjoyable as they are to eat, let's face it: In the end, what you're left with are the jelly beans you don't want; the flavors you are reluctant to try or taste again. So why not create a batch of jelly beans made up only of the flavors you want? Here is a [homemade jelly bean recipe](#) you can try out, perfect for [National Jelly Bean Day](#)(April 22nd)!

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup water, divided
- 2 cup sugar, divided
- 1/4 ounces gelatin
- 1/2 cup juice with no pulp
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoon cornstarch
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Food coloring (your preference)

### Directions:

1. In a large saucepan on medium heat, combine  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water, 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups sugar, and gelatin.
2. Bring this syrup to a boil, stirring regularly to prevent clumps of gelatin from forming.

3. As soon as the temperature of the syrup reaches 230 degrees Fahrenheit, take the saucepan off the burner-the syrup should still be quite liquidy. This should not take more than 25 minutes. If the temperature rises above 230 degrees Fahrenheit, the jelly beans will be too hard.
4. Place the saucepan in a bowl of ice to stop the temperature from rising. If you do not have a bowl larger than your saucepan, fill your sink with ice water and place the saucepan in there.
5. Quickly stir in the juice and salt.
6. Spray the jelly bean molds with non-stick spray and pour the syrup into the molds.
7. Let the jelly beans sit for 4 to 6 hours, or until the gelatin has hardened. They will still be gummy and sticky.
8. Pop the jelly beans out of the molds and transfer them to a sheet of parchment paper. Do not worry about mangling their shape during this step; they hold their shapes surprisingly well.
9. Lightly dust the jelly beans with cornstarch to help them dry. Let them sit for another few hours.
10. To make the outer shell, mix 1/4 cup water, 3/4 cup sugar, and your preferred food coloring.
11. Pour the mixture into a jar along with the jelly beans and tightly seal the jar.
12. Tilt the jar at an angle. While maintaining this angle, turn the jar in your hand back and forth (as you would a doorknob) to allow the mixture to evenly coat the jelly beans. This step is extremely important-if they are not well-coated, they will not have a hard-outer shell. Tumble for 10 to 15 minutes.
13. Pick the coated jelly beans out of the jar and place them on a fresh sheet of parchment paper. Let them dry and harden overnight.
14. When the top half is hard, flip each jelly bean over and allow the other side to dry.

Make sure that the syrup doesn't get too hot by checking the temperature with these talking thermometers. And don't let syrup, sauces or batter get away from you-or the containers you are pouring them into-by using these mixing bowls that come with built-in spouts. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit AbleData.

With a bagful of only your favorite flavored jelly beans, it looks like from now on, what you'll be left with in the end is an empty bag.

## Zucchini Bread

April 24, 2020

Don't be duped by their mild, subtle flavor. When properly seasoned, prepared and cooked, zucchinis can deliver a wallop of flavor that's all their own. Grilled or roasted, sautéed or stewed, you can find zucchinis in entrees, side dishes, soups, and even noodles (known as zoodles)!

It is no wonder, then, that zucchinis have found their way into our hearts (and bellies) in various forms, not the least of which is bread. So, grab yourself a zucchini or two and let's get ready to bake a few loaves of deliciousness in celebration of [National Zucchini Bread Day](#) on April 25<sup>th</sup>! Need a [recipe for zucchini bread](#)? We got you covered.

### Ingredients:

- Cooking spray or butter (for greasing the pans)
- 1 pound zucchini (about 2 medium-sized zucchinis), shredded
- 3 cups all-purpose flour

- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons freshly grated lemon zest
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 3/4 cup olive oil or canola oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Optional: 1 cup chopped nuts, 1 cup raisins, or 1 cup chocolate chips

**Directions:**

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Coat 2 8 x 4-inch loaf pans with cooking spray or butter.
3. Trim the stem and root-end from the zucchinis and grate them on the large holes of a box grater. You should end up with about 3 cups of shredded zucchini.
4. Place the shredded zucchini in a clean kitchen towel or several layers of cheesecloth. Gather up the sides and squeeze to press out as much moisture from the zucchini as possible. This will help make the loaves lighter and airier.
5. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, lemon zest, nutmeg and salt in a large bowl. Set aside.
6. Add the shredded zucchini and any optional ingredients (nuts, raisins or chocolate chips) to the flour mixture.
7. Whisk together the eggs, sugars, olive oil and vanilla in a medium bowl.
8. Pour the liquid mixture over top of the flour mixture, and gently stir and fold until the dry flour is no longer visible.
9. Divide the batter between the 2 prepared pans.
10. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the center of each loaf comes out clean. The finished loaves should have a golden-brown crust and feel springy if you give the top a little pat.
11. Let the loaves cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn them out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

This recipe makes 2 (8 x 4-inch) loaves. If you prefer larger slices, bake all of the batter in one single 8 x 4-inch loaf pan and extend the baking time by about 10 minutes. If you would like to make muffins, coat the muffin tins with cooking spray or butter or use muffin liners and bake the batter for 16 to 18 minutes. This will make about 24 muffins.

Whether you need to cut, chop, slice, dice, trim or mince, let these knives help you cut with increased safety and greater precision and independence. And speaking of great kitchen aids, let's not forget about graters that are designed to help you grate fruits and vegetables with greater ease and less strain on your hands and wrists. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Did you know that the word zucchini comes from the Italian word, zucchini, which means [small squash](#)? Though it may be small in size, there is nothing small about its ability to pack in flavor, so with zucchini bread baking in the oven, let this summer squash bring a bit of warmth and sunshine into your kitchen today.

## Bubble Tea

April 30, 2020

What do you get when you shake black tea, milk and chewy tapioca pearls in a cup of ice? The answer? One of the biggest drink crazes to hit the global market - bubble tea! Although it might be hard to remember a time when bubble tea was not an available dessert or quick pick-me-up drink option, let's rewind a few decades and go back to where it all began-to [Chun Shui Tang](#), a small teahouse located in Taiwan.

In the early 1980s, the founder, Liu Han-Chieh, started serving cold tea at his teahouse after visiting Japan where he saw people enjoying cups of cold coffee. Then, in 1988, his Product Development Manager, Lin Hsiu Hui, was sitting in a staff meeting when she, just for fun, decided to pour fen yuan (a typical Taiwanese dessert of sweetened tapioca pudding) into her iced tea and drank it. It was an instant hit among all those who attended the meeting, so they started serving iced tea with tapioca pearls which are the "bubbles" in bubble tea. Within months of being added to their menu, bubble tea started outselling all of their other iced teas.

Refreshing and flavorful, bubble tea is as customizable and versatile as a drink can be. Sweet or tart, fruity or milky, caffeinated or decaf - the choice is yours. So grab your favorite tea and tapioca pearls (also known as boba) and create your own bubble tea for [National Bubble Tea Day](#) (April 30th). It might not be like your grandma's traditional cup of tea, but it will be delicious nonetheless! Here's a [bubble tea recipe](#) to get you started.

### Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup dried boba tapioca pearls per serving (not quick-cooking boba)
- 1 to 2 tea bags per serving, any kind
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- Milk, almond milk, or sweetened condensed milk
- Fruit juice or nectar (optional)

### Directions:

*Prepare the boba.* You will need 2 cups of water for every 1/4 cup of boba being prepared:

1. Pour 2 cups of water in a saucepan and bring the water to a boil over high heat.
2. Add the boba and stir gently until they begin floating to the top of the water.
3. Turn the heat to medium, and cook the boba for 12 to 15 minutes.
4. Remove the saucepan from the heat and cover it. Let the pearls sit for another 12 to 15 minutes.

*Make a simple sugar syrup to sweeten the boba.* This can be done while the boba are cooking:

1. Bring 1/2 cup of water to a boil over high heat on the stove or in the microwave.
2. Remove from the heat and stir in 1/2 cup of sugar until the sugar is dissolved. Set aside to cool.

*Combine the boba and the simple sugar syrup:*

1. Once the boba have finished cooking, drain them from the water and transfer them to a small bowl or container.
2. Pour the simple sugar syrup over the boba until they are submerged. Let the boba sit until they are room temperature, at least 15 minutes, or refrigerate them until they are ready to use. Boba are best if used within a few hours of cooking, but will keep refrigerated for several days.

*Prepare a cup of tea.* This can be done either while the boba are cooking or ahead of time. Allow enough time for the tea to cool completely before adding the boba:

1. Bring 1 cup of water to a boil and remove it from the heat.
2. Add the tea bag (or bags) to the water. Use 1 tea bag for regular-strength bubble tea or 2 for a stronger tea flavor.
3. Remove the tea bag(s) after 15 minutes and let it chill.

*Make the bubble tea:*

1. Pour the prepared tea into a tall glass and add the boba.
2. Add milk for a creamy bubble tea, fruit juice or nectar for a fruity bubble tea, or leave it plain and add a little extra water.
3. Sweeten to taste using the simple sugar syrup left over from soaking the boba.

*For an extra chilly bubble tea:* Combine the tea and milk and/or juice in a cocktail shaker. Add a few ice cubes and shake for 20 seconds. Pour the drink into a tall glass and top it off with boba.

Let these adapted kettles and pouring aids help you pour your tea with greater ease. Some of them even emit audible beeps to let you know when the water has come to a boil, because you know what they say about a watched kettle. And if you need help stirring boba, simple sugar syrup or any other ingredients in hot saucepans or pots, let these automatic pot stirrers do it for you. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

If regular tea is not your cup of tea, perhaps bubble tea will be. Test out different teas, milks and fruit juices to find the right combo that's all your own!

## **Orange Ricotta Pancakes**

May 4, 2020

Orange, why do we love thee? Let us count the ways! From its sweet pulp to its tangy juice; its zesty peel to its fresh citrus scent-what's not to love? Sliced or squeezed; zested or candied, there are so many ways to enjoy this delectable fruit, not the least of which is orange juice. Refreshing, invigorating and loaded with vitamin C, a glass of orange juice is a great way to start the day.

But did you know that orange juice can be incorporated into or used in place of other ingredients to enhance a dish? If you want to put the versatility of orange juice to the test, here are a few [orange juice-enhanced recipes](#) you can try. After all, what better way is there to celebrate [National Orange Juice Day](#) (May 4th) than with a homemade dish cooked with love and a splash of orange juice? To get us started, let's kick off the day with a batch of [orange ricotta pancakes](#). This recipe makes a total of 4 servings, so don't worry, there will be plenty left over for seconds (and thirds).

**Ingredients:**

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 15-ounce container whole-milk ricotta
- 2/3 cup milk
- Zest of one large orange
- 2/3 cup orange juice, preferably freshly-squeezed
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1 tablespoon canola oil

**Directions:**

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt.
2. In another bowl, whisk the ricotta, milk, orange zest, juice, vanilla and sugar until the mixture is smooth; set aside.
3. In another bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
4. Combine the ricotta mixture with the dry ingredients, and then fold in the beaten egg whites.
5. Heat a large non-stick pan over medium heat and evenly distribute canola oil over the pan's surface.
6. Drop 1/4 cups of batter onto the pan to form a pancake, making sure not to crowd the pan.
7. Cook until bubbles appear on the surface of the pancake, about 2 minutes. Then flip the pancake and cook it on the other side until it is golden brown.
8. Serve immediately with your favorite pancake accoutrements.

To kick off the day-and your recipe-with freshly squeezed orange juice, let these juicers help you get the most out of your oranges. Sweet and tangy juice? Check. Vitamin C? Check. Pulp? Optional. And when it's time to flip your pancakes, let these adapted spatulas help you lift and flip with greater ease and precision. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Orange juice, how we love thee. Let us count the ways you can enhance our recipes!

**Coconut Cream Pie**

May 12, 2020

A rich, coconut cream filling over a buttery, flaky crust, sprinkled with toasted coconut and topped with whipped cream? Yes please! Over the years, coconuts have undeniably grown in popularity, availability and versatility. The sweet coconut meat and liquids found inside its hard, fibrous shell have taken on many forms (e.g., coconut oil, coconut water and coconut milk), so it's no wonder that coconuts have found their way into culinary dishes, desserts, candies, nutritional drinks, and even cosmeceutical products!

There was a time, however, when this wasn't always the case. In the [late 1800s](#), pineapples and bananas were the favored tropical fruits among Europeans and Americans, mainly because coconuts were not as readily available and thus not as familiar of an ingredient as other fruits. This all changed when [J.H. Vavasseau and Company](#), a French company located in Ceylon (what is now Sri Lanka), developed a way to make coconut meat more transportable and thereby more accessible: They shredded it and dried it before packing it away for shipping.

The U.S. was not far behind on this endeavor. In 1894, [Franklin Baker, Sr.](#), a flour miller from Philadelphia, PA, received fresh coconuts from a Cuban merchant as payment for flour he had shipped to Cuba. Seeing the massive potential of this delicious fruit, Mr. Baker bought a small business in 1895 and started shredding and selling coconuts, quickly becoming the leading supplier of coconut products in the U.S. It wasn't long before more and more coconut cream pie recipes started appearing in cookbooks.

In celebration of [National Coconut Cream Pie Day](#) (May 8<sup>th</sup>), why not treat yourself to this classic, decadent dessert? From pie crust to whipped topping, here is a [coconut cream pie recipe](#) you can try (please note you can use store-bought pie crust in place of a homemade one if you'd like).

### **Ingredients:**

*For the pie crust:*

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cubed
- 1/2 cup cold vegetable shortening, cut into a few pieces
- 1/2 cup ice water

*For the coconut cream filling:*

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 1 cup half and half
- 1 cup unsweetened canned coconut milk (not refrigerated coconut milk)
- 4 large egg yolks
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-sized pieces
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut extract (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups sweetened shredded coconut, toasted

*For the whipped cream:*

- 1 cup cold heavy whipping cream
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### **Directions:**

*To make the pie crust:*

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar and salt until well combined.
2. Add the cold cubed butter and cold vegetable shortening. Using a pastry cutter or fork, cut them into the dry ingredients until you have small pea-sized crumbs (some larger pieces are okay).
3. Slowly drizzle in 1 tablespoon of ice water at a time, and gently mix it in.
4. Once the dough starts to come together, turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and pack it into a ball. Cut the dough in half and flatten it into 2 discs.
5. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
6. To bake the pie crust, roll the dough out to 12 inches in diameter. Gently fit the dough into a 9-inch pie plate, trimming any excess dough and decorating the edges.
7. Line the pie dough with parchment paper or foil, making sure to cover the bottom and the sides, then fill it with pie weights (these prevent the crust from shrinking and help it maintain its shape. If you don't have pie weights, dried beans or dry rice will work as well).
8. Bake with the pie weights at 400 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes.
9. Remove the pie crust from the oven, and remove the parchment paper/foil and the pie weights. Prick the bottom of the pie crust with a fork to prevent bubbling and return it to the oven.
10. For a partially baked (blind baked) pie crust, bake it for another 5 minutes or until the bottom of the crust looks dry. For a fully baked pie crust, bake it for another 15-20 minutes or until it is golden brown and cooked through.

*To make toasted coconut:*

1. Spread the shredded coconut out on a large baking sheet.
2. Bake it at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for about 10 minutes, stirring a few times, until the coconut is lightly browned.
3. Remove the coconut from the oven and let it cool completely before adding it to the filling.

*To make coconut cream filling:*

1. In a large saucepan, whisk together the sugar and cornstarch until well combined. Set aside.
2. In a separate large mixing bowl, whisk together the half and half, coconut milk and egg yolks until fully combined. Slowly pour the wet ingredients into the saucepan with the sugar and cornstarch mixture and whisk until fully combined.
3. Place the saucepan over medium heat and bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Allow it to boil for 1 minute (the mixture should be pretty thick at this point).
4. Remove from the heat and stir in 1 tablespoon of butter at a time. Then mix in the vanilla extract, coconut extract and 1 cup of the toasted coconut (reserve the rest for the topping).
5. Cover the filling with plastic wrap, placing the plastic wrap directly on the surface of the filling, and allow it to stand in the saucepan for 30 minutes.
6. Remove the plastic wrap. Stir the filling and scoop it into the baked and cooled pie crust, spreading the filling out into 1 even layer.
7. Cover the pie tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate the pie for at least 3 hours or until it is completely chilled and firm.

*To make whipped cream:*

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, or in a large mixing bowl using a hand-held mixer, add the heavy whipping cream, powdered sugar and vanilla extract.
2. Start mixing on low speed, then increase the speed to medium-high until stiff peaks form.
3. Scoop the whipped cream onto the chilled filling and spread it out into 1 even layer.

4. Top the pie off with the remaining 1/2 cup of toasted coconut. Cover the pie tightly and refrigerate until you are ready to serve.

Note: Make sure to use unsweetened, full-fat canned coconut milk in this recipe, not refrigerated coconut milk. Since canned coconut milk may separate, shake it well and mix it together in a bowl before measuring it out for this recipe.

Avoid under or overcooking your food with these trusty timers. They will let you know when the time is up with vibratory feedback and/or audible beeps. And want to know for sure you're putting the correct amount of each ingredient into your batter? Let these tactile measuring cups and spoons take the guesswork out of your measurements. To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit AbleData.

Who said you need to be in a tropical paradise to enjoy all that it has to offer? Bring a bit of the tropics into your kitchen this weekend with a slice (or two) of coconut cream pie. No passport or luggage needed. Just sit back, relax and enjoy!

## Vanilla Pudding

May 22, 2020

Sweet, creamy and rich, vanilla pudding is a simple dessert that has the power to evoke nostalgic images of childhood and lazy summer days. Comforting in its simplicity and familiarity, it's hard to imagine anyone feeling stressed or harried while eating a bowl of vanilla pudding. But did you know that this beloved treat did not start off as a dessert?

[Culinary historians](#) believe that a pre-cursor to vanilla pudding emerged in medieval Europe, during the 13th Century, when people began to prepare a pudding-like dish of rice and almonds. Over the centuries, the recipe evolved into a French dish called blancmange, a white stew that consisted of milk or almond milk, sugar, and shredded capon or fish, and it was a dish enjoyed by Europe's wealthiest class during the Middle Ages. In the 17th Century, meat was replaced with cream and eggs (and later, gelatin), changing the stew into a creamy dessert. Then in the 19th Century, arrowroot and cornstarch were added to the recipe, transforming the dessert into the vanilla pudding we know and love today. Who would have ever thought that such a simple, unassuming dessert carried with it such a rich, lavish history?

Well, with summer quickly approaching, it's time to kick back and relax with a hearty helping of vanilla pudding, especially since [National Vanilla Pudding Day](#) (May 22nd) is just around the corner! If you've never had [homemade vanilla pudding](#) before, now's a good a time as any to whip up a batch of your own! Here is a recipe you can try (makes about 6 to 8 servings):

### Ingredients:

- 4 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- Kosher salt
- 5 large egg yolks, beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

- Stir-ins (optional, see below for suggestions)

**Directions:**

1. Heat 4 cups of the milk in a large saucepan over medium heat until steaming.
2. Whisk the sugar, cornstarch and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Then whisk in the egg yolks and the remaining 1/2 cup milk.
3. Whisk half of the hot milk into the egg mixture until it is smooth, then gradually whisk the egg-milk mixture into the saucepan. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture boils.
4. Continue to cook, whisking constantly, until it has thickened to a pudding-like consistency, 3 to 4 minutes.
5. Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the vanilla.
6. Cool slightly, stirring a few times to prevent a skin from forming. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on top of the pudding and refrigerate it until it is completely cooled and thickened, about 4 hours.
7. Before serving, whisk the pudding vigorously until it is smooth and creamy.

This vanilla pudding is delicious on its own, but if you'd like to change the flavor and textural profiles up a bit, use it as a foundational vehicle and just add in a few extra ingredients to create a whole new dessert! Here are a few extra stir-ins you can try:

- Cookies and Cream - crush 20 chocolate wafer cookies. Stir some into the pudding and use the rest to top off the pudding.
- Fresh Berries and Gingersnaps - fold in 2 cups of fresh, mixed berries, and top off the pudding with about 12 finely crushed gingersnaps.
- Vanilla-Banana - fold in 3 sliced bananas, then cover and refrigerate the pudding for 1 hour. Fold in 24 crushed vanilla wafer cookies and top off the pudding with more sliced bananas.
- Rocky Road - fold in 1 cup of mini marshmallows, 1 cup of toasted chopped walnuts and 1/2 cup of mini chocolate chips. Then sprinkle the pudding with more chocolate chips.
- Peanut Butter and Jelly - fold in 1 cup of quartered, red grapes and 1/3 cup of chopped, roasted peanuts and 1/3 cup of peanut butter chips. Top off the pudding with whole grapes.

Making homemade vanilla pudding requires a lot of whisking, stirring and mixing, so let these whisks and automatic pot stirrers help you transform those ingredients into creamy lusciousness. And if you'd like to top off your pudding with chopped nuts or diced fruit, let these manual choppers chop them for you. Press down on the handle a few times and the once-whole nuts and fruits will be chopped down to your desired size-it's like presto! To learn more about these and other assistive technology (AT) products designed to help you live more independently, please visit [AbleData](#).

Get a sweet taste of childhood with each spoonful of vanilla pudding. You can eat it on its own, layer it into a trifle, spread it over a poke cake, scoop it into a parfait-oh the possibilities! Regardless of how you serve it, the proof is in the pudding-vanilla pudding is anything but vanilla!