






  
**Developmental Disabilities Administration**  
**Tech Talk**  
**Maximize Independence with Smartphones**  
 May 2025- Session 1

**Maximize Independence with Smartphones**


Images in this presentation were created by Joan Green (the presenter) in Canva and with the assistance of AI- Gemini and ChatGPT






**Welcome! This is for you!**

- Providers
- Caregivers
- Individuals receiving services
- Families
- Lifelong learners
- Tech novices
- Tech experts



Please introduce yourself in the chat!

Let's learn from each other and share ideas during this time together.




**Goals for our time together**

- **Empower Participants with a Train the Trainer approach**  
Provide demonstrations and step-by-step instructions so that family members, volunteers and staff can better empower seniors and adults with disabilities to gain independence with the help of an up-to-date smartphone.
- **Enhance Communication & Social Connection**  
Provide guidance about what's possible with mainstream phone, video call, texting and camera apps—adapting these features for different accessibility needs (e.g., hearing, vision, communication, cognitive, and memory challenges)
- **Promote Safety, Organization & Self-Reliance**  
Demonstrate features of mainstream apps such reminders, tasks, calendar events, emergency contacts, maps, and location sharing. Emphasize practical tools to increase participants' ability to manage daily tasks and well-being. Provide guidance for staying safe online.



**Tech for Success**

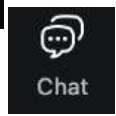

Smartphones are one of the single most impactful tools for independence and community integration.



I will not be covering all the information in these slides.



Save for future reference as you help others:)

Let's share experiences and learn from each other in chat!

**Tech can help overcome challenges!**

- Reading and Writing
- Speaking and Understanding
- Getting around
- Loneliness
- Mental Health
- Engagement
- Thinking

## Session 1- Communication Essentials

- Getting Started
- Initial Access and Setup
- Audio and Video Calls
- Texting
- Contacts

## Session 2- Increasing Independence and Safety

- Digital Safety
- Getting Around
- Health and Wellness
- Camera and Photos
- Alternative Device Options

## Session 3: Organization & Productivity

- Tasks
- Email
- Calendar
- Reminders
- Documents and File Management

## Getting Started

## New Tech Mindset

“How can readily available and free or low cost technologies help others:  
• experience success with everyday tasks  
• stay socially connected, and enjoy life?”

Let's look for the “lowest hanging fruit” first!

- greatest impact, least resistance, readily available with limited expense



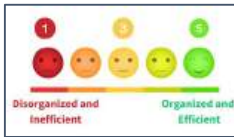
## Let's Enhance Independence with Everyday Tech

- Focus on smartphones- most popular tech device
- Amazing built-in features
- Train-the-trainer approach for maximum value
- Learn what's possible
- Person centered- match needs to features
- Keep on exploring, try new things and stay curious
- 



## How comfortable are you with technology?

- Tech is a burden.
- It's always changing and if something can go wrong it will!
- You need to seek out others for constant support and avoid using tech whenever possible.



- You enjoy exploring new ways to use tech.
- If there is a problem you can usually figure out a solution.
- Others tend to come to you for help.

## What's the antidote to the fear and overwhelm technology may cause?



## Circles of Support

We all need our "go to" people!

Let's form tech support teams for providers as well as those we serve!



## Think of me as Your Tech Advisor and Coach

It's nice to meet you!

- Love learning about emerging technologies!
- Live in Montgomery County, MD
- Speech-language pathologist
- Assistive Technology Specialist
- Mother of 4 young adults
- Immersed in eldercare
- It makes my day to help others improve life with tech!



[www.innovativespeech.com](http://www.innovativespeech.com)

## Reach Out For Ongoing Tech Help and Support

- [Let's Chat! Free phone consults for caregivers and families](#)
- [Tech Life Inner Circle Membership](#)
- [Free IST Tech Savvy Solutions Facebook Group](#)- 1.2 K members



## Identify Local Tech Lead

Support Person who:

- Is comfortable with smartphones, tablets, and other mainstream tools
- Knows how to set up, troubleshoot, and customize accessibility features
- Can teach and encourage others, at their own pace
- Keeps up with simple tech updates, tools, and best practices



They don't need to be an IT expert—just someone who's curious, patient, and willing to help others learn!

## What's the secret to feeling comfortable with tech?



## Decode Tech's language + Search for clues

Apps are always changing! By "reading" the symbols of tech, we can much more easily figure things out.



## On Smartphones we often see these symbols



"ellipsis"

"hamburger sign"

More

Additional menus

Click to see more options

## How many of these symbols do you recognize?



## The Language of Tech- 1



Dictate/ Speak  
Microphone  
on/ off



Speakers  
Volume  
up/down  
Mute/ Silence



Add text  
Type



Upload/ do  
something with  
this

Download

## Do you know what these do?



## The Language of Tech - 2



Print



Copy/  
Duplicate



Power



Brightness

## What will happen if you click on these?



## The Language of Tech - 3



Mobile Data



Reload or  
Refresh



Favorite in  
Internet browser



Share

## Have you noticed these symbols?



## The Language of Tech - 4



Gemini



Siri



Live Caption-  
iOS



Control  
Center- iOS

## What do these symbols represent?



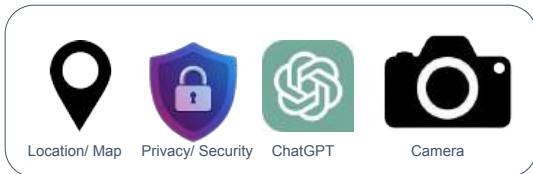
## The Language of Tech- 5



## Recognize these?



## The Language of Tech- 6



## Want a copy of these slides to use?

[Click here to download a forced copy of The Language of Technology Google Slide Deck from Joan Green](#)

Edit it to make it your own to help yourself or others:)



## Person Centered Approach

## SETT Framework- created by Joy Zabala



Focus first on person's needs and then features.

Selecting the device or app comes next, followed by practice and adjustments.

<https://www.iovzabala.com/links-resources>

## Set the Stage for Success

- Understand user needs and pain points
- What has the user successfully used a phone for?
- What barriers exist?
- Has anyone tried to overcome barriers and explore solutions?



## Explore Accessibility Features

## Live Demo and Discussion



## Settings

- On all smartphones, start by exploring what's possible in the settings!
- Check out the accessibility section
- Consider initial access
  - passwords and passcodes
  - balance ease of access with privacy concerns
- [Apple Accessibility](#)
- [Google Accessibility](#)
- [Microsoft Accessibility](#)



## Passcode Options on iPhone and Android

- **4-digit or 6-digit Passcodes** – Simplest and most common.
- **Custom Alphanumeric Codes** – More secure, but harder to remember.
- **Option to Disable Auto-Lock** – Useful for those who struggle to unlock frequently, but comes with privacy tradeoffs.



## Biometric Access

Face ID (iPhone) / Face Unlock (Android)

- Ideal for users who can hold the phone steadily and look at it.

Fingerprint Unlock

- Works well if dexterity and positioning aren't an issue.
- Some older users or those with hand tremors may find this challenging.



## iPhones

- iOS18- current operating system (May 2025)
  - iPhone 11-15
  - iPhone SE (2nd and 3rd generation, XS and SR)



- Apple Intelligence- iPhone 15 Pro and later

- Not sure what phone you are using or which operating system is running?

Settings> General> About



## Android Phones

- Android 15 - latest operating system 9/2024
- Samsung Galaxy Series
- Google Pixel Series
  - Pixel 6 and later
- They are all different
- Settings> About device
  - Device Name/ model
  - Android version



ANDROID

## iPhone Settings > accessibility

Settings > Accessibility

- Vision
- Physical and Motor
- Hearing
- Speech
- Accessories
- General



## Android Settings > Accessibility

Vision

Hearing

Interaction and dexterity



Screenshot of Samsung Galaxy Tablet

## Scenario- When touch doesn't work

Leah is always frustrated using her phone. She tries to touch it and it just doesn't respond the way it should!



## Why screens may not respond to touch

- Tapping too lightly or too quickly
- Dry or cold fingers may reduce skin conductivity
- Screen protector or case interference Dirty or smudged screens
- Reduced dexterity or tremors





## Potential Challenges for Audio Calls

- Inarticulate or inaudible speech that is hard for others to understand
- Verbal expression challenges
- Hearing impairment
- Difficulty focusing on the call
- Hard time remembering what was said
- Difficulty calling the correct number



## Scenario- Difficulty Speaking

- Roberto has speech and voice issues.
- He can type but can't be understood due to vocal cord issues as well as slurred speech.



## iOS Live Speech

This feature enables users who are unable to speak aloud but can type, the ability to type using the speaker and in calls and then Live Speech says it aloud.

Settings > Accessibility > Live Speech

Phrases can be stored in categories.

[Apple Support- Type to Speak on iOS](#)



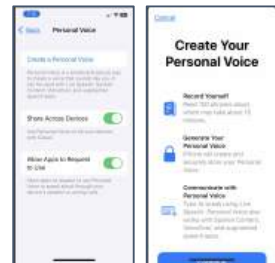
## iOS Personal Voice

A personal voice can be created if user is able to read aloud 150 phrases.

Create the personal voice on Mac or iOS device

Settings > Accessibility > Personal Voice

[Apple Support- Personal Voice for iOS](#)



## Solutions for "nonstandard" speech

If the users voice is hard to understand, training can be done using Voiceltt or Project Relate to create a web app that can "translate" the speech pattern into "intelligible" speech.

[Voiceltt](#)

[Project Relate](#)



## AAC Apps

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication** — tools and strategies that support people who have difficulty speaking or writing.

Types of AAC Apps on Smartphones

**Symbol-Based AAC Apps-** Proloquo2Go, TouchChat, LAMP Words for Life, Bridge AAC

**Text-Based AAC Apps-** Proloquo4Text, Speech Assistant AAC, Predictable

[www.praacticalaac.org](http://www.praacticalaac.org)



## Using AAC on a Smartphone

### PROS

- Always available — fits in a pocket!
- Customizable for different needs, voices, and languages

### Cons

- Small screen
- For some, it's best to use a dedicated communication device- just for AAC

Consultation with a speech-language pathologist is highly recommended for individuals with complex communicative needs.

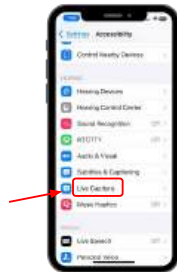
## Scenario- Difficulty Hearing

Lila has a difficult time hearing what others say - especially when trying to talk on the phone or when there is background noise.



## Phone Features for Hearing

- iPhones and Android phones come loaded with hearing support features.
- No extra devices needed—just unlock what's already there!
- Smartphones can amplify sound, provide captions, send alerts, and more.
- Settings> Accessibility >Hearing
- Stream phone calls, audio books, podcasts, videos etc directly into hearing aids.



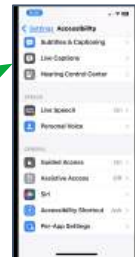
## Live Captions on Your Smartphone

Enable the captions for in-person conversations or to use while having a phone call!

**iPhone-** Settings > Accessibility > Live Captions (need at least iOS17)

**Android phones-** Live captions came first on Pixel phones.

- Require Android 10 or newer



## Amplified Speech- Smartphones



### Live Listen

iPhone feature- turns iPhone or iPad into remote microphone!  
Stream audio directly into AirPods, Beats headphones or Made for iPhone (MFi) hearing aids.



### Conversation Boost

For AirPods Pro users, this enhances voice of person in front of you. Go into AirPods settings under Accessibility.  
Very helpful in noisy environments or when need to hear someone speaking from a distance



### Sound Amplifier (Android)

Enhances speech, reduces background noise. Download the app if not already on phone.



## Apps with instant transcription

If live captioning is not available on the phone- these apps are great if captioning would be helpful!



[Live Transcribe- iOS](#)



[Live Transcribe- Android](#)



[Ava- iOS, Android and desktop](#)

## Video Calls

## Video Calls - Support Conversation Visually!

- Help stay socially connected, access remote support, attend virtual appointments and maintain routines.
- May be less confusing than audio calls or text-based communication.
- Hearing and seeing at the same time supports communication- facial expressions, gestures, body language
- Visual supports such as showing objects, actions, maps, calendars, and pictures can be helpful.



## Video Calls - Provide live visual support!

- Showing step-by-step tasks in real time makes instructions clearer.
- Support persons can observe and model suggested strategies in real time.



## Options for video Calls

### Facetime

- Best for iPhone, iPad and Mac users.
- Can have group calls
- Easy to use
- Can now create Facetime links to invite non-Apple users via browser



### WhatsApp

- May be a good fit for Android and iPhone users who already use this app to text with family or friends
- Very popular globally. Works well with low data or slow internet.



## More Video Call Options

### Zoom

- Great for virtual classes, telehealth and structured group sessions
- Free group calls for up to 100, 40 minute limit
- Host controls settings
- Can be simplified by using Zoom app and saving favorite contacts or meetings.



### Google Meet

- Great for anyone with a Google account.
- Free- individual or group calls.
- Integrated with Google calendar and Gmail
- No downloads, simple layout, good accessibility.



## Texting

## Live Demo and Discussion



## Texting- Promotes independent communication

- Communicate without speaking
- Provides time to think and process before responding.
- Removes pressure to respond immediately or in real time.
- Offers a visual record of conversations- helps with memory, comprehension and follow through.
- Instructions, reminders and important details can be saved and referred to.



## Texting- More Benefits

- Supporters can text reminders, checklists or prompts for tasks like taking medications, going to an appointment, or packing a lunch.
- Texts can include links, photos or emojis to support understanding or clarify meaning.
- Can send audio messages if speech to text doesn't work well.



## Send a text by speaking- not typing

Option 1- **Use Voice assistant** (Hey Google or Siri)

- ie "Siri, send a text to (name)" (requires smart assistants to be enabled)

Option 2- **Use voice typing** in the messaging app - click on the microphone and the text will appear where the cursor is blinking

Option 3- **Send an audio message-**

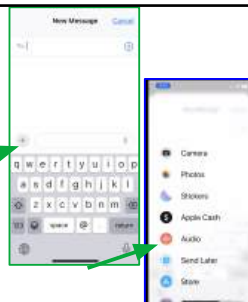
**iphones-** Open the conversation in the messaging app- select the "+" button- then select the red audio option.

**Android-** if you hold down the microphone within the message, you'll see that it will record audio. It used to take place this way on iPhones.

## Send audio file by text

This is a great option if you don't want speech converted to text- there are too many errors. Or, if the recipient has trouble reading.

The recipient hears the person's voice.



(screenshots from iPhone)

## Potential Challenges of Texting

- Reading and comprehension difficulties
- Difficulties composing responses- motor, cognitive or language issues may make it hard to type out clear messages
- Users may lose their phone, forget to charge it or get distracted when using it.
- Learning when it's appropriate to text, how often, what's too personal etc.
- May not recognize when someone is scamming or taking advantage of them.

## Scenario - Reading and Writing Challenges

Stephan has a hard time reading the small print on his phone.

He also has difficulty understanding and remembering what he reads.



## Reading Support

Enlarge the font- accessibility settings

Explore having text read aloud- in accessibility settings.

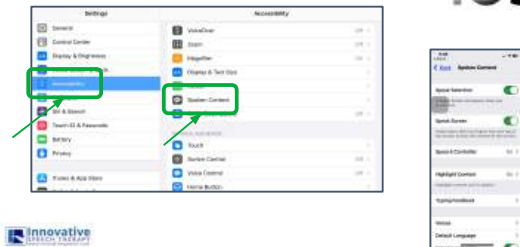
Much improved voices!

- Enable **“Spoken Content”** or **“Select to Speak”**
- Beware of using TalkBack on Android or VoiceOver on iPhones unless user is blind or very low vision- its a full screen reader and changes the gestures.



## iPhones- Spoken Content

# iOS



## Android phones

- Android 11 and up
- Settings > accessibility> Select to Speak
- If doesn't work- go to Google Play store and download the Android Accessibility Suite



## Scenario- Difficulty Typing

- Angelique has a hard time typing on the phone.
- She has poor dexterity and spelling has always been a problem.



## Writing / Typing Support

Try speech-to-text/ dictation

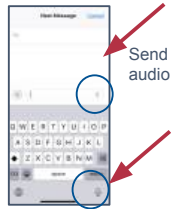
All smartphones can write what you say for free!

It takes practice and requires clear speech and some edits



## Dictation and Sending Audio on Smartphones

1. Find the microphone on the keyboard
2. Make sure the cursor is in the right spot
3. Tap on the microphone
4. Speak clearly
5. Tap again to stop dictating
6. If speech is not clear, try sending audio.



Type out the message

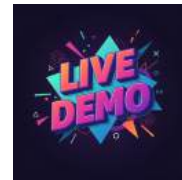
## Contacts

## Contacts

How can we use the “contacts” app or “address book” more effectively to support independence, memory and communication?



## Live Demo and Discussion



## Add supporting info to contacts

- Add photos and relationship labels to contacts- Image of “Uncle Julio”
- Add additional information such as “job coach” “text if late” in the “notes section.”
- Add helpful notes re expectations, or what to talk about and past interactions in notes such as:
  - Mom- call on Sundays
  - met at community center- loves art.
  - ask how the new puppy is doing.
  - Work manager- call if need help



## What will you try before our next session?

Pick one or two new ideas to implement.

Just a couple of changes may make a big impact in someone’s life!

Share in chat what you hope to try until we meet again.



## Questions

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