

Free and Low-Cost Ways to Access Technology and Increase Productivity

AthLife Fundamental

Getting organized with all your work and school tasks can help you be more efficient and empower you to be more productive as well. The digital age has spurred productivity gains in the last quarter-century and yet it can be expensive to access. Here are some ways to break down technology barriers that might hinder your productivity.

Access to free and low-cost internet

Internet access has become as important as a basic utility. If you are heading back to school, whether online or in-person, you must have internet access to complete your assignments efficiently. What do you do when you don't have access at home or it is just too costly?

- There are free internet "hotspots" everywhere in your community. From the local library to restaurants like McDonald's. If you can't find one download a free [Wi-Fi finder app](#) to assist.
- When the pandemic sent everyone home in 2020, it became clear that there were thousands of communities across the country that could not accommodate the needs of its youngest citizens to be able to participate in online learning. Since that time, corporations, local, state, and federal governments have taken steps to provide free and low-cost internet service to thousands. Your local cable provider or municipality may have created [a program](#) that can help you.

Access to equipment

- If you are heading back to school, a laptop is ideal yet things don't always go as planned.
 - If your laptop crashes mid-term you can go to the library to use those computers or your school may offer loaner computers to bridge the gap until you can find a solution.
 - A low-cost option could be to purchase a [Chromebook](#). It would cost you less than \$350 and allow you to complete most homework assignments.
 - Don't forget refurbished items, they will allow you to get more for your money. You can purchase laptops for pennies on the dollar directly from the manufacturer or from superstores like [Best Buy](#).
- Your smartphone, even an old one, is millions of times faster than the computers that sent astronauts to the moon. So if all you are using it for is to call, text, and check Facebook, you are missing out on the power you hold in your hand.
 - Your phone is a powerful tool and it can help you in a pinch. Did you know you can purchase a Bluetooth keyboard and connect it to your phone? This would allow you to do some typing or even skip the extra equipment and dictate what you would like to put in writing, this is often called, talk to text.
 - Additionally, your phone will read aloud any website, book, or anything you place on the screen utilizing its [accessibility features](#). This can be really helpful if you are trying to do some multi-tasking.

Access to applications and programs

- You can also utilize free programs from Google to write and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations on the fly, even from your phone.
- Use free features like Siri, Google, and Alexa (even on your phone) to set reminders just by speaking. Turn on calendar notifications so you can be alerted that your next appointment is an hour or whatever interval you choose.
 - TIP: If you find it difficult to use any of these features, know that learning something new can be challenging and you are not alone. [YouTube](#) is full of "How To" videos and is a great resource for learning new programs and applications.

Technology is essential in our everyday lives. It also helps us stay organized and ultimately increases our productivity. Make sure that you take advantage of the free and low-cost options available today to meet your own technology needs and become more productive.