

# Assistive technology (equipment, technology and devices)

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**Quick Summary:** People use equipment, technology and devices every day to make their lives easier. When we talk about assistive technology, we mean equipment, technology and devices that help you do things you can't do because of your disability. Or, things that help you do something more easily or safely. Assistive technology involves things designed to improve your daily life and help you do everyday things.

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## What do we mean by assistive technology?

The World Health Organisation has a [universal definition of assistive technology](#).

Assistive technology is equipment or devices that help you do things you can't do because of your disability. Assistive technology may also help you do something more easily or safely. Assistive technology will reduce your need for other supports over time.

This could be small things like non-slip mats, or special knives and forks. It could be big things like wheelchairs and powered adjustable beds. It also could be technology like an app to help you speak to other people if you have a speech impairment.

Not all equipment or technology you use is assistive technology. Many people use some equipment as part of their lives, for example, a radio to listen to music, or a standard microwave oven to cook food.

Assistive technology is only the equipment you need because it helps you do things that you normally can't do because of your disability. It **includes** items that:

- mean you need less help from others
- help you do things more safely or easily
- help you to keep doing the things you need to do
- allow you to do tasks independently
- are personalised for you.

We **don't include**:

- home equipment that everyone uses, that isn't related to your disability, like a standard kettle
- items for treatment or rehabilitation
- changes to public spaces, like a footpath
- changes to public vehicles, such as buses or taxis
- assessment or therapy tools used by therapists.

This page has information on how we make decisions. For general information on assistive technology, check out [assistive technology explained](#).

## What assistive technology do we fund?

All NDIS supports must meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

When we think about assistive technology support, we'll ask these questions:

- [Does the assistive technology relate to your disability?](#)
- [Is the assistive technology right for you?](#)
- [Is the assistive technology you need value for money?](#)
- [Is your assistive technology funded or provided by someone else?](#)

We consider how your supports work together as a package to address your disability support needs or achieve an outcome. We look at how assistive technology will make it easier for you to do things or reduce other supports you need. Your assistive technology should bring you benefits over many years. Learn more about the [principles we follow to create your plan](#).

## Does the assistive technology relate to your disability?

Your assistive technology must relate to your disability.<sup>1</sup> It should help you with different activities, or something you can't do now. Or, assistive technology may make it less tiring for you to do some things, or mean you need less help from someone else. We won't fund a support if it's not related to your disability.<sup>2</sup>

We don't fund general items that everyone needs, like everyday household furniture. But we might fund the extra cost of adapting general items for your disability.

### Example

Both Salim and Jane can't sit in a standard chair. This is because they won't be able to get back up due to their disability.

We all have to buy furniture for our home. But they each need to pay more to adapt the chair, or to buy a specialised chair.

Salim's occupational therapist says he could use low cost chair raiser blocks to raise the height of his chair. Salim buys a standard chair with his own money. But his plan could include funding for the chair raiser blocks if they meet all the NDIS funding criteria.

Jane's occupational therapist says low cost options won't work for her. She needs a sit-stand recliner chair so she can stand up slowly without help from someone else and avoid falling. Her plan could include funding for the sit-stand recliner chair if it meets all the NDIS funding criteria.

## Is the assistive technology right for you?

Assistive technology needs to help you pursue your goals.<sup>3</sup>

When we're making decisions about funding assistive technology we'll look at how your disability stops you from pursuing your goals. We'll also look at how the assistive technology will help with your disability support needs.

For example, you might have a goal to move around your house more independently. We'll look at all the ways you might be able to pursue that goal. Funding a wheelchair could be one way.

We need to know the assistive technology:

- is the right item for your needs
- is safe for you to use<sup>4</sup> and meets Australia's safety standards, where this is possible
- will help you do all the things you need it to
- will work in all the places that you need to use it.

There are some things to remember:

- If you set more and bigger goals it doesn't mean we'll fund more and bigger funded supports.
- If you set a goal about an exact type or amount of support you want, it doesn't mean we're obliged to fund that support or in that amount.

[Learn more about setting goals.](#)

## Is the assistive technology you need value for money?

The assistive technology we fund for you must be value for money compared to other assistive technology or supports that would achieve the same outcome.<sup>5</sup> We consider the benefits of the assistive technology. We also think about what it will help you do in the long term.<sup>6</sup>

We also look at:

- less expensive options
- how long the assistive technology will last
- how often the assistive technology will need maintenance or repairs
- whether the assistive technology may be cheaper to rent for the time you need it.<sup>7</sup>

We check the price of assistive technologies in the market. We'll compare the cost of the item you want to an expected price range for a similar item.<sup>8</sup>

We use this expected price range to help us decide how much funding to include in your plan. We also look at how easy a device or service is to get.

This helps us give enough funding for the assistive technology you need to pursue your goals. This may be above the expected price range for some needs.

We generally fund the standard level of assistive technology you need based on your goals. For example, a wheelchair with standard specifications and features. We won't fund extra items that don't relate to your disability, or don't help you pursue your goals.

You can also pay extra from your own money if you want:

- a particular brand or model of an item
- special features not related to your disability needs (for example, paint type)
- a particular design.

### Example

Bill needs a new powered wheelchair. He gives us an assessment and quote for \$16,550.

There are some parts of the quote that don't meet our funding criteria because they're not reasonable and necessary. These are extra 'cosmetic' features like metallic paint and personalised AFL club upholstery for a total of \$550.

Bill's plan will include \$16,000 for the standard assistive technology for his needs. He decides he doesn't need the metallic paint, so he gets the standard paint. But he really wants to show his AFL Club loyalty, so he pays \$250 from his own money for the upholstery upgrade.

### Is your assistive technology funded or provided by someone else?

We can't fund assistive technology if it's another organisation's job to fund or provide it. We can help work out whose job it is to fund or provide what you need.

For example, health departments will provide equipment you need in hospital. You might get to keep this for a week or two after you come home if you've had surgery.<sup>9</sup>

Other state and federal government agencies will also fund equipment sometimes.<sup>10</sup> For example, to help you in your work, school, or university.

If we don't fund what you need, we can help you find out how to get it from the right provider or scheme.

Learn more about [who is responsible for the supports you might need](#).

### How do we fund assistive technology?

We make decisions about including assistive technology in your plan based on the cost of the item. We need different evidence from you to help us decide if the assistive technology meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#), depending on the cost of the item.

We put the cost of assistive technology into 3 categories.

Low cost assistive technology	Mid cost assistive technology	High cost assistive technology
Under \$1,500 per item	\$1,500 - \$15,000 per item	Over \$15,000 per item

For some items, it's best to buy them. For other items, it might be better to rent or borrow if your needs are likely to change.

### Low cost assistive technology: under \$1,500 per item

Low cost items are:

- easy to set up and use
- available from local suppliers or general non-disability specific retailers.

The **Core – Consumables** section of your budget shows your low cost assistive technology funding.

Examples include:

- continence products
- non-slip bathmats
- large print labels
- walking sticks
- basic shower chairs.

### Mid cost assistive technology: between \$1,500 and \$15,000 per item

Mid cost items may be more difficult to choose and set up on your own to get the best outcome.

The **Capital** budget in your plan shows your mid cost assistive technology funding. This will be a broad category. For example, your plan might say 'Funding provided for wheeled shower commode with a price range of \$1500 to \$3500.'

Other examples of mid cost items might include:

- a standing hoist
- a customised shower chair
- ankle-foot orthotics
- alternative communication devices
- some power wheelchairs

- pressure care mattresses.

## High cost assistive technology: over \$15,000 per item

High cost items:

- are complex and need an individual assessment to make sure it's the right solution for your needs
- need specialised knowledge or tools to set them up
- may be custom made for your individual needs
- generally need a quote, so we can include the right amount of funding in your plan.

The **Capital** section of your plan shows your high cost assistive technology support. It may say the specific type of assistive technology you need to buy. It might also say 'quote required' – your plan will explain this.

Examples include:

- a wheelchair custom-made for you
- some complex communication devices
- many prosthetics
- ventilators.

## How can you get assistive technology in your plan?

There are a few ways to get assistive technology in your plan. You can talk to us in your planning meeting about getting assistive technology in your next plan. If you already have a plan, you might be able to use funding in your current plan, or you could ask for a plan reassessment.

Assistive technology always needs to meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#) before we can include it in your plan.

We need you to give us evidence that helps us understand what assistive technology you need. We also need to know how it will help you pursue your goals. If you don't give us the evidence we need for your assistive technology, we can't include it in your plan. We'll need different information from you depending on the cost of the item.

To help you understand what you need to do, check out the fact sheet [Understand assistive technology evidence, advice, assessments and quotes](#).

If you're replacing assistive technology you currently use, we have a simpler process. Check out [What if you need to replace the assistive technology?](#)

Once you give us all the evidence we need, we'll decide whether we'll fund the assistive technology. For your current plan we're required to make a decision about low and mid cost assistive technology within 28 days.<sup>11</sup> We're required to make a decision within 50 days<sup>12</sup> if it's high cost.

If you need assistive technology in your first plan, we'll consider it as part of our approval process.<sup>13</sup>

Learn more about our timeframes in our [Participant Service Guarantee](#).

The evidence we need depends on whether the assistive technology is low, mid or high cost.

You need to give us different [evidence for tablets and computer based assistive technology](#) before we decide if we include it in your plan.

### How can you get low cost assistive technology in your plan?

You can tell us what you think you need at your planning meeting. Or, you can talk to your local area coordinator, early childhood partner or planner.

If you're not sure how much your low cost assistive technology will cost you can look at the fact sheet [Assistive Technology – Guide for Low Cost support funding](#). We'll use this as a guide to work out how much funding to add to your plan for the low cost items you need.

Learn more about [what you need to do before you buy your assistive technology](#).

### How can you get mid cost assistive technology in your plan?

You'll need to give us evidence that your mid cost assistive technology is right for you. The evidence can be a letter, email or report from your [assistive technology advisor](#). Your advisor must tell us:

- the assistive technology you need
- why the assistive technology is the best value, over other supports, to help with your disability support needs
- how the assistive technology will help with your disability support needs and help you pursue the goals in your plan
- an estimate of how much the assistive technology costs.

The evidence you give us doesn't need to be a formal assessment but it does need to be in writing so we can keep it for our records.

You might also have other evidence about how assistive technology will help you. You don't have to provide this evidence but it might help us understand your needs better. This can make it quicker to get the assistive technology in your plan. You might tell us:



- about your lived experience
- if you've used or tested the item or similar item before and it meets your needs
- about advice from peer support groups or peak bodies that indicate the item is right for you
- you don't already have something or someone doing the same or similar job, unless you are replacing it because it's failing or no longer suitable.

Learn more about [what you need to do before you buy your assistive technology](#).

### Example

Huan has limited mobility and he needs specialised footwear. Huan's podiatrist writes a letter showing how the specialised footwear is needed because of his disability and why other footwear won't help him. The information from the podiatrist includes a photo of suitable items from suppliers and an expected price of the item. In the planning conversation Huan describes how the footwear will help him spend more time with his friends which is a goal in his plan. The planner has enough evidence to decide that the footwear meets the NDIS funding criteria.

You don't have to give us a quote for us to decide if we'll fund mid cost assistive technology in your plan. But we'll need to make sure the item is not going to cost more than \$15,000. Once you have the funding you might like to shop around and get quotes from a range of suppliers to make sure you get the best value for money.

### How can you get high cost assistive technology in your plan?

For high cost assistive technology, you need to give us:

- a recent assessment or report that shows what assistive technology you need
- one quote unless we have another way to find out the right amount of funding to include.

The assessment needs to be from a qualified [assistive technology assessor](#). For example, this could be an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. For specialised hearing products, this needs to be an audiologist, and for prosthetics a qualified prosthetist. We have [more information and an assessment template](#) on our website.

We usually need an assessment from the past 2 years. But if your needs are changing quickly, we may need a more recent report or an update to an earlier report. For example, we might need a more recent report for:

- young children

- people with degenerative neurological conditions, like multiple sclerosis or Huntington's disease
- anyone with rapid functional changes.

We'll ask about your experience using the item. For example, you might have used the assistive technology before. If you have, you can tell us how it worked for you. You could also do your own research about why you need this support.

You might need to trial the assistive technology before you know it's right for you.

We might include funds in your **Capital** budget to trial items. You usually need to give us one quote. Sometimes, we might need a second quote to check your assistive technology is value for money.

Quotes help us understand how much funding you need for your assistive technology. They also help us understand the short and long term costs for the recommended items. This is an important part of deciding if it meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

For high cost assistive technology getting quotes and assessments can take time. Sometimes we'll include funding for assessments or trials in your plan before we fund the assistive technology item. When you get your assessment and quote, you should email them to [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au), so we can check them.

We may be able to include a high cost item in your plan without the quote. If we do, we'll show in your plan the maximum amount we'll accept for a quote. If the quote you get for your item is higher than this, we will check whether that assistive technology is still reasonable and necessary.

### **Example**

Rob can't speak due to his disability. He has his first plan approved, which includes funding to trial some assistive technology options. He starts seeing a speech pathologist, who assesses his needs.

The speech pathologist gets Rob to trial a few options to decide what's right for him, then writes an assessment.

They recommend a \$16,000 communication device that tracks Rob's eyes as he spells out what he wants to say, and then reads it out.

Rob gets a quote for the communication device. He gives the assessment and quote to his planner.

The planner asks for more information about what other devices Rob trialled, and what types of activity he did during the trial. This is to make sure the device is value for money, and the best type of device for him. Rob and his speech pathologist give the planner this information.

Rob's planner decides the communication device is reasonable and necessary.

Rob's next plan has funding for the communication device, and he can now buy the device he needs.

## What evidence do you need for tablets and computer based assistive technology?

We won't usually include funding in your plan for you to buy or rent a tablet or a computer to run computer based assistive technology. This is because these items are a day-to-day living cost.

To help us decide if we'll include the item in your plan, you need to give us evidence that shows you need the device because of your disability. You'll need to give us this evidence no matter what the device costs.

The evidence needs to be in writing from an assistive technology advisor. It needs to confirm the device is the most appropriate solution for your disability support needs.

After you provide this evidence we'll include funding for the item in your plan if it meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

If you want to use funds already in your plan to buy a tablet or computer based assistive technology you'll need to get written advice from an assistive technology advisor. The advice needs to show you need the device because of your disability.

Learn more about [if we would fund a smart device or tablet](#).

## What do you need to do before you buy your assistive technology?

What you need to do after we approve the assistive technology in your plan, and before you buy it, depends on the cost and risk of using the item. You'll need to get advice or an assessment before you buy your assistive technology.

To help you understand what you need to do, check out the fact sheet [Understand assistive technology evidence, advice, assessments and quotes](#).

### What do we mean by risk?

Some assistive technology is higher risk. People can be injured by these items when not used or set up correctly.

### What's low risk assistive technology?

When we talk about low risk, we mean assistive technology that:

- is unlikely to cause harm in your day-to-day life

- is available in stores so you can see or try it before you buy
- doesn't need professional advice, setup or training for you to use it safely.

Many assistive technology products are low risk, both to you and others. This includes things like non-slip mats, modified cutlery, walking sticks or handheld magnifiers.<sup>14</sup>

### **What's higher risk assistive technology?**

Higher cost assistive technology such as power wheelchairs are likely to be higher risk.

We might consider assistive technology higher risk even if it doesn't cost very much. For example, bed poles and weighted blankets are higher risk.

You can look at some examples of the 2 [assistive technology risk levels and typical products in each category](#). We rely on information from the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) who regulate the use of therapeutic goods in Australia.

You often need professional or skilled advice to pick the right model or size for higher risk assistive technology. You also need to make sure it's set up properly, and you understand how to use it. This way you'll get the best outcomes and avoid getting hurt.

We'll include funding in your plan so you can get written advice about any higher risk assistive technology you need before you buy the item. We'll also include funding for someone to help you to set up and learn how to use it.

### **Example**

Li would like a bed pole to help her get out of bed more easily.

Although it only costs \$35, it's higher risk assistive technology. She needs written advice from an assistive technology advisor to check the bed pole is safe for her. If not used correctly, bed poles can cause injury or death.

Li's planner knows that bed poles can be higher risk. They make sure Li has enough funding in her plan to get advice from her occupational therapist about whether the bed pole is right for her.

Li's occupational therapist says the bed pole she wanted to buy might be dangerous for her and recommends another one that's much safer.

### **What do we mean by advice or an assessment?**

We suggest you get advice before you buy any assistive technology. This will make sure the item is right for you. If you buy the wrong assistive technology without getting advice we usually won't pay for another item.

There is a range of skilled and qualified people who might be able to provide this information about your assistive technology. We describe all those who can provide this advice as assistive technology advisors.

**Assistive technology advisors** can be:

- allied health practitioners. For example, audiologists, occupational therapists, orthoptists, orthotists/prosthetists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, speech pathologists
- assistive technology mentors, who have a recognised qualification in assistive technology advice
- orientation and mobility specialists for the vision sector
- continence nurses
- rehabilitation engineers.

You'll need to use the expertise of your assistive technology advisor to choose a safe and appropriate item. Your assistive technology advisor will need to provide independent advice.

Sometimes your medical practitioner or specialist may have enough assistive technology experience to provide advice on what you need. But they will usually refer you to another more experienced assistive technology advisor.

You might also need to get an assessment from an assistive technology assessor.

**Assistive technology assessors** are specialist assistive technology advisors. They need to have a university or equivalent degree relevant for providing assistive technology assessments. They also need to be working within the standards set by a professional registration organisation such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Allied health practitioners, nurse continence specialists, orientation and mobility specialists, and professional rehabilitation engineers all meet this requirement for their area of assistive technology expertise.

We will tell you what sort of advice you need before you buy your assistive technology. To help you understand what you need to do, check out the fact sheet [Understand assistive technology evidence, advice, assessments and quotes](#).

### **What should you do with the advice or assessment?**

You can keep the advice or upload it to your NDIS myplace portal if the item is:

- low cost assistive technology
- mid cost assistive technology

You should send your quote and/or assessment to us at [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au) if:

- it's for high cost assistive technology
- if you need us to look at or accept a quote for a high cost item.

### **What do you need to do before you buy low cost assistive technology?**

When we have funded low cost assistive technology that is low risk in your plan, we suggest you get advice before you buy the item. This will make sure the item is right for you.

The advice can help you learn about assistive technology you didn't know about. Or it can help you find assistive technology that's cheaper or works better for you.

For low cost items that are higher risk, you'll need to get written advice. The advice needs to be provided by an [assistive technology advisor](#) before you buy an item funded in your plan. This is to make sure you get the right item for you and it is safe for you to use.

### **What do you need to do before you buy mid cost assistive technology?**

For all mid cost assistive technology approved in your plan, you need to get written advice from an assistive technology advisor before you buy the item.

For mid cost items that are low risk, you need to get your advisor to make sure the item is right for you.

For mid cost items that are higher risk, you'll also need advice about how to set up and adjust the item so you can use it safely.

#### **Example**

Sally needs a shower chair as she finds it difficult to shower herself.

Sally and her occupational therapist believe Sally will need a shower chair in the next few months. They aren't sure of the exact chair she needs. Sally's occupational therapist writes a letter to say why Sally needs the shower chair. It will be a mid cost assistive technology item. Sally brings the letter to her planning meeting.

Sally's planner has enough evidence in the occupational therapist's letter to show the shower chair is reasonable and necessary. Sally's planner includes funding for mid cost assistive technology in her plan. Her plan includes a price range for the shower chair from \$1,600 to \$5,600. But there's a bit more funding if she needs a more expensive shower chair. Her plan also includes a note that Sally will need written advice before buying the item.

Sally's planner knows the chair will be under \$15,000 and doesn't need to ask for a quote. The planner explains to Sally she will need to work with her occupational therapist to make sure she buys the right item.

Once the funding is in her plan, Sally gets written advice from her occupational therapist to help her choose the right shower chair. Sally contacts different providers to get the best price for her shower chair and buys it from the funding in her plan.

She keeps a copy of the letter in case the item isn't right for her. She knows we might ask for the letter to make sure she got the right advice if the item doesn't meet her needs. She might also need to take the letter back to her occupational therapist if the advice was wrong.

### **What do you need to do before you buy high cost assistive technology?**

For all high cost items you'll need to get a written assessment before we can include it in your plan. You must have an assessment before you buy the item. This is to make sure high cost or complex items are appropriate, safe for you to use and have a long term benefit for you. Your assessment needs to be completed by an [assistive technology assessor](#).

The assessment needs to show what extra support you need to set it up. It will also need to say what training you need to use the assistive technology.

The assessment will need to make sure the assistive technology is safe for you to use.

### **How do you start using your assistive technology?**

For general information about how to use the funding in your plan, check out [Your plan](#).

If your plan is Agency managed, you need to buy or rent the item from a registered provider.

For mid cost assistive technology your plan will tell you what item you can buy. It will also tell you the expected cost of the item, which you can use as a guide. This is so you know you're getting a good deal when buying your items. Remember you'll always need to get written advice before you buy your mid cost assistive technology.

For high cost assistive technology your plan may have a specific description of the approved item. You'll need to use your funding on an item that matches this description. For example, we might say the funding is for a particular model of assistive technology. If so, you can't buy a different model.

### **How do you get more assistive technology or different assistive technology in your plan?**

If you need more or different assistive technology, check the funding in your plan first. You may be able to use your existing funding to buy what you need. We try to make plans as flexible as possible so you can choose what you spend your funding on. Your local area coordinator, support coordinator, early childhood partner or planner can help.

Remember that you don't always need to buy new assistive technology to meet your needs. Sometimes you may rent or borrow an item, or buy a suitable second hand (for example,

refurbished) item. You can discuss what would be right for you with your [assistive technology advisor](#).

If you can't use the existing funding in your plan and your circumstances have changed you may want to ask for a reassessment of your plan. We can look at your request before your next check-in.

You can send us any information or evidence you have about your assistive technology to start this process.

We'll help you with the next steps. The information we need depends on the type of item you want. You can [contact us](#) if you need help with this.

### **What happens during the plan reassessment?**

When you ask for a plan reassessment, we'll look at any information you give us about your new assistive technology needs. If your circumstances have changed, we may decide to reassess your plan.

If you have evidence with you at your plan reassessment that meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we can include the funding in your new plan. The funding will be available when the plan is approved.

Sometimes, we include funding to rent or try an item, especially if it's something you're using for the first time. This is so you can be sure it's right for you.

[Learn more about plan reassessments](#).

## **What other assistive technology costs do we fund?**

We usually fund other supports related to your assistive technology. This section answers:

- [How can you get funding in your plan for advice or an assessment?](#)
- [How can you get funding for delivery and set up of your assistive technology?](#)
- [How can you get funding to trial new assistive technology?](#)
- [What if you need to rent assistive technology items?](#)
- [How can you get funding in your plan for maintenance and repairs?](#)

### **How can you get funding in your plan for advice or an assessment?**

We'll always include funding in your capacity building budget to help you get advice or an assessment for your assistive technology. You can also use the funding to help you choose assistive technology or learn how to use it.



For low cost assistive technology, we include at least \$500 in your capacity building budget for advice. This helps you choose the right assistive technology for you.

For mid cost assistive technology, we include more funding for advice.

For high cost assistive technology, we include more funding for the assessment if you don't already have one.

## How can you get funding for delivery and set up of your assistive technology?

If we fund new assistive technology in your plan, we'll fund costs for delivery. This includes delivery costs to your home, or wherever you use the item.

We'll also include funds for your therapist or assistive technology provider to help set it up if this is needed.

For low cost and mid cost items you can use flexible funds in your plan to pay for this.

## How can you get funding to trial new assistive technology?

You might need a trial to test the assistive technology before buying it. You might trial the item if you've never used it before or to confirm if it's still right for you.

If you need funding in your plan to trial mid cost assistive technology, you won't need a quote. But you'll need to tell us why you need to trial the item and how long you need to trial it to work out if it's right for you. This is to make sure that funding the trial meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

We can estimate the trial cost for you if the supplier doesn't know or hasn't included it in a quote. To do this we'll use the [Assistive Technology – Guide for minor trial and rental funding](#). For items over \$15,000 you can tell us how much it will cost from a quote.

We'll include funding to trial high cost assistive technology if you need it. For short trials like a one hour session, we include funding in the **Core – Consumables** budget.

For longer trials, we include funding in the **Capital – Assistive Technology** budget.

## What if you need to rent assistive technology items?

Sometimes it may be better to rent assistive technology, rather than buy it. For example, when you are on holiday, you might rent a shower chair for the week. Or if you have a degenerative condition and your needs are changing quickly.

You may be able to use the flexible funds in your plan to rent the assistive technology.

We may also include funding in your plan to rent assistive technology if:

- you can't use your regular assistive technology for some reason

- you can't use your current assistive technology anymore, and you're waiting on new items to come in
- you've left hospital with assistive technology, and you're waiting for an assessment on your long term needs
- you need new high cost assistive technology, but you need to trial some options as part of the assessment
- it's better than buying the assistive technology – if your needs are likely to change.

For example, we may consider renting assistive technology is better value for money for a child. This is because the child is likely to outgrow the technology within a short period of time.

You'll need to tell us why you need to rent the item. You also need to let us know how long you will need to rent it. Renting an item for a long period of time may not be good value for money. We'll need to make sure that the rental meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

We'll put funding for rental of supports in your **Capital – Assistive Technology** budget if you need it.

If the item costs less than \$15,000 to rent, you can give evidence from your assistive technology advisor on the cost of rental. If you don't have this information, we may use the fact sheet [Assistive Technology – Guide for minor trial and rental funding](#) to help us work out the right amount of funding to add to your plan.

If the item costs more than \$15,000 to rent, we'll include **quote required** rental funding. This means you must give us a quote for us to approve the funds you need.

If you have any questions, check out our [Contacts page](#) to get in touch.

## How can you get funding in your plan for maintenance and repairs?

Like other equipment, your assistive technology may need repairs. It may need repairs due to regular wear and tear or accidental damage not covered by insurance. Sometimes if the assistive technology is old or badly damaged, it's better value to replace it than repair it.

If your item isn't of acceptable quality or fit for purpose, you can ask your provider for a refund or replacement. This falls under the [Australian Consumer Law](#).

We'll include funding for repairs and maintenance for all assistive technology items in your plan.

For small repairs like a tyre puncture, we include funding in your **Core – Consumables** budget. If your funding is Agency managed, it's in your **Capital – Assistive Technology** budget.

For major repairs like a regular service, we include funding in your **Capital – Assistive Technology** budget.

We'll use the [Assistive Technology – Guide for funding of annual repairs and maintenance funding](#) to calculate how much funding you need for repairs. If you need more because of your specialised needs you can tell us in your planning meeting.

If your plan has funding for repairs and maintenance you can get it done when you need to. But let us know if your repairs are expensive, or if you need them frequently. We may be able to discuss whether a different item can support you better. You can contact your local area coordinator, early childhood partner, planner, or assistive technology advisor.

Even though your new assistive technology has a warranty, we'll still include funding for repairs you may need for things like accidental damage or routine servicing.

### **What if you don't have enough funding left in your current budget for repairs?**

When we include funding in your budget for assistive technology, we include enough to cover maintenance and repairs. It's up to you to manage your budget so you have enough for these costs. If you do need to fix something and don't have enough budget left, get in [contact with us](#) about maintenance or repairs.

You might be able to get a new plan with funding for repairs. We'll have to check if this meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

### **What if you need repairs for a powered mobility device or prosthetic?**

We include **quote required** funding for powered mobility devices or prostheses more than 2 years old. If you need major repairs, give your local area coordinator, early childhood partner or planner a quote. If the repair is value for money, we can accept the quote and provide funding. Sometimes it's better to replace damaged or broken assistive technology than repair it. In this case we'll initiate a plan reassessment to give you funding to [replace your assistive technology](#).

### **What if you need urgent repairs?**

You should try to get repairs and maintenance done during normal business hours unless it's urgent.

If you need an urgent repair and don't have enough funding in your budget, [contact the National Contact Centre](#). We'll let you know the next steps.

If your repair is over \$1,500, we'll need a quote before we can approve the repairs being made.

## What if you need to replace the assistive technology?

If you need to replace your assistive technology, we'll help fund it as soon as possible. We'll also include funding to rent the item if you need to wait for a replacement and can't use funds already in your plan.

Assistive technology may need replacing when:

- it doesn't work anymore, or keeps breaking down
- it's dangerous to keep using
- a child has outgrown their assistive technology
- your support needs change due to a degenerative condition
- it's broken and can't be repaired.

We can include some funding for replacements in your **Capital – Assistive Technology** budget without a full assessment. This happens when we create your plan.

We generally only replace items you got through the NDIS (or a similar scheme that funds assistive technology) that are in your plan. We also need to know that you were recently using it. You can send us a tax invoice, receipt, or report from a repairer stating the item's condition.

You also need to show us that you:

- still have the same support needs
- don't expect this to change in the next 12 months.

If the item is less than \$15,000 you need to give us evidence that the replacement item is right for you. You can give us evidence from an [assistive technology advisor](#).

If the item is more than \$15,000 you'll need to give us an assessment from an [assistive technology assessor](#). We need to know the replacement item is right for you. An assessment from the last 2 years will show this. You'll also need to give us a quote.

If your plan is already in place and you don't have enough funds for a replacement, you may need a plan reassessment.<sup>15</sup> We'll decide if you need a plan reassessment.

Learn more about [plan reassessments](#).

Before you have a plan reassessment, think about whether your assistive technology might need replacing soon. Your local area coordinator, early childhood partner, support coordinator or planner can talk about including the funding in your next plan.

## What happens once you have the funding for the replacement?

If your plan has a specific description of the assistive technology, then you need to buy a replacement that matches that description. For example, your plan may say you need a certain type of wheelchair. This is known as a 'stated support' in your plan. Most assistive technology in your plan generally won't be a stated support.

If there isn't a specific description, your replacement item doesn't need to be the same as your existing one. We know suppliers will have new models over time.

An assistive technology assessor can help you make sure the replacement has all the features you need to pursue your goals. And that it's best suited for where you want to use it.

## How do you get rid of assistive technology?

Once we fund your assistive technology, you own it, unless you're renting or borrowing it. You can decide what to do with items you own.

If we've funded a replacement for your old assistive technology, you can keep the old item, if you choose. But we generally won't pay for any maintenance or repairs to the old item, unless it's suitable as a backup device.

Also if we've told you the item no longer meets all the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we won't pay for any repairs. You can choose to:

- give or sell the item to someone else
- return it to your provider
- trade it in.

If you decide to get rid of an item because you don't need it anymore, it's unlikely we would fund a replacement.

## What happens if you don't agree with our decision?

If we decide assistive technology supports don't meet all our [NDIS funding criteria](#), we can't include them in your plan.

We'll give you written reasons why we made the decision. You can [contact us](#) if you'd like more detail about the reasons for our decision.

If you don't agree with a decision we make about assistive technology supports, you can ask for an internal review of our decision.<sup>16</sup>

You'll need to ask for an internal review within 3 months of getting your plan.<sup>17</sup>

Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#).

## Attachment 1: Assistive technology product risk table

The evidence you need for your assistive technology depends on the item's risk level. You need written advice before you buy or rent higher risk assistive technology. Check out [What do we mean by advice or an assessment?](#)

There may be some situations where you don't need to get written advice for higher risk assistive technology. For example, if you are replacing something you have used a lot before. We'll talk with you to understand your situation. We want to make sure you know how to use your assistive technology safely and you understand any risks.

The evidence we need to make decisions about including assistive technology in your plan depends on if it is low, mid or high cost. Check out [How can you get assistive technology in your plan?](#)

Risk level	Broad description	Examples
Low risk assistive technology products	<p>Products you or your family can choose, that need very little advice or setup support from <a href="#">assistive technology advisors</a> to use them safely.</p> <p>There's a low risk of causing harm when used in day to day life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-slip bathmat</li> <li>• Knives, forks or other eating utensils</li> <li>• Large print labels</li> <li>• Shower stool or chair</li> <li>• Handrails</li> <li>• Portable ramps</li> <li>• Mainstream computer technology</li> </ul>
Higher risk assistive technology products	<p>All higher risk assistive technology will generally need advice from an assistive technology advisor or <a href="#">assistive technology assessor</a> to confirm the right item selection and the best outcomes.</p> <p>Items regulated by the <a href="#">Therapeutic Goods Administration</a> in Australia are considered higher risk. We also rely on information from the <a href="#">NDIS</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed sticks and other transfer aids</li> <li>• Items that might restrict voluntary movement (including bed rails, bed covers, weighted blankets)</li> <li>• Powered devices for magnification or hearing</li> <li>• Mobility and postural support or correction devices</li> </ul>

Risk level	Broad description	Examples
	<a href="#">Quality and Safeguards Commission.</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motor vehicle adaptations</li><li>• Pressure care devices</li><li>• Beds adjustable while occupied</li><li>• Prosthetics or orthotics</li><li>• Devices to support breathing</li></ul>

## Reference list

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- <sup>1</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(b); NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(b).
- <sup>2</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(b).
- <sup>3</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(a).
- <sup>4</sup> NDIS (Support for Participants) Rules r 5.1(a).
- <sup>5</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(c); NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.1(a).
- <sup>6</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules rr 3.1(b), 3.1(f).
- <sup>7</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.1(d).
- <sup>8</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.1(e).
- <sup>9</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules rr 7.5(b)-(c).
- <sup>10</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(f).
- <sup>11</sup> NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.
- <sup>12</sup> NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.
- <sup>13</sup> NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.
- <sup>14</sup> The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is generally responsible for regulating most assistive technology. The TGA has been working on a simpler way to describe product risks around assistive technology. The NDIA will follow this approach when it is released and has included the initial concepts from the TGA in this Operational Guideline.
- <sup>15</sup> NDIS Act s 48.
- <sup>16</sup> NDIS Act s 100.
- <sup>17</sup> NDIS Act s 100(2).