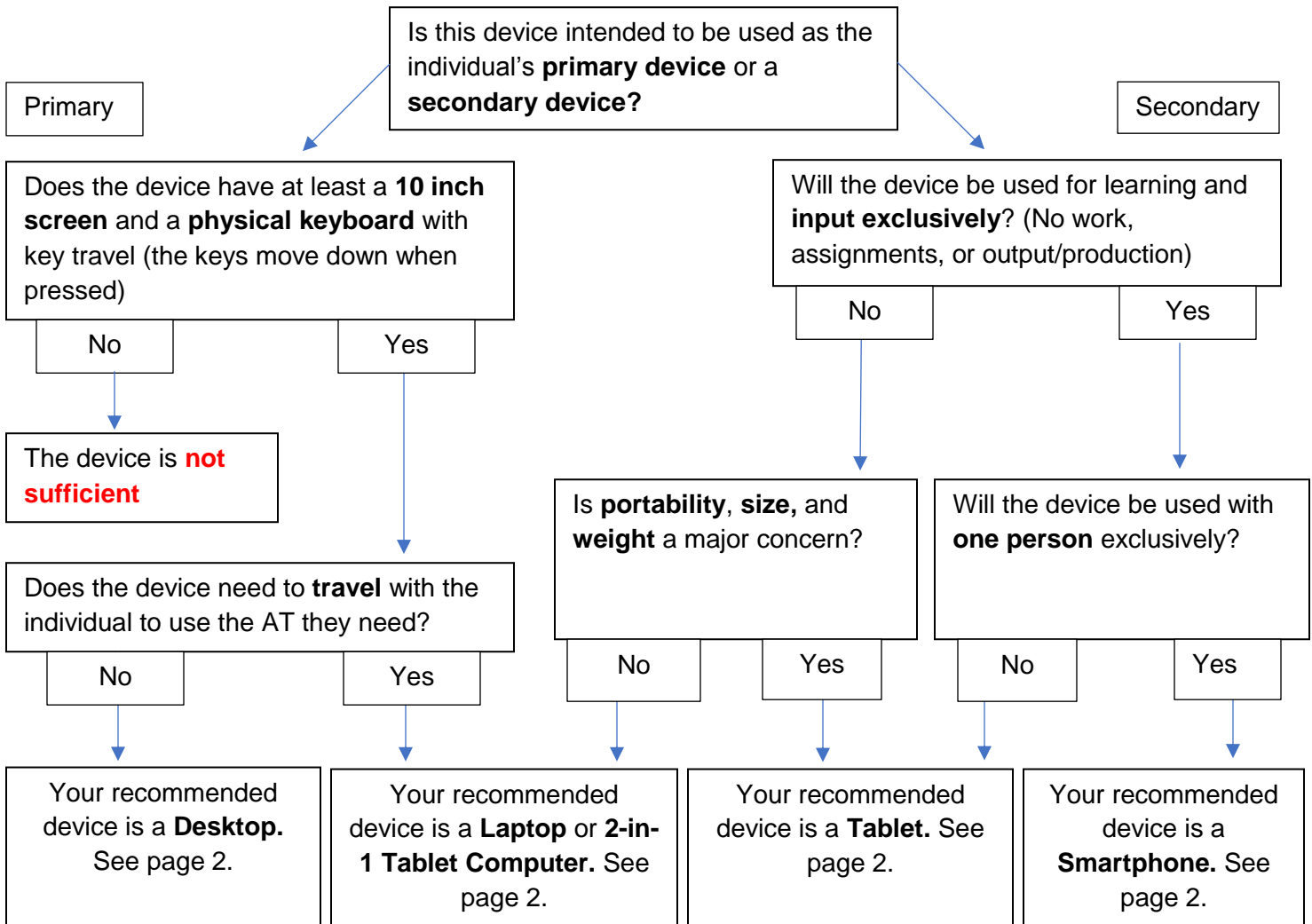# How to Choose an Assistive Technology Device

The following is a list of steps to follow to choose a primary education device on which to load assistive technology (AT). While almost all AT can be loaded onto any device, but not all devices will be optimal for all assistive technologies and purposes. The following will help you consider the most appropriate device for the person using AT. The benchmarks and values listed are not absolute cutoffs (for example, a 10-inch screen is recommended, but a 9.99-inch screen is almost as good). It is simply recommended to get as close to these as possible given budget limitations.

It is recommended to use this tool to **first evaluate current devices**, and then, if no device meets the specifications, using the tool **again to choose a new device** to purchase.

Is this device intended to be used as the individual's **primary device** or a **secondary device?**

Primary

Secondary

Does the device have at least a **10 inch screen** and a **physical keyboard** with key travel (the keys move down when pressed)

No → The device is **not sufficient**

Yes → Does the device need to **travel** with the individual to use the AT they need?

No → Your recommended device is a **Desktop.** See page 2.

Yes → Your recommended device is a **Laptop** or **2-in-1 Tablet Computer.** See page 2.

Will the device be used for learning and **input exclusively**? (No work, assignments, or output/production)

No → Is **portability**, **size,** and **weight** a major concern?

No → Your recommended device is a **Tablet.** See page 2.

Yes → Your recommended device is a **Smartphone.** See page 2.

Yes → Will the device be used with **one person** exclusively?

No → Your recommended device is a **Tablet.** See page 2.

Yes → Your recommended device is a **Smartphone.** See page 2.

Summary

- A **desktop** is best used as a primary device and offers the best cost to hardware
- A **laptop** is best for portable production, and offers the most versatility with the least limitations
- A **tablet** is useful for information consumption and works better to share than a phone, particularly when used for extended periods, but in general is best used as an *educational technology* (teaching skills), not an assistive technology (bypassing a weakness).
- A **smartphone** is best for individual organizational purposes and high frequency, short uses

Specifications of Devices

The follow specifications are recommended features to look for. Once these criteria are accounted, the **cheapest** device is the best choice. Overshooting these benchmarks, unless the intended use is for other lifestyle activities, beyond assistive technology, is as a rule, not worth the money.

DESKTOP   Your desktop should have **these features**, in order of importance

- [ ] 1. The **same ecosystem** as the other devices the individual is using (ecosystem refers to what operating system, such as Windows for a PC or Apple for a Mac)
- [ ] 2. A start-up time of less than **1 minute** to avoid frustrating and waiting to get started on work
- [ ] 3. **4GB** of RAM to ensure it runs technology smoothly
- [ ] 4. A physical keyboard where the user's **fingers rest comfortably on the home row keys**
- [ ] 5. A comfortable, **wireless mouse**

LAPTOP   Your laptop or 2-in-1 tablet computer should have **these features**, in order of importance

- [ ] 1. The **same ecosystem** as the other devices the individual is using (ecosystem refers to what operating system, such as Windows for a PC or Apple for a Mac)
- [ ] 2. A physical keyboard where the user's **fingers rest comfortably on the home row keys**
- [ ] 3. A screen size of **10 inches** to ensure comfortable viewing
- [ ] 4. A start-up time of less than **1 minute** to avoid frustrating and waiting to get started on work
- [ ] 5. **4GB** of RAM to ensure it runs technology smoothly
- [ ] 6. Enough battery life to last a **full school day** without using power saver mode (power save mode greatly extends battery life at the expense of the computer's speed and power)
- [ ] 7. Relatively durable and **water resistant**
- [ ] 8. **Lightweight** and **thin**, if the user is a younger child

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TABLET   Your tablet should have **these features**, in order of importance

- [ ] 1. The **same ecosystem** as the other devices the individual is using (ecosystem refers to what operating system, such as Android for a Google tablet or iOS for an iPad)
- [ ] 2. A physical keyboard where the user's **fingers rest comfortably on the home row keys**
- [ ] 3. A screen size of **10 inches** to ensure comfortable viewing

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SMARTPHONE   Your smartphone should have **these features**, in order of importance

- [ ] 1. The **same ecosystem** as the other devices the individual is using (ecosystem refers to what operating system, such as Android for a Google phone or iOS for an iPhone)
- [ ] 2. Enough battery life to last a **full school day**
- [ ] 3. A **mainstream ecosystem** (iOS, Windows, Android) to ensure app compatibility
- [ ] 4. Les than **3** years old; phones released before this have a very short shelf life and once their software stops being supported, many apps become unusable on them
- [ ] 5. The **bigger the screen size, the better**, with at least **4 inches** recommended

Note: The intended use should not be for production of any extended amount of content, but only for organization and information intake