

## AT FOR EATING

---



According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#), one in nine people suffer from chronic undernourishment worldwide. If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to nourish yourself with food using standard commercial products on the market, there are assistive technology (AT) devices that may help you. This guide will highlight several different types of AT devices for eating, such as arm and hand supports, adaptive dishware and utensils, and self-feeding machines.

### Arm and Hand Supports

If you have muscle fatigue or weakness, adaptive arm and hand support devices may assist you. They are designed to reduce strain on your arms and hands.

---



*Stable Slide Self Feeding*

One adaptive arm support device is the [Stable Slide Self Feeding Support](#). The device consists of a base (for attaching it to a table) and a support slide. You place your arm in the bottom portion of the slide. You put food on a utensil in your hand. You raise your arm toward your mouth with the support of the slide until it rests in the top portion of the slide. Then you can bite the food. The [Zonco Mobile Arm Valet \(ZMAV\)](#) is another adaptive arm support device. ZMAV consists of an arm platform, a hand grip, and an elbow stop. You can attach

utensils to its hand grip. You place your forearm in the platform with your elbow up against the elbow stop. You place your hand in the hand grip with the utensil attached. You put food on the utensil, and then you move your hand and forearm toward your mouth in one controlled movement so you can bite the food. [View more arm and hand supports here.](#)



*Zonco Mobile Arm Valet (ZMAV)*



*Plastic Base Utensil Holder*

One hand support device is the [Plastic Base Utensil Holder](#). The device is designed to hold a utensil in your hand for you. It features a base with an opening for your utensil's handle and a nylon strap to secure the base in the palm of your hand. You place your utensil's handle in the base's opening. Then you place the base in the palm of your hand and pull the strap over the top of your hand. Then you can put food on the utensil and raise it to your mouth to bite without having to use any strength to hold the utensil. The [Right Angle Utensil](#)

[Pocket](#) is another hand support device. Designed to be used in combination with your cuff, holder, wrist support, or similar AT device, it helps you hold items upright at a 90-degree angle in between your thumb and index finger. You slip this accessory into the pocket of your assistive device. You insert a utensil into an opening on the device, and then you can put food on your utensil and raise it to your mouth to bite without having to use any strength to hold the utensil. [View more utensil holders here.](#)



*Right Angle Utensil Pocket*

## Plates, Bowls, and Utensils

### Plates

If you are blind or visually impaired or have limited upper-extremity strength and coordination, adapted plates and accessories such as food bumpers and plates with suction cups or raised edges may help you eat more independently. These devices can help stabilize your plate and prevent food from sliding off it.

A food bumper is a food guard that can be attached to your plate. Two such examples are the [Plastic Food](#)



*Plastic Food Bumper Guard*

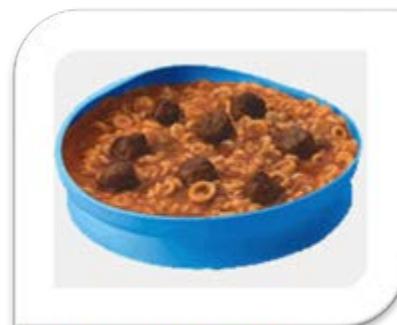
[Bumper Guard](#) and the [Ableware Food Bumper](#). You can

clip either of these products onto a circular dinner plate measuring nine to 11 inches in diameter. Once attached, they provide a raised circular bumper on your plate. You use the bumper to help you keep food from falling off your plate or to help you scoop it up. Some plates come with food bumpers built right in, such as the [Plate with Inside Edge](#) and the [Inner Lip Plate](#). Both have raised bumpers within their centers.



*Plate with Inside Edge*

Other plates have suctioned bases that secure them to your tabletop. These also can help prevent accidental spills or help with scooping food. One option is the [Maddak Scooper Plate with Suction Cup Base \(Model 920479\)](#). It has a built-in food bumper on one side of the plate's 6.75-inch diameter to help you scoop up food onto your utensil. It also features a rubber suction base to help keep your plate securely in place while in use. Another option is the [Triangular Suction Plate](#). It is a 9-inch-wide circular plate with three suction cups underneath to secure it to your tabletop. It also features a 0.5-inch food bumper along its edge. [View more plates here](#).



*Maddak Scooper Plate with Suction Cup Base (Model 920479)*

### *Bowls*

If you are blind or visually impaired or have limited upper-extremity strength and coordination, plates are not the only dishware that have been modified to meet your needs. Adaptive bowls may also be able to assist you with eating.

The [Maddak Eating Scooper Bowl With Suction Cup Base, Model F745340000](#) is one option. It has a high rim and a curved-in lip on one side to assist you in scooping up food with your spoon. Made of heat-resistant plastic and measuring 4.5 inches in diameter, the Scooper Bowl also features a rubber suction base to help prevent it from skidding across the table while using it. Another possible option is the [Weighted Bowl](#). This 12-ounce capacity bowl has a weightier

base to help reduce the risk of tipping over of standard bowls. It is also insulated to keep your food warm or cold. [View more bowls here.](#)

### *Utensils*

If you have limited upper-extremity strength and coordination, specialized utensils may help you gain better control to eat more easily. There are many types on the market with varied features that may meet your needs.



*Weighted Bowl*

You may find weighted utensils helpful, especially if you have tremors because the added weight helps to stabilize your hand movement. One example is [Weighted Eating Utensils with Large Handles](#). It is a four-piece weighted utensil set that includes a fork, knife, teaspoon, and soup spoon. Each utensil weighs approximately eight ounces (about half a pound) and has a built-up handle that measures 4.5 inches in length and 1.125 inches in diameter. Or, you may find a product such as [Dining with Dignity - Set #3: Fork, Spoon, & Knife](#) useful, especially if you



*Dining with Dignity - Set #3: Fork, Spoon, & Knife*

have limited or no use of one or both of your hands. These three utensils have handles with two rings on them. You put your thumb and index finger through the rings so you can hold the utensils without having to exert any strength. Or, perhaps a product like the [Etac Light Dining Set](#) may be helpful if you need support for your hands and forearms when you eat. The set includes a knife, fork, spoon, and teaspoon with long handles. With longer handles, you do not need to lift the utensils as high as you do with utensils with shorter handles, which may make it easier for you to eat. [View more utensils here.](#)

### Self-Feeding Machines

If you have limited upper-extremity strength and coordination, self-feeding machines may also be helpful. There are many different types on the market depending on your unique needs. One example is the [Electric Programmable Neater Eater](#). This device is switch-operated and automatically scoops food off of your plate and raises it to your mouth. You plug the Neater Eater into an electrical outlet and connect a head or foot switch to the device. You use the switch to rotate the plate in the plate holder as well as to operate the arm.

Another example is [Obi](#), a robotic, switch-operated feeding aid that automates the motion



*Obi*

of a human arm when eating. Obi comes with a teach button, two accessibility switches (one for choosing food and one for delivering food), a rotating serving dish with four bowls, a placemat, two different-sized spoons, and a charging cable. When it is your first time using Obi, you or a caregiver will have to teach it the correct position of its spoon by manually maneuvering its arm so that it is level with your mouth. To do so, you or a caregiver must move the arm to the desired position while continuously holding down its teach button. Obi will store the position in its memory and automatically direct the spoon to the learned position from then on out, without your or a caregiver's guidance. To feed yourself, you press its choose switch to select which bowl you want to eat from and then press its deliver switch to bring the arm to your mouth. Once you have eaten the food off of the spoon, press the deliver switch to return the arm to the same bowl or the choose switch to bring the arm to a different bowl. [View more self-feeding machines here.](#)

## For More Information

[Contact us](#) at AbleData for information on these and other AT products that may help you eat more independently.

## References

RehabMart.com, LLC. (n.d.). *Adaptive eating utensils, weighted silverware, swivel spoon, special needs utensils.* Retrieved from [http://www.rehabmart.com/category/eating\\_utensils\\_and\\_accessories.htm](http://www.rehabmart.com/category/eating_utensils_and_accessories.htm)

United Nations. (n.d.). *Universal declaration of human rights.* Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

World Hunger Education Service. (2016, December 28). *2016 world hunger and poverty facts and statistics.* Retrieved from <http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/>



The contents of this publication were developed under a contract from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR contract number ED-OSE-13-C-0064). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this publication do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Address: AbleData, 103 W Broad Street, Suite 400, Falls Church, Virginia 22046  
Telephone: 800-227-0216 (Se habla español.)  
TTY: 703-992-8313  
Fax: 703-356-8314

All AbleData publications, the AbleData database of assistive technology, and other AbleData resources are available on the AbleData website, <http://www.abledata.com>. Copyright 2018, New Editions Consulting, Inc.