

# Leisure and Recreation

Doing something you love—whether an art, hobby, game, sport, or activity—can bring deep joy and fulfillment. As ALS progresses, the thought of not being able to do something you love can be extremely difficult. Depending on the activity, however, there may be assistive devices or modifications that let you continue to enjoy all or part of that activity or experience.



If you notice it is becoming more difficult to do something you love, ask the occupational or physical therapist on your ALS clinic team or medical team if there are any adaptive strategies or devices that could help you continue to do that activity.

You may be surprised to learn what is possible, either through a physical modification or digital alternative. No matter the stage of the disease, it is important to continue living and doing things you love, even if in a modified way.

## Exploring Adjustments and Modifications

There are many different types of adaptive devices that can help you continue to do activities in a modified way. You may also be able to modify the activity itself or find ways to enjoy core aspects of what you love about the activity.

Every individual, activity, and situation is unique, so you may need to be creative, think outside the box, and go through a process of trial and error to figure out what works best for you at each stage of the disease.

If you love to paint, for example, but are finding it harder to hold your brush, you can try building up the handle with foam tubing or tape, or you can try putting your brush in a universal cuff. If using a physical paintbrush is no longer possible, there are many apps and software programs that can help you make art digitally.

Or, if you like to grow flowers, herbs, or vegetables, there are different ways you can continue to enjoy gardening. Garden kneelers with handles, special adapted gardening tools, raised beds, and drip systems on timers can make gardening easier and more accessible. You can also ask for assistance setting up and maintaining your garden.

## Accessing Your Digital Devices

Recent advances in technology have made it possible to do many things—such as making art, writing, playing games, attending virtual events, and controlling smart home devices—as long as you can access your phone, tablet, or computer.

If you find that it is getting harder to access your digital devices, reach out to your occupational therapist and speech language pathologist to request an evaluation and ask for suggestions. If you can speak but are unable to use your hands, there are speech-to-text apps and programs that can allow you to click, write, surf the web, and control your device. Another option is using a hands-free voice assistant with a smart speaker. If you are unable to speak or use your hands, you can use a head mouse or eye-tracking technology.

## Do you need assistance with digital access and devices?

Most digital access devices, except for speech-generating devices, are not covered by insurance. If you need assistance accessing your phone, tablet, or computer, there are a number of resources that should be able to help.

Begin by sharing your challenges and needs with an occupational therapist or assistive technology professional (ATP). They should be able to do an evaluation and make suggestions. If you have a speech-generating device, a technology professional from the manufacturer should be able to help with training and troubleshooting.

The nonprofit organization Bridging Voice ([www.bridgingvoice.org](http://www.bridgingvoice.org)) offers a range of personalized services that can help you with computer access and communication technology needs. The ALS nonprofit organization Team Gleason may be able to make recommendations or provide loaner communication devices. Another option is asking your local ALS Network care manager if they can lend you some devices from their equipment loan closet.

### Get Local Support



*Formerly ALS Golden West*

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

(866) 750-2572

[info@alsnetwork.org](mailto:info@alsnetwork.org)

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