



How can you harness technology to improve your future?

A Senior's Guide to the Future of Retirement



As you likely already know, seniors are using technology more than ever. About 70% of seniors are connected to the internet and use their phones, tablets, or laptops to access it. This is roughly the same percentage of younger adults. As many Boomers enter their senior years, their willingness to use technology is only increasing.

So, how can you harness technology to improve your future?

The Impact of Technology on Senior Life

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), technology is defined as the application of scientific knowledge resulting in artifacts that support the practical aims of human life. Simply stated, technology is science used to help people live easier lives. Since retirement is all about living easier, it is a surprise that many people think retirees are averse to it. Like many things, technology is making an enormous impact on senior life. Recent studies indicate that your technology has a powerful potential to change how you live your everyday life in retirement.

How Tech Makes Socializing Easier for You

Technology can make life easier in many ways but recently none is more apparent than the impact on senior social life in retirement. One of the key factors is loneliness. More than 40% of seniors experience loneliness regularly and technology can help alleviate that discomfort. Humans are social creatures by nature and our connections help us to survive. However, as we get older, many people are by themselves more often than when we are younger. This leaves you vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Studies found that:

- Loneliness is connected with an increase in mortality.
- Loneliness can be as hazardous to your health as smoking.
- Loneliness increases the possibility of developing dementia.
- Loneliness increases the severity of flu and cold symptoms.

Fortunately, technology is helping seniors counteract these negative effects.

Seniors in Rural Areas

The advances in technology, over even just the last few years, play a transformative role in the fight against social isolation among senior adults. This is especially true in rural communities. Rural communities often lack infrastructure for technology and can hinder older adults from taking advantage of what the digital world has to offer. Additionally, the number of senior Americans living in rural areas is expected to increase from 8.6 million to 14.6 million, and more than half of those will experience social isolation which leads to loneliness. Roughly, 1 in 5 seniors live in rural areas, making this an obstacle for this particular demographic. Though many older adults in rural areas can't take advantage of the digital benefits of technology, things like Teledoc are making it easier for seniors in rural areas to talk to their doctors on the phone for non-emergency visits. This is why it is so important for seniors to stay involved with technological developments. Here is how you can take action:

- **Stay Informed:** Whether asking your grandkids or reading the news, stay up to date on the daily advances of technology.
- **Stay Connected:** Find new ways to stay connected to your family and friends (see Staying Connected in the next section).



Staying Connected

With the advent of cellphones, email, and social media it is easier than ever to stay connected. Additionally, platforms like Zoom and Facetime are also seeing a major bump in use from an older demographic. In fact, 69% of older adults use social media apps. In light of the negative effects of loneliness and the benefits of connectivity, consider the following apps to help you stay connected to your loved ones:

- **Skype:** This is one of the most popular apps for video chatting. It's free and can be easily downloaded to a mobile device, laptop, or desktop.
- **FaceTime:** This is an iPhone-specific app and can only be used by iPhone users. Similar to Skype, FaceTime is free and is used for video calls. Additionally, you can have group calls and leave messages.
- **Marco Polo:** A relatively new addition to the digital world, this app is similar to texting but with video. Users can record a video and send it to a contact. That person can then watch it and respond with their own video. It allows users the benefit of video without the time constraint to be free at the same time. It is free and easy to download.
- **Facebook Messenger:** Available through Facebook, this app allows users to chat, send video, or make an audio call. It is free and available in most app stores.
- **WhatsApp:** This is another messaging service that enables users to send audio, text, video messages, and share images.



Selling Your Stuff Online

Downsizing is hard enough. But what do you do with all the stuff you don't want anymore? Well, the digital world can help you out there too. There are many online shops where you can sell your second-hand things.

- **Websites**
 - Craigslist
 - eBay
- **Apps**
 - Facebook Market Place
 - OfferUp
 - Close5
 - 5miles

How Tech Makes Downsizing Easier

Downsizing is a major undertaking and at times may seem impossible. But what if we told you that technology can help with your downsizing and decluttering journey. To start, you likely got this eBook as a download from our website, so digital resources are already helping you. But let's get a little more specific.

Digital Resources for Downsizing

As you know, there is lots of advice to be had on the internet about downsizing. So, here are four simple steps to starting your downsizing journey:

- 1. Start Early:** one of the biggest mistakes people make in downsizing is waiting too long. Start paring down about a month before you plan on moving.
- 2. Make a Plan:** from the living room to your office desk, making a plan to go room by room is your key to success.
- 3. Keep Memories Without Clutter:** see *Converting Photos to Digital*. <https://lec.org/blog/how-to-convert-photos-to-digital-to-make-space/>
- 4. Donate:** stay in the giving spirit by donating your unwanted belongings. You never know who you might be helping.

For a complete resource guide on downsizing, download our **FREE** eBook. <https://lec.org/resources/power-to-declutter/>



Smart Technology

Though robots haven't completely taken over yet, smart technology has. Smart home device markets are estimated to be worth roughly \$53 billion with no signs of decreasing any time soon. This should come as no surprise considering how useful smart devices are, especially for seniors. One of the demographics that can most benefit from smart technology are those over 65. According to the AARP, 87% of adults over 65 would like to stay at home and smart devices are helping them at home and in assisted living communities.

Increasing Safety

Whether you are looking to stay in your home or upgrading to a senior living community, smart technology is making living easier and safer. Things like smart doorbells and smart locks are a great way to protect your home and increase your safety.

Increasing Comfort

Adjusting the heating at the touch of a button or having motion-sensing lights automatically turn on from your phone or voice-activated device can add a level of comfort to your surroundings. Simply, sit back and listen to your favorite radio station via your voice smart technology.

Converting Photos To Digital

Converting your hardcopy photos to digital copies is a great way to cut down your clutter. Here are three ways to convert your photos:

Scanning

Though you can get a scanner at a relatively reasonable cost and can save them right to your desktop, scanning photos is a bit time-consuming.

Basically, all you have to do is get the scanner and set it up. You should scan one photo at a time, which is why this process can take so long. Once the images are scanned, you will have the option to save them to your computer. We suggest setting up a folder for these photos so you know exactly where they are. From there you can save them to a cloud or share them on social media.

If you don't want to do this yourself, there are companies like Shutterfly that will do it for you.

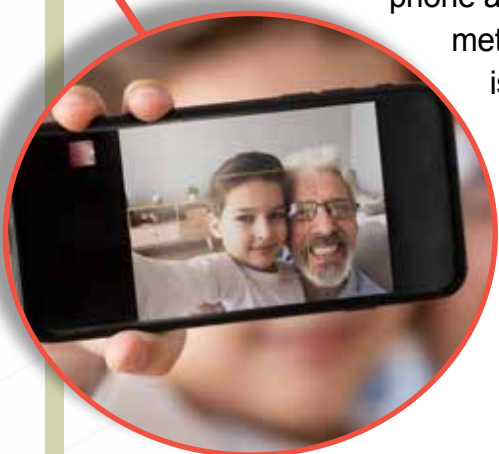
Apps

Just like there are services that will scan your photos for you, there are apps that can help you as well. It can save you the cost and space of a scanner, which if you are downsizing your home might be better to avoid. These apps work just like taking a picture of the photo, except they have the added luxury of photo editing options like color correction. Google Photo Scan is a comprehensive app.

Take Digital Photo

This is perhaps the most straightforward method. Simply use the camera on your phone and take a picture of the picture. Though this is one of the easiest methods, it gives you very little control over the image quality. If there is a shadow across the image or a tear in the photo, you won't be able to fix it later. If you are just looking for a way to get the job done quickly, this might be something worth considering.

Regardless of which method you choose to use to convert photos to digital copies, one thing is for certain; you will have more space and less clutter when you are done.



Travel

Whether you are a snowbird or just off for a weekend getaway, there are loads of ways technology can help you with your travel plans. Not only that, but technology has changed the way we travel today.

TOURISM

Mobile Technology

This is certainly the main game-changer for new wave tourism. The cell phone has become our travel agent, tour guide, dining concierge, and so much more. According to TripAdvisor, 45% of cell phone users use their phone for everything involving their vacation, from booking to sight-seeing.

Virtual Assistants

From asking about the weather to local radio stations, virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa are helping people with their daily travel needs regularly. Even some hotels are getting on the band-wagon and recruiting “help” specifically designed for the environment to assist visitors in navigating the grounds.

Augmented Reality

With augmented reality (AR), otherwise known as virtual reality (VR), you don't even need to leave the comfort of your living room to travel. When you begin your search for a VR system you'll be able to choose from many options regarding your cost, headset, availability and more.

5G

With faster loading and downloading speeds, the powerful 5G network is essential for traveling today. The wide coverage promises more stable connections in larger areas and more efficient connectivity between smart devices.

Non-Emergency Travel

Not all travel is done for leisure and pleasure. But technology is now helping seniors with daily chores. Services like Lyft and Uber are helping seniors maintain their independence should they find themselves unable or unwilling to drive. Here is how ride-sharing can benefit seniors:

Ride-Sharing: An Alternative to Public Transit

Whether you are grocery shopping or running to a doctor's visit, ride-sharing is a great alternative to public transit that can cut down on time and makes it easier

NonEmergency Travel

Go Go Grandparents

Go Go Grandparents provides transportation, grocery delivery, and home services to senior adults who don't have smartphones. They offer services provided by vetted and background-checked individuals to help you with pharmacy pickups, food shopping, home cleaning, maintenance, and more!

Sign Up is Easy

Though it requires downloading an app which means having a smartphone, the rest of the signup process is simple. Once the app is downloaded, open it. You will be prompted to register which means creating a username and password. After that, enter your personal information (from a secured wi-fi connection). Uber and Lyft don't give your information to others while using the app, though they will share your name and number with your driver to verify your identity.

Tech for Brain Health

Cognitive function and brain health is another way technology is breaking down barriers and making staying sharp easier than ever.

Mental Health

Technology has opened up an entirely new frontier in mental health support. Mobile devices are giving doctors and other health professionals new ways to help, understand and monitor patient's wellbeing. Here are the benefits of using technology for your mental health:

- Convenience
- Anonymity
- Accessibility
- Low Cost
- Service More People
- 24-Hour Service
- Consistency
- Support From Home



Tech for Brain Health

Mindfulness

Simply put, mindfulness is the practice of being mentally present and in the moment. It is an effective way of connecting to your surroundings for the purpose of relaxation and peace of mind. This is a popular health approach to those looking to care for their minds as well as their bodies. The benefits of mindfulness are:

- Decreasing anxiety and depression
- Increase feelings of positivity
- Cost-effective and accessible
- You can do it anywhere
- There are a variety of apps offered to help you

Skill Training Apps

Though they may look a lot like games, skill training apps help users learn new critical thinking skills. Users can watch educational videos or practice skills through activities. Some of the best skill training apps are:

- Skillshare
- Duolingo
- LinkedIn Learning
- Udemy
- Ted-Ed
- Headspace

Online Courses

Learning today is easier than ever. If you have been toying with the idea of going back to school or simply taking a class but are concerned about the age difference of your classmates, online learning might be the solution for you. Whether you want to learn better software skills or how to paint, there are online resources to help you take courses such as:


- YouTube
- Skye Learning
- Academic Earth
- BBC Language



Tech for Health

Your health is one of your most valuable assets and technological developers are fast at work creating devices to help you in your journey as you age. This is the future of healthcare.

Healthcare Trackers, Wearables, and Sensors



As the future of medicine and healthcare remains connected to the empowerment of patients, this is one of the primary areas technology can make life easier. There are many devices designed to make aging healthier and live better lives. Products like Fitbit, Freedom Guardian, and Lively Mobile are helping seniors live independently longer. Increasingly, seniors are turning to smart wearables, according to a 2015 study by the AARP. In it, they claimed 45% of adults over 50 reported motivation for healthier living after only a few weeks of wearing their device.

Wearable technology can also allow family members and caregivers greater peace of mind. Some wearables are specially developed for seniors and include features like emergency monitoring and fall detection. This means those living independently still have greater freedoms and flexibility to live their normal lives despite medical issues or a mild decline in health.

Medication Reminders

Keeping track of your medications can be a stressful chore. However, there are digital reminders to help you stay on top of your health requirements. From digital pill dispensers with alarms to medication trackers that notify caregivers if a medication has been taken, technology is helping seniors on a daily basis.

Doctor's Visits

Technology is even helping how you interact with your caregivers with things like Teledoc (see "Seniors in Rural Areas") and My Chart. My Chart allows patients to schedule visits and see test results all from the comfort of your computer.

Now that you know how technology can help you harness your future in retirement, start aging smarter today!



Life Enriching Communities owns and operates six senior living communities (CCRCs)...

CINCINNATI AREA

- Twin Towers, College Hill: 513-853-2000
- Twin Lakes, Montgomery: 513-247-1300

CLEVELAND AREA

- Concord Reserve, Westlake: 440-961-3700

COLUMBUS AREA

- Wesley Glen, Columbus: 614-888-7492
- Wesley Ridge, Reynoldsburg: 614-759-0023
- Wesley Woods, New Albany: 614-656-4100
- Wesley Hospice: 614-451-6700

For additional resources you can visit us online at: www.lec.org

Confident Living is a continuing care at home program offered by Life Enriching Communities (LEC) designed to help people navigate their options so they can live independently in their own homes.

- 513-719-3522



Life Enriching Communities is affiliated with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church and welcomes people of all faiths. We do not discriminate and we provide free assistance in your native language, if needed. Find our complete non-discrimination policy at www.LEC.org