The Commons Assistive Technology

Free/Inexpensive AT Alternatives

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Built-In Accessibility

This booklet provides an overview of some applications that you may find helpful when using your computer. It also includes a list of Chrome browser extensions, as well as downloadable software.

Windows and Mac operating systems come with a variety of built-in accessibility options that will allow you to personalize your computer, and may make using your computer a litter easier.

Windows

You can access the following options via the "Ease of Access Centre" in Windows' Control Panel:

- "Narrator" - screen reader/text to speech
- "Magnifier " – screen magnification
- Speech Recognition
- On-screen keyboard
- High Contrast mode
- Other features include: personalized mouse/cursor options and keyboard shortcuts, visual notifications for sounds, etc.

To see a comparison of accessibility features for Windows 8, Windows 7, and Windows Vista, as well as tutorials for activating these features, visit this website:
https://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/chartwindows.aspx

For more information on Windows accessibility, visit this website:
https://www.microsoft.com/enable/default.aspx

Mac

The following options are available on Mac operating systems:

- VoiceOver – screen reader; talks you through navigation
- Text to Speech – highlight text and hear it read out loud
- Switch Control – navigate your computer via onscreen keyboards and menus
- Word Completion – suggests words as you type in applications like TextEdit and Pages
- Zoom and High Contrast modes

For more information on accessibility features for Mac products (including iOS and Apple TV), please visit this website: http://www.apple.com/accessibility/mac/

Free & Inexpensive AT Alternatives

Text to speech
Balabolka

- Copy and paste text, or open files (including PDF) directly in program. Compatible with any voices currently installed on your computer (e.g., Microsoft Anna). Highlights text as it's being spoken. Can customize display colours. Can customize reading speed, and train program to pronounce words in specific ways
- Built-in word processor
- Save text as sound file (e.g. wav, mp4, etc.)
- Compatible with Windows OS

Natural Reader

- Reads text copied and pasted from clipboard. Wide range of voices available.
- Free downloadable version acts as floating toolbar. Allows you to listen to webpages, and customize speaker and speed.
- Paid for options offer additional features: text to audio files, word prediction, sync across multiple devices, etc.
- Available as download and web-based application; compatible with Mac and Windows OS

Ghost Reader

- Copy and paste text from any program and listen to it be read
- Allows you to customize voices and modify pronunciation; zoom and highlight words
- Convert text to audio files
- Cost: $24.99 (free trial available)
- Compatible with Mac OS

PowerTalk

- Free PowerPoint plugin; automatically speaks PowerPoint presentations
- Compatible with Windows OS

WordTalk

- Free Word plugin; reads Word documents. Highlights text as it's being read; includes a talking dictionary. Users can adjust colours, as well as voice and reading speech. Can save files as wav or mp3
- Compatible with Windows OS

Orato

- Reads text that has been copied to clipboard. Highlights words as they're being read

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- Compatible with Windows OS

Capti Narrator

- Allows you to upload documents from Dropbox, Google Drive, or a web browser and listen to it; save document in your playlist for future listening
- Adjust speech rate and voice; additional voices available for purchase
- Compatible with Windows OS

Rewordify

- Web-based application
- Replaces higher-level vocabulary with words that are easier to understand

Screen Readers
NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA)

- Screen reader; intended for users with visual impairments
- If using a braille display: can convert text to braille
- Compatible with Windows OS

Thunder

- Screen reader; intended for users with visual impairments
- Download to a USB to use on any computer
- Compatible with Windows OS

Screen Magnifiers
Desktop Zoom

- Zoom an area around the mouse, zoom a fixed window or zoom the entire desktop. Alter mouse views (e.g., enlarged mouse or crosshair). View screen in greyscale or invert colours.
- Compatible with Windows OS

Macnifier

- Displays magnified portion of screen in a separate window
- Compatible with Mac OS

Word Prediction

eType

- Allows users to type faster by auto-completing words as they type
- Uses multi-language dictionary; fully integrated with many programs and browsers (e.g., Word, Outlook, Twiter, etc.)
- Compatible with Windows OS

LetMeType

- Allows users to type faster by auto-completing words as they type
- Runs in background; compatible across programs
- Compatible with Windows OS

Typing Assistance

Click-n-type

- Keyboard alternative for users who cannot use a traditional keyboard
- Provides virtual keyboard with word prediction and completion capabilities; includes AutoClick and Scanning modes
- Compatible with Windows OS

Mind Mapping

Mind Meister

- Online mind mapping tool, compatible with Windows, Mac OS, and Linux
- Create mind maps that include icons, comments, links, media, and attachments; customize colours, themes, and font sizes
- Adapt mind maps into presentations
- "Basic" account allows you to create up to three maps; paid accounts begin at $6/month

XMind

- Create mind maps, business charts, and brainstorms; "Presentation Mode" allows you to turn your existing maps into PowerPoint-style presentations
- Export completed work to MS Office, PDFs, Evernote; share on social media; or save to XMind Cloud to access across devices
- Paid options with additional features also available (process range from $80-$100)
- Compatible with Windows, Mac OS, and Linux

Mind Maple

- Create mind maps that include notes, links, and attachments
- Features of lite version vary across platforms: Windows allows you to export to MS Office, Mac version allows you to export as PDF, etc.
- Pro version available for $4.99-$9.99
- Available as Windows, Mac OS, and iOS downloads

Popplet

- Web-based mind mapping tool
- Cost: free (account required)

Dictation
Dictation

- Web-based mini word processor with speech recognition
- Allows you to download dictations as TXT files
- Also available as a Chrome app

SoundNote

- Note taking + dictation app - record audio as you're taking notes
- When you click a word, the app will being playing at the corresponding time in audio
- Cost: $4.99 (also available as iPad app)

Note Organization
Evernote

- Web-based, cross-device application that allows you to create notes, to-do lists and reminders; save your notes, research, and projects all in one place!
- Free version provides 60MB of storage, and allows you to sync notes between 2 devices, clip web pages and images, search notes, and share notes. "Plus" and "Premium" accounts offer more functions, and range from $46.99-$89.99/year
- Syncs with Google Drive; also available as Android and iOS app

Time Management
Wunderlist

- Cross-platform application that allows you to create, organize, and share your lists. Get reminders and due dates, and collaborate with others on lists

- Compatible with Windows, Mac, Kindle, Chromebook
- Also available as Chrome, Firefox, and Safari apps

iStudiez Pro

- Organization app – great for staying on top of your schedule, homework, and due dates
- Keep track of grades and calculate your GPA
- Available as both Windows and Mac download
- Cost: $6.95

Research/Note Organization
Mendeley

- Allows you to manage your scholarly material. Search and sort your references, documents, and notes in one place, and on the go!
- Highlight, annotate, and add notes to PDFs
- Generate citations in the style of your choice. Compatible with MS Word, LibreOffice, and BibTex
- Available for Mac, Windows, Linux, and Android

Distraction-Free Writing/Web Browsing
Write Monkey

- Distraction free word processor with stripped down interface
- Compatible with Windows

Focus Writer

- Distraction free word processor with stripped down interface
- Supports TXT, RTF, and ODT
- Allows you to customize themes and sound effects. Supports multiple open documents and includes spell check feature
- Available for Windows, Mac, and Linux

Readability

- Converts any webpage into a distraction free, "clean" view – removes clutter, and allows you to store articles for later reading
- iOS and Android apps available

Google Drive/Chrome Accessibility

If you use Google Chrome as your primary Internet browser, there are a number of accessibility extensions that you can download

Screen Readers
Chrome Vox

- Screen reader; intended for users with visual impairments

Text-to-Speech
Select and Speak

- Read selected text in Chrome browser. Customize voice and speech options. Available in a variety of languages

Announcify

- Reads entire web pages (i.e., no need to select text first)

Speak it

- Reads selected text. Supports 12 languages

Read and Write

- Read and Write Gold tools (text-to-speech, text highlighting, word prediction, talking and picture dictionaries, etc.) available in Google browser
- Simplify and summarize text on websites
- Full version free for 30 days; after this, text to speech features remain free
- The Screenshot reader extension allows you to read text that is embedded in images or on websites that use flash, Google Slides, and inaccessible PDFs

Screen Magnification/Viewing
Zoomy

- Overrides default zoom for website and allows you to personalize per site zoom levels

AutoZoom

- Allows you to set and save the zoom level for particular sites

Chrome Daltonize!

- Intended for colour blind users – provides colour enhancement for users with various forms of colour blindness
- Exposes details in images that allow colour blind users to catch details they may have otherwise missed

Change Colors

- Lets you replace a webpage's existing styling (colors, fonts, etc.) to your own preferences

ezLinkPreview

- Browse more efficiently by previewing links without leaving your current tab
- Automatically finds all http links on a page; displays links in a draggable, resizable popup

High Contrast

- Allows you to toggle between Increased Contrast, Inverted Colour, and Inverted Grayscale colour schemes on web pages

BeeLine Reader

- Adds a colour gradient to text to guide your eyes from the end of one line to the beginning of the next
- Can customize colour schemes
- Uses Open Dyslexie Font
- Also available for download

Visor

- Allows you to dim/change colour cast of screen
- Horizontal focal point tracks your mouse, giving full focus to the content being read

Dictation

Note that Google Docs now comes with [voice recognition capabilities](#)

- ○ ***You can both type with your voice and use voice commands (e.g., "Select paragraph," "Go to the end of the line")***

Dictanote

- Word processor that allows you to dictate/edit sentences directly in browser
- Supports over 25 languages
- Access "Pro" version for $9.99/year

SpeechPad

- Basic word processor with text-to-speech and speech-to-text capabilities

Voice Search

- Allows you to search the internet via voice commands
- Automatically worked with Google, Wikipedia, and Youtube; user can add own search engines
- Integrates speech input buttons for text fields on all websites

Mind Mapping
MindMeister

- Open, view, and edit mind maps from Google Drive
- Create mind maps that include icons, comments, links, media, and attachments; customize colours, themes, and font sizes
- Collaborate with colleagues in real-time (includes live chat feature)

Lucidcharts Diagrams

- Create mind maps and diagrams that can be exported as PDFs, JPGs, and PNGs
- Customize colours, fonts, etc.; attach images, links, etc.
- Collaborate with colleagues in real-time
- Also available as a Google Chrome add-on and iOS app

Mindomo

- Create mind maps that can be customized, accessed offline, and exported as PDFs, PNGs, and more
- Allows for real-time collaboration; maps can be turned into presentations

Distraction-Free Writing/Web Browsing
Writer

- Distraction free word processor with stripped down interface
- Customize colours, font, and line spacing
- Export documents as TXT or PDF (upgrade to Pro to export to Google Docs, Dropbox, and Evernote)

TidyRead

- Converts any webpage into a distraction free, "clean" view – removes clutter and customize style and font

Cortexit

- Displays selected text one sentence at a time – allows for more focussed reading by decreasing clutter on page
- Provides text-to-speech capabilities

Readability

- Click "Read Now" to convert any webpage into a distraction free, "clean" view – removes clutter, and allows you to store articles for later reading
- Can send links directly to Kindle

Extensity

- Useful if you'll be using a lot of Google Chrome extensions. Tool for quickly enabling and disabling extensions, or quickly switching between extensions

OneTab

- Converts all open tabs into a single list. Saves up to 95% memory

Keyboard Navigation

- Allows you to browse web without needing to use a mouse

StayFocused

- Limits the amount of time you spend on time-wasting websites

Writing Support
Grammarly

- Checks your spelling and grammar as you type
- After registering your account, you will receive weekly emails with performance statistics on your writing

Co:Writer Universal

- Predicts your next word as you type
- Text-to-speech feature allows you to hear what you've typed
- Cost: $4.99/month

File Conversion

Snapverter

- Converts print documents and inaccessible digital files into PDFs

Readium

- View EPUB documents

Copyfish

- Allows you to extract text from images, videos, and PDFs

Note Taking

Evernote Web

- Web-based, cross-device application that allows you to create notes, to-do lists and reminders; save your notes, research, and projects all in one place!
- Chrome application allows you to insert documents saved to your Google Drive

Evernote Web Clipper

- "Clip" any part of a webpage (text, images, links, etc.) and save them to your Evernote account
- Access your research from any device

Mic Note

- Combines the functionality of a notepad and recorder – allows you to take notes while recording audio at the same time
- Save timestamps while you are typing for fast playback at specified positions