



AbilityNet

What is a screen reader?



This factsheet tells you about screen readers for people who are blind or visually impaired.

How to use this factsheet



We are **AbilityNet**.

We help disabled people to use technology.



Like computers, tablets and smartphones.



This is an **Easy Read** factsheet.

You may still need help to read it.
You can ask someone you know for help.



For more information you can phone or email us.



Phone 0800 048 7642

Email enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk



1. What this factsheet is about



This factsheet tells you about **screen readers**.



A **screen reader** helps people who are blind or who cannot see well to use



- computers
- websites



- smartphones and tablets.



This factsheet can help you choose the right screen reader.

2. What is a screen reader?



Screen readers are a type of **software**.



Software is what makes computers, tablets or smartphones do useful things.



For example, email is a type of **software**.



It lets you write and send messages on your computer, tablet or smartphone.

How screen readers work



A screen reader reads out loud what is on the screen of a computer, tablet or smartphone.



You can control screen readers

- by touching the screen



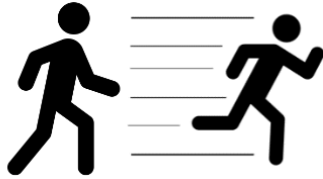
- by using a keyboard



- by using your voice.



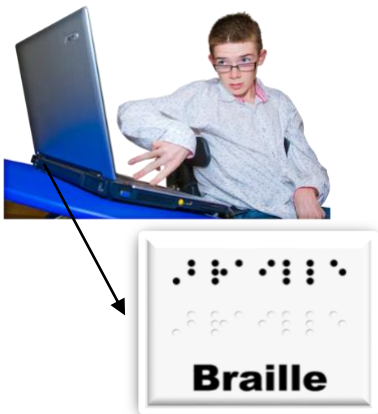
You can change the settings on the screen reader to make it work better for you.



For example, you can make it read slower or faster.



You can also change the language.

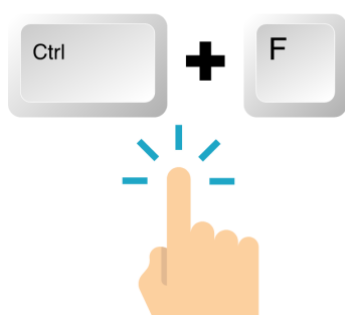


You can use some screen readers with a Braille display. So you can then read it as Braille.

Are screen readers easy to use?



When you start using screen readers you need to learn some **shortcut keys** or **touch gestures**.



A **shortcut key** is when you press two or more keys at the same time on the keyboard to work the screen reader.

For example, to go to the next word.



A **shortcut touch gesture** is when you touch the screen to work the screen reader.



For example, tap two fingers on the screen to stop or start reading.



You only need to learn a few **shortcuts** to use a screen reader.



But if you learn more shortcuts you can make the screen reader do more things.



It can take some time to learn these shortcuts.



Training can help you learn how to use a screen reader.

Different types of screen readers



Most new computers, tablets and smartphones come with screen reader software.



But there are lots of different types of screen readers. When you choose one you need to think about what you are using it for.

This is because some screen readers work better on different



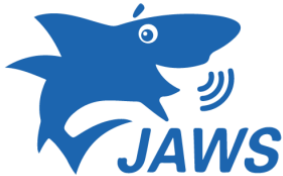
- computers
- smartphones
- **web browsers**
- software.



A **web browser** is the software you use to go online. Where you type the web address.

3. The main screen readers

JAWS for computers that use Windows



JAWS is a screen reader for computers that use Windows software.



It works best with these web browsers

- Chrome
- FireFox
- Internet Explorer

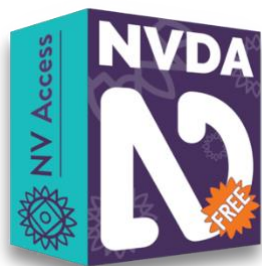


Lots of people use JAWS in offices and workplaces.



You have to pay for JAWS. But you can get try it out for free by going on the [JAWS website](#).

NVDA for computers that use Windows



NVDA is a screen reader for computers that use Windows software.



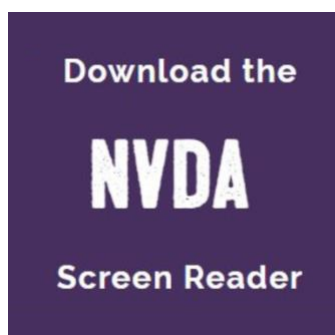
It works well with lots of web browsers.



Lots of people use NVDA.



It is free to use.



You can get NVDA on the [NVAccess website](#).

Narrator for computers that use Windows

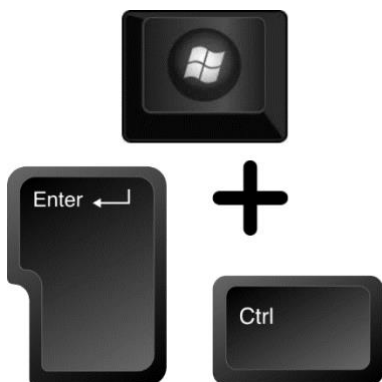


Narrator is the screen reader that comes with Windows software.



Narrator works well with

- Microsoft Office, like Word
- the web browser Edge.



To turn Narrator on and off, you can press the **Windows Logo key** and **Control** and **Enter** at the same time.



You can do training on the [Microsoft website](#).

VoiceOver for Apple devices



VoiceOver is the screen reader for Apple devices, like



- Mac computers
- iPads
- iPhones
- the Apple Watch
- Apple TV.

It works best with the **Safari web browser** which is on all Apple devices.



It also works well with lots of software and apps.



VoiceOver is already on your Apple device.



Settings

Accessibility



To find VoiceOver, go to **Settings** and tap on **Accessibility**.

TalkBack for Android smartphones and tablets



TalkBack is for Android smartphones and tablets.



It works well with apps and web browsers like Chrome.



TalkBack is very popular.
It is free to use.



TalkBack is already on most Android smartphones and tablets.

You might need to get TalkBack from the [Google Play Store](#).
This is where you get apps.



Settings

Accessibility



To turn on TalkBack, go to **Settings** and then tap **Accessibility**.

4. Other screen readers



There are many other screen readers.

For example,



- SuperNova



- System Access by Pneuma Solutions



- Thunder



- ChromeVox.

5. Where you can get more help

R N I B

You can get more information from the **Royal National Institute of Blind People**.



This is called **RNIB** for short.

The RNIB is a national charity that gives advice to people with a visual impairment.



They also have an online shop.



Website www.rnib.org.uk



Phone **0303 123 9999**



Email helpline@rnib.org.uk.

6. How we can help you

My Computer My Way



The **My Computer My Way** website explains how to make your computer, tablet and smartphone accessible.

Website mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk.

Advice and information



If you have any questions, you can contact us at AbilityNet. We are here to help you.



Phone **0800 048 7642**.



Email enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk.

Support with your computer or technology at home



AbilityNet volunteers can help you with your computer, laptop or smartphone.



If you need support at home, you can book an AbilityNet volunteer to visit you.



You do not have to pay for support at home from AbilityNet.

www.abilitynet.org.uk/at-home.