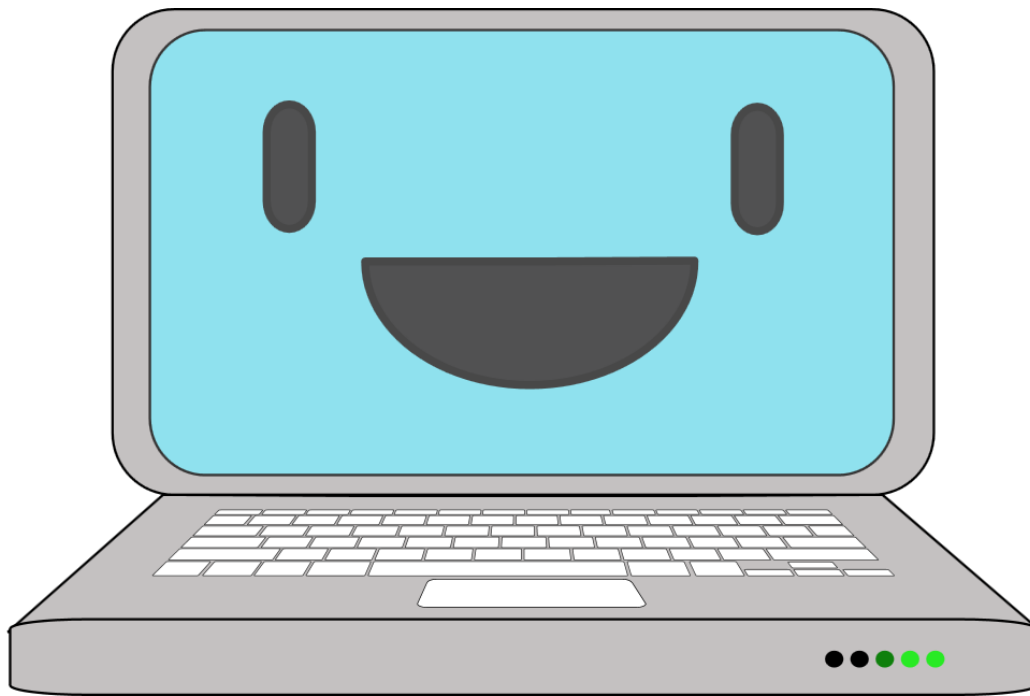# How text readers can make your web content more accessible

By Aurora Betony

This guide is for anyone who manages websites or blogs.

Summary

This guide considers:

1) Why web content in print is difficult for dyslexic people to access

2) How you can make your web content more visual

3) 3 ways web content can be accessed in audio format

    a) Human-read audio recording

    b) Computer-read audio recording

    c) Text reader

4) Text readers (Text to Speech technology)

    a) What are text readers?

    b) How do text readers help dyslexic people?

    c) Give your users information on text readers

    d) Install a text reader that reads directly from the webpage

5) How you can encourage all your users to try text readers

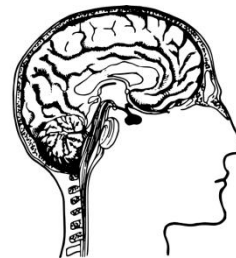How text readers can make your web content more accessible

1) Why web content in print is difficult for dyslexic people to access

All dyslexic people, to one extent or another, find reading difficult. This means it's difficult for dyslexic people to take in and remember information they have read. A lot of web content is presented in print format. In order to assimilate web content, dyslexic users need to engage with it in a way that takes account of their difficulties and uses their strengths.

2) How you can make your web content more visual

The more visual your website, the more accessible it will be for dyslexic people. Here are some ways you can make your website visual:
   a) 'Show' something in a video or screen shots, rather than explain it in words;
   b) Use symbols or pictures to illustrate your text;
   c) Use bullet points and diagrams; and
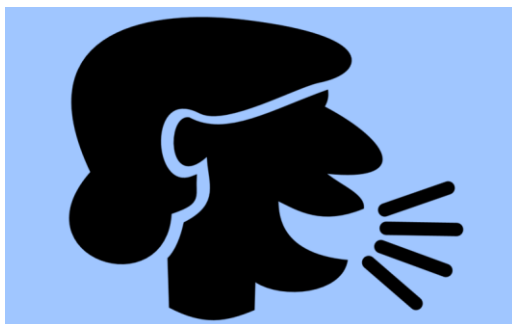   d) Use colour

3) 3 ways web content can be accessed in audio format

You can also make your web content more dyslexia-friendly by presenting it in audio format. For example, audio books are more accessible for me than print books. Here are 3 ways you can present web content in audio format:
   a) Create and upload **human-read audio** recordings of your content;
   b) Generate and upload **computer-read audio** recordings of your content; and
   c) Install a **text reader** on your website / blog

How text readers can make your web content more accessible

a) Human-read audio recordings: time-consuming, expensive and impractical

Of these 3 options, audio spoken by a human narrator is the one I find most accessible. However, if you were to make and upload audio recordings using a human reader of all your web content, this would be time consuming and costly. And if you made any edits to your print content, the audio version wouldn't match the print version.

b) Computer-read recordings: not intelligible enough and need ABL(s)

You can create an audio recording of web content using a text reader (more about text readers below). Computer-read recordings are helpful because you can listen to them while you are doing something else. Personally computer-read recordings don't work as well for me as human-read recordings or text readers. This is because computer-read recordings are too robotic for me to follow without written back-up of the content.

If you did offer computer-read recordings on your website / blog, you would need an Audio Broadcast Licence (ABL) for the computer voice(s) you used to generate the recordings. This is an annual cost, like a TV licence. By contrast, if a *user* wishes to generate a computer-read recording, they can do so without having an ABL, as long as they don't share the recording online.

c) Text reader

I think that a text reader is probably the best solution overall out of these 3 options for the reasons above. In addition, text readers are easy to acquire and use, and there are some free ones available.

4) Text readers

a) What are text readers?

How text readers can make your web content more accessible

A text reader is a software program that reads aloud the text of an electronic document or webpage using a synthetic voice. Text readers can be built into a website ('developer-based') or downloaded onto a device or USB stick by a user ('user-based').

b) How do text readers help dyslexic people?

I think of text readers as tools that help me engage with text. The beauty of text readers for dyslexic people is they let you listen to the text instead of read it in print. If I read something out loud, I have to concentrate so hard to decode the text that I can't listen to the words I'm reading. But I *can* listen if someone - or something - else reads it to me. And that is exactly what a text reader does.

Text readers let you control the audio and select whichever text you want to listen to. They work via a toolbar which has functions on it, such as play, stop, pause etc., as on a DVD player.

c) Give your users information on text readers

It's easy and quick to install a text reader on a website or blog. Whether you install a text reader or not though, you can signpost users to information on text readers so that they can download one. This means if you *don't* provide text reader, your users will still have one; and if you *do* provide one, they will have alternatives. It is easy and quick for a user to download a text reader and use it. But dyslexic users won't necessarily know about text readers. So I have written a separate guide for users which you can signpost them to: 'Using text readers to access websites and blogs'.

d) Install a text reader that reads directly from the webpage

I use a free text reader to listen to web content that is installed on my device. I find it very helpful. I prefer it to other text readers for the following reasons:

How text readers can make your web content more accessible

1) I don't have to copy and paste text, just select it.
2) It reads out the text directly from the webpage rather than from a program window.
3) The toolbar is compact so doesn't clutter up my screen

However, I find a developer-based text reader called ReadSpeaker better than my text reader, for the following reasons:

1) I don't have to select text in order to play the audio - I just click on play
2) The toolbar is anchored in a space of its own on the webpage, rather than floating. This means I don't have to find a space for it on my screen, and it doesn't get in the way. If I want to jump around the webpage, all I do is select the text I want to listen to and another toolbar appears for it. So I don't have to move the toolbar at all.
3) I can change the appearance of the highlighting and text. This can be crucial for dyslexic people[1].

4 other developer-based programs which read text directly from the webpage are ATbar (free), ReciteMe (free 30-day trial), Browsealoud (30-day trial) and Babelbar.

5) How you can encourage all your users to try text readers

Many dyslexic people don't realise they are dyslexic. And many people who *aren't* dyslexic will benefit from engaging with your web content in audio format. For these reasons, I recommend that when you give information on your website / blog about text readers, you use wording that *includes* dyslexia and other print disabilities, but also includes everyone else too. That way, you will be inviting *all* your users to use audio format, and giving them encouragement and support to do so. To quote Richard McKenna, Director of Inclusive Employers, "If you have an inclusive website, you will get more customers coming to you".[2]

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[1] Visual stress is a condition that makes print 'swim', blur, or move about on the page. Many dyslexic people have visual stress (and other visual conditions) in addition to dyslexia. There are also many people who are not dyslexic who have visual stress. Changing the background / colour of the page, or using an overlay when reading off paper, can stop the text moving about. Some people use tinted spectacles.
[2] In the video 'Recite Me - The web experience your customers want'

How text readers can make your web content more accessible

To find out more

Text readers

1) CALL Scotland webpage summary: [Text-to-Speech](#)

2) The Codpast introductory video: [A Beginners Guide to Text-to-speech Software](#)

3) Blog post: [Using Text to Speech Utilities to Read Web Pages](#) by Allan Wilson. Posted July 2009

4) CALL Scotland guide: '[Reading the Web: Using a Web Browser with Text-to-Speech Support for People with Reading Difficulties](#)'

5) CALL Scotland webpage summary: [Text to Speech on iPads and iPhones](#)

6) Blog post: [MiniReader No More](#) by Paul Nisbet. Posted July 2015

7) 5-part blog series: '[Make your computer speak](#)' by Dominik Lukes. Posted summer 2014

8) Article: '[Making your computer speak using text to speech](#)' by Lynette Penney. Posted Oct 2012

9) [Webpage on Audio Broadcast Licence](#)

10) Demo videos of 2 free user-based text readers:
[Orato](#);
Balabolka: [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#)

Blog post and infograph: [ICT to Support Learners with Dyslexia](#) by Craig Mill. Posted Jan. 2017

Blog post and guide: [Writing for a dyslexic audience](#) by Aurora Betony. Posted Nov. 2016

Guide 'Using text readers to access websites and blogs' by Aurora Betony. Written Jan. 2017.

Accessibility

1) [British Dyslexia Association webpage](#)

2) [Include Us All resources library](#) (huge range of resources on inclusive communication)

How text readers can make your web content more accessible

Dyslexia

1) [Dyslexia Scotland's information leaflets](#)
2) [British Dyslexia Association website](#)
3) [Dyslexia Action's website](#)

Websites where you can find public domain images for your website / blog

[Our top 5 sites for sourcing great images and photos on your iPad](#) by Dan Kemp

Image credits

All the images used in this guide are public domain and were sourced from https://openclipart.org.

Embedded links

The hyperlinks embedded in this guide are listed below for reference.

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1) ReadSpeaker - http://www.readspeaker.com
2) ATbar - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNRXrhn8mvc
3) ReciteMe - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-87IAKx5dk
4) Browsealoud - https://www.texthelp.com/en-us/products/browsealoud
5) Babelbar - http://babelbar.com/index.html
6) (In footnote 2) Recite Me - The web experience your customers want - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-87IAKx5dk

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1) Text-to-Speech - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech
2) A Beginners Guide to Text-to-speech Software - http://thecodpast.org/2016/04/a-beginners-guide-to-text-to-speech
3) Using Text to Speech Utilities to Read Web Pages - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/using-text-to-speech-utilities-to-read-web-pages
4) Reading the Web: Using a Web Browser with Text-to-Speech Support for People with Reading Difficulties - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/quick-guides/reading-and-

writing

5) Text to Speech on iPads and iPhones - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/text-to-speech-ipad

6) MiniReader No More - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/Blog/MiniReader-no-more

7) Make your computer speak - http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/news/tech-thursday-make-your-computer-speak-part-1-getting-started

8) Making your computer speak using text to speech - http://www.iansyst.co.uk/articles/article/articles/2012/10/18/making-your-computer-speak-using-text-to-speech

9) Webpage on Audio Broadcast Licence - https://www.cereproc.com/en/storeabl?page=2

10) Orato - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVFO2TpKNjI

11) Balabolka - Part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf6lk_3R29o

12) Part 2 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzJGXMAKXPk

13) ICT to Support Learners with Dyslexia - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/ict-to-support-learners-with-dyslexia

14) Writing for a dyslexic audience - http://includeusall.org.uk/writing-for-a-dyslexic-audience

15) British Dyslexia Association webpage - https://bdatech.org/accessibility

16) Include Us All resources library - http://includeusall.org.uk/resources

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1) Dyslexia Scotland's information leaflets - http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-leaflets

2) British Dyslexia Association website - http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

3) Dyslexia Action's website - http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

4) Our top 5 sites for sourcing great images and photos on your iPad - http://bookcreator.com/blog/2015/12/the-top-5-sources-for-images-and-photos-on-your-ipad

January 2017