Using text readers to access websites and blogs

By Aurora Betony with Appendix by CALL Scotland

This guide is for anyone who finds reading print difficult and wants to access web content. It is structured in 3 sections:

1) Information on text readers

    a) My experience of text readers

    b) What text readers are

    c) How you make text readers work: via a toolbar

    d) How text readers read: directly from a webpage or in a window

    e) Functions text readers can offer

    f) Text readers can either be server-based (built into website) or user-based (downloaded by user onto device or USB stick)

    g) 10 user-based text readers

    h) How to set your device to open your text reader when you switch it on

2) Appendix - which text readers can use the Scottish Voice

3) Links to further information

1) Information on text readers

a) My experience of text readers
   - If I can use text readers so can you!
   I find it really difficult to learn new technology. But I am also dyslexic and love books and finding things out. So there is a very strong motivation for me to use anything that will help me access written material. We live in an age where computer technology can help dyslexic people enormously. I have been using text readers for a few years now. One of the things they help me do is access blog posts and webpages. If you haven't used text readers for web content yet, I really recommend you try them. Now that I've got into the habit of using them, I find that I use them like any other tool.

b) What text readers are
   Text readers are computer programs that read electronic text aloud using a computer voice. They are also called 'Text to Speech' technology.

c) How you make text readers work: via a toolbar
   Text readers work via a toolbar which has the functions on it, such as play, stop etc., as on a DVD player. Some toolbars 'float' - you can move them around the screen to wherever you wish. Others are fixed at one point.

d) How text readers read: directly from a webpage or in a window
   Text readers read out text either directly from the webpage or in a program Window or clipboard. One that does both is Natural Reader. With a text reader that uses a program Window or clipboard you have to select, copy and paste the text before you can listen to it. Whereas with a text reader that reads directly from the webpage, you only have to select the text and click on play. I much prefer text readers that read directly from the webpage because there are fewer steps involved, and I can see the webpage.

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e) Functions text readers can offer

Text readers vary in which functions they offer. Here are 2 examples:

1. Some text readers let you **save web content as audio files**. This means you can listen to a blog post or webpage when you're doing something else.
2. Some text readers let you **change the appearance** of the text and background.

f) Text readers can either be server-based (built into website) or user-based (downloaded by user onto device or USB stick)

Text readers can be 'server-based' i.e. built into a website or blog; or 'user-based' i.e. downloaded onto your device or a USB stick. Here are 3 examples of websites / blogs which have text readers built into them:

1. [Self Management Network Scotland blog](#) (ReadSpeaker)
2. [Dyslexia Scotland website](#) (Recite Me)
3. [Beating Dyslexia website](#) (Roktalk now called babelbar)

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g) 10 user-based text readers

If you want to listen to web content on a website or blog that doesn't have a built-in text reader, you can easily download a user-based text reader and use it. Here's some information on 10 user-based text readers.

5 free text readers
1. Natural Reader
   - Works in its own program Window or **directly from the webpage**.
   - Saves text to **MP3**
   - Demo of Natural Reader reading directly from the webpage using a compact toolbar called 'miniboard'

2. Orato
   - Works in a clipboard
   - Doesn't have to be installed on a device - can be carried round on a **USB stick**
   - Demo of whole program

3. Balabolka
   - Works in its own program Window
   - Saves text to **MP3**
   - Demo of Balabolka:
     Part 1: Balabolka: an introduction and overview
     Part 2: Balabolka: text to speech and saving text to MP3

4. ATBar
   - Works **directly from the webpage**
   - Doesn't have to be installed on a device - can be carried round on a **USB stick**
   - Demo

5. Read&Write using Windows 10 with the Microsoft Edge browser
   - Has a picture dictionary

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5 paid-for text readers

1. Read&Write
   - Reads text **directly from the webpage**
   - Review
   - 30-day trial

2. Penfriend
   - Reads text from a clipboard
   - Can speak in Scottish Gaelic as well as English and several other languages
   - Demonstration webinar

3. ClaroRead
   - Review

4. The Google Chrome Browser and the Clarospeak extension
   - Uses the 'native' or default voice on your device. So if you have the Scottish Voice installed, it will default to it.

5. Text Aloud
   - Introductory video

h) How to set your device to open your text reader when you switch it on
If you have a text reader installed on your device, I recommend setting your device so that when you switch it on, your text reader automatically opens. This is how to do that on Windows:

1. Open up Start > All Programs, and search through the menu for the program you want to start at boot. Right-click on it and select "Copy".

2. Find the Startup folder in All Programs and right click on it. Select "Open", and it'll open up in Windows Explorer.

3. Right click anywhere inside that window and select "Paste".

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2) Appendix

Image used with permission from CALL Scotland, The University of Edinburgh

Which text readers can use the Scottish Voice?

Information provided by CALL Scotland 12 January 2017

The question above isn't so much to do with the *individual application / program* (e.g. Orato), but with the *operating system* (e.g. Windows 10).

Windows or Mac operating systems

Almost any text reader for Windows or the Mac can use the Scottish Voice.

On an iPad

Only ClaroPDF can use the Scottish Voice (Heather).

Android

Any Android text reader can use the Scottish Voice. But the 'standard' apps Claro, Co:Writer, NaturalReader, etc. aren't available for Android.

Chrome
The Scottish Voice is not available for Chromebooks. But if you are running Chrome on a PC with the Scottish Voice, most Chrome apps will be able to access it.

The table below summarises this information.

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Key

<mark>Yes</mark> means the app is available for the operating system and can use the Scottish Voice.

<mark>No</mark> means the app is available for the operating system, but it can't use the Voice.

N/a means the app is not available for the operating system.

App / Program	Windows 10	Mac OS	iPad	Android	Chromebook
Orato	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Balabolka	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ClaroRead	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a
ClaroSpeak	n/a	Yes	No	n/a	No
ClaroPDF	n/a	n/a	Yes (Heather)	n/a	n/a
Co:Writer	Yes	Yes	No	n/a	No
Penfriend	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
AT-Bar	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NaturalReader	Yes	Yes	No	n/a	No
TTS Reader	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a
Easy Text to Speech	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a

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3) Links / further information

User-based text readers

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

2) 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) Guide: '[Reading the Web: Using a Web Browser with Text-to-Speech Support for People with Reading Difficulties](#)' by CALL Scotland. Available as a free download.

5) 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

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

Server-based text readers
'How text readers can make your web content more accessible' by Aurora Betony. Written Jan. 2017.

Image credits
Except for the Scottish Voice logo on page 6, all the images used in this guide are public domain and were sourced from https://openclipart.org.

Hyperlinks

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

Page 3

1) Self Management Network Scotland blog
   http://smns.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog

2) Dyslexia Scotland website
   http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

3) Beating Dyslexia website
   http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

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1) Natural Reader
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/naturalreader
   Demo - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HmGBKPmEc0

2) Orato
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/orato
   Demo - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVFO2TpKNjI

3) Balabolka
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/balabolka
   Demo: Part 1 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf6lk_3R29o
               Part 2 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzJGXMAKXPk

4) ATBar
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/atbar-text-to-speech-software-for-windows
   Demo - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNRXrhn8mvc

5) Read&Write using Windows 10 with the Microsoft Edge browser
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/readwrite-text-to-speech-for-microsoft-edge

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1) Read&Write
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/professional-learning/webinars/WEB68
   Review - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxUwQMm_Lmw
   Trial - https://www.texthelp.com/en-gb/products/read-and-write-family

2) Penfriend
   http://www.penfriend.biz/screen-reading.html
   Demonstration webinar
   http://www.callscotland.org.uk/professional-learning/webinars/WEB80

3) ClaroRead
   https://www.clarosoftware.com
   Review
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLGf5SXvClY&list=PLK0s8y6Ttx7HKgx8MOrrEoAJAqhNkey-E&index=8

4) The Google Chrome Browser and the Clarospeak extension
   https://chrome.google.com/webstore/unsupported/fblbeibikalffoohjpiojmpmmndpkeii?utm_source=chrome-app-launcher-info-dialog

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5) Text Aloud
http://nextup.com
Introductory video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzVMECAYRn4#t=11

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1) The Scottish Voice
http://www.thescottishvoice.org.uk/home

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1) CALL Scotland webpage summary on Text-to-Speech
http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech

2) Video - http://thecodpast.org/2016/04/a-beginners-guide-to-text-to-speech

3) Blog post - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/using-text-to-speech-utilities-to-read-web-pages

4) Guide - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/quick-guides/reading-and-writing

5) Webpage summary - http://www.callscotland.org.uk/information/text-to-speech/text-to-speech-ipad

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

7) 5-part blog series - http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/news/tech-thursday-make-your-computer-speak-part-1-getting-started

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

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

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