Screen Readers

What is it for?

Screen readers are pieces of software that announce content audibly. This allows a computer to read text, images, icons, and much more. Some screen readers are available for free, either pre-installed as part of your operating system or available for download from websites. Screen readers are used if someone does not have enough vision to be able to view content from a screen.

Screen readers are impactful to everyone, but especially for the following people:

- People with visual impairments
- People with learning difficulties
- People with cognitive disabilities
- Non-native speakers
- People who prefer to listen to content instead of reading it visually

How to support it

Most devices come with a screen reader installed as standard, so you can test your own pages: VoiceOver on Mac and iPhone, Narrator on Windows, and TalkBack on most Android devices.

When testing, check that:

- Decorative images and icons aren't read out
- All images are understandable using the alt text, without needing to look at the page
- The order of the page makes sense
- Everything on the page is fully functional using a screen reader
- There is a skip link that lets keyboard users, including screen reader users, skip the header navigation

Useful links

- An Introduction to Screen Readers
- RNIB: Screen reading software