

Free Assistive Technology for People with Learning Disabilities

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Introduction

It is said that 10 to 15 percent of the population has a learning disability. With such a high number of students needing additional support, it can become very costly to provide assistive technology to them. This workshop demonstrates that assistive technology doesn't have to break the bank. There are several software companies that make some of their programs available free of charge. The software covered in this workshop is completely free and without limitations although it is recommended that everyone carefully read the user agreements that are presented during installation.

Downloading Tips

CNET's Download.com is one of the safest freeware repositories on the web. All of the programs available on that website are tested and are spyware and virus free. Most of the software demonstrated in this workshop was found on that website. When downloading from other websites, scan all incoming files for potential threats with an antivirus to ensure the files are safe to run.

Reading Software

Free NaturalReader 7

http://www.download.com/Free-NaturalReader/3000-2169_4-10197795.html?tag=mncol

NaturalReader software is a professional text to speech program that converts any text into spoken words. Free NaturalReader lets you listen to text instead of reading on screen. You can have your computer speak any text aloud in a clear, natural sounding human voice. Free NaturalReader is never been so easy to use a text-to-speech program. As long as the software is running, just press control plus F9, and you can have the computer speak any selected text on the computer screen. You can choose to copy and paste text to the reading area of the software, or more conveniently, with the add-in toolbars in the Internet Explorer, Microsoft Office Word, PowerPoint and Outlook programs, you can listen to any online news, web information, Word documents, Presentation files, and e-mails without copy and paste.

Requirements: Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

ReadPlease 2003

http://www.download.com/ReadPlease-2003/3000-7239_4-10030557.html?tag=mncol

ReadPlease 2003 is a text-to-speech application designed to give your computer a human-sounding voice so it can read arbitrary text to you, from Web pages, e-mail, or the Clipboard. Through file-type association, the program can read any text file or Rich Text Format file directly from the Internet.

Requirements: Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

Speakonia

http://www.download.com/Speakonia/3000-7239_4-10125328.html?tag=mncol;pop&cdlPid=10125329

Speakonia is a Text-To-Speech Program which is controlled through a graphical user interface (Similar to Notepad). Speakonia reads aloud any given text. The reading can be paused, resumed and can be exported to a wave file. Speakonia is able to fetch web pages through an internal http interface and read them aloud for you. You can have your mails read to you using the 'Clipboard Reading' feature.

Requirements: Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

Mozilla Firefox with CLiCk speak extension

<http://www.download.com/mozilla-firefox/?tag=mncol>

<http://clickspeak.clcworld.net/downloads.html>

CLiCk, Speak is an open source, freely available extension for the Firefox web browser. It is part of the CLC-4-TTS Suite of products, it features a mouse driven interface, and it reads web pages - hence its name. CLiCk, Speak is designed for sighted users who want text-to-speech functionality. It doesn't identify elements or announce events - two features that are very important for visually impaired users but very annoying for sighted users. It also has a simplified, mouse driven interface that is designed to be easy for users familiar with point-and-click graphical user interfaces. CLiCk, Speak works on Windows, Macintosh, and Linux. **Requirements: Windows 2000/XP/Vista**

Scanning and OCR

SimpleOCR

http://www.download.com/SimpleOCR/3000-2192_4-86160.html?tag=mncol

Convert your scanned images to text files or Word documents with SimpleOCR--the only OCR (Optical Character Recognition) application that is completely free. SimpleOCR is also a royalty-free developer toolkit (aka SDK or API) that you may use to add OCR to your custom software application. SimpleOCR features include TWAIN scanning, ability to manually specify text and image zones, English, French and Dutch dictionaries, interactive correction with suggestions from dictionary, output to plain text or RTF (MS Word) formats and more. It provides all of the most commonly used OCR features and competitive recognition rates for many types of documents. If you just need to convert a few documents to text to save retyping, SimpleOCR will save you hours of time without the \$75-\$700 cost. Developers can use the SimpleOCR API to add OCR capabilities to their custom software. If your application deals with document images, SimpleOCR will let you add full-text searching or automate the indexing process with zone OCR.

Requirements: Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

Organization and Planning

FreeMind

http://www.download.com/FreeMind/3000-2051_4-10076598.html?tag=mncol

FreeMind is intended for editing Mind maps, XML/HTML documents, and directory trees. In future, even network-structures will be supported such as Topic Maps (ISO). All this data is represented to the user as a Mind map. This is achieved with a modular design, which makes it possible to easily write modules,

only designing the model of the problem (the data structure), without caring for the visual representation at all. Currently a Mind Mapping and a File Mode are implemented. Version 0.8.1 is a bug-fixing release. **Requirements: Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista, Java RE**

Dia

http://www.download.com/Dia/3000-2075_4-10833704.html?tag=mncol

Dia is open-source visual-editing software that can be used to draw many different kinds of diagrams. It currently has special objects to help draw entity relationship diagrams, UML diagrams, flowcharts, network diagrams, and many other diagrams. It is also possible to add support for new shapes by writing simple XML files, using a subset of SVG to draw the shape. It can load and save diagrams to a custom XML format (gzipped by default, to save space), can export diagrams to a number of formats, including EPS, SVG, XFIG, WMF and PNG, and can print diagrams (including ones that span multiple pages).

Requirements: Windows 2000/XP/Vista

Rainlendar Lite

http://www.download.com/Rainlendar-Lite/3000-2124_4-10623256.html?tag=mncol

Rainlendar is a feature rich calendar application that is easy to use and doesn't take much space on your desktop. The appearance can be customized with skins and it has been localized to many languages. Version 2.4 adds new features and fixes some bugs. **Requirements: Windows, Mac OS, Linux**

Writing and Editing

WordWeb

http://www.download.com/WordWeb/3000-2279_4-10003201.html?tag=mncol

This thesaurus/dictionary can be used to look up words from almost any program. In addition to displaying sense definitions and synonyms, WordWeb can find sets of related words. The database has more than 150,000 root words and 120,000 synonym sets, many proper nouns, pronunciations, and usage tags. WordWeb works off line, but when online you can also quickly view Web references such as the Wikipedia encyclopedia. Version 5.52 has minor updates and compatibility fixes. **Requirements: Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista**

OpenOffice.org

http://www.download.com/OpenOffice-org-Windows-/3000-2064_4-10263109.html?tag=mncol

OpenOffice.org is both an open-source product and a project. The product is a multiplatform office productivity suite. It includes desktop applications such as a word processor, a spreadsheet program, a presentation manager, and a drawing program, with a user interface and feature set similar to those of other office suites. OpenOffice.org also works transparently with a variety of file formats, including those of Microsoft Office. Localizations of OpenOffice.org are available in 27 languages, with more being

constantly added by the community. OpenOffice.org runs on Solaris, Linux (including PPC Linux), and Windows. Written in C++ and with documented APIs licensed under the LGPL and SISSL open-source protocols, OpenOffice.org allows any knowledgeable developer to benefit from the source.

Requirements: Windows 2000/XP/Vista, Mac OS, Linux, Solaris, Java RE

Global Spell Check

http://www.download.com/GlobalSpellChecker/3000-2079_4-10443586.html?tag=mncol

GlobalSpellChecker is a tool for checking spelling or meaning of words from any application using Microsoft Word. It displays the meaning or spelling suggestion in a non-disturbing way so that you do not have to shift from the application you are working. You can copy the word to be checked to Clipboard by pressing Ctrl+C and invoke GlobalSpellChecker using hotkey Ctrl+Alt+S. **Requirements:**

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

Ease of Access

Virtual Magnifying Glass

http://portableapps.com/apps/accessibility/virtual_magnifying_glass_portable

Virtual Magnifying Glass Portable is the handy Virtual Magnifying Glass utility packaged in PortableApps.com Format so you can easily use a screen magnifier on any PC you use. **Requirements:**

Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista

Click n' Type with Word Prediction

<http://cnt.lakefolks.com/#Download>

Click-N-Type is an on-screen virtual keyboard designed for anyone with a disability that prevents him or her from typing on a physical computer keyboard. As long as the physically challenged person can control a mouse, trackball, touch screen or other pointing device, this software keyboard allows you to send keystrokes to virtually any Windows application or DOS application that can run within a window. The Click-N-Type Virtual Keyboard is a 32 bit application that requires Windows

95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/Vista or later.

Word Prediction installation:

If you want to use English Word Prediction and Completion, download the [Words.exe](#) installation program and run it. Allow it to extract its contents to the folder Click-N-Type is in. If you accepted the default location when installing the Click-N-Type Virtual Keyboard, this simply means clicking the "Setup" and "Install" buttons. **Requirements: Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista**

Speech Recognition (requires Windows Vista)

Speech Recognition in Windows Vista empowers you to interact with your computer by voice, significantly reducing the use of a mouse and keyboard, while maintaining or increasing your overall productivity. Speech Recognition is particularly useful for people who have difficulty with dexterity or

have limited use of their hands and arms, because it reduces or eliminates their need for a mouse and a keyboard while enabling them to maintain or increase their productivity. With Speech Recognition, you can dictate documents and e-mail, fill out forms on the web, and command applications and the operating system by saying what you see.