

# Accessibility



## Key Points

- Accessibility features make it easier for everyone to use technology and to personalize their computers to meet their needs and preferences.
- For many people, accessibility features are what make computer use possible.
- Microsoft is committed to developing innovative accessibility solutions through four key areas of focus: product accessibility, leadership and awareness, innovation, and collaboration.
- Policymakers can support accessibility by enacting policies that promote people-centric design; pointing to voluntary, technology-neutral industry standards; and allowing the marketplace to determine the best balance of built-in features, scalable services, and specialized third-party technologies.

## BACKGROUND

As technology becomes increasingly important in people's day-to-day lives—for work, commerce, and communication—it is vital that everyone, regardless of ability or age, be able to enjoy the benefits of the digital world. Accessible technology enables individuals to personalize the settings on their computers and other devices to make them easier to use.

For many people with physical or cognitive impairments, accessibility features are what make computer use possible. For example, adjustable display settings and text-to-speech features benefit people with low vision. Hands-free technology benefits people with mobility impairments who have difficulty using a keyboard or a mouse. Simplified visual displays and picture-to-speech features can make computer use easier for people with cognitive impairments.

Accessible technology is also helpful to individuals who want to customize their computing experience to address situational needs, such as a noisy environment or bright sunlight.

In addition to accessibility options that let people personalize their computer settings, accessible technologies also include assistive products such as screen readers and specialty keyboards.

## MICROSOFT APPROACH

Microsoft is committed to developing innovative accessibility solutions through four key areas of focus: product accessibility, leadership and awareness, innovation, and collaboration.

- **Products.** Many Microsoft products have built-in accessibility and personalization options. These products include:
  - » **Windows 8**, which works on touch-only devices and offers touch-compatible updates to accessibility features such as Narrator and Magnifier. The Windows 8 Ease of Access Center helps individuals manage an array of accessibility options.
  - » **Office 2013**, which provides integration with Windows 8 accessibility features and offers other accessibility features such as Read Mode in Word 2013 and the Accessibility Checker for documents, spreadsheets, and presentations.

» **Office 365**, which offers keyboard accessibility and high-contrast modes and supports display modes that make the Word Web App and PowerPoint Web App accessible to screen readers.

- **Leadership and awareness.** At Microsoft, our commitment to developing innovative accessibility solutions began more than two decades ago. The company offers information about its accessibility offerings—including demos, tutorials, and guides—on the [Microsoft Accessibility website](#) and in the [Microsoft Accessibility Update newsletter](#).
- **Innovation.** Microsoft promotes accessibility innovation in the development community and works with industry organizations to advance accessibility. The [Microsoft Accessibility Developer Center](#) provides tools and guidance for developing accessible applications and web content. Microsoft engages in accessibility-related research and development projects, including large-scale nationwide studies and targeted usability studies.
- **Collaboration.** Microsoft collaborates with a wide range of organizations to help raise awareness of the importance of accessible technology. Microsoft has built strong relationships with organizations such as [G3ict](#), [UNESCO](#), [Trust for the Americas](#), and national disability groups in many countries.

- **Ensure technology neutrality.** When governments consider accessibility standards, a guiding principle should be technology neutrality. Technology-neutral policies help promote innovation, help eliminate barriers to trade and market access, encourage enhanced competition, and assist in the prevention of bias in government procurement.
- **Promote digital inclusion.** Governments should create policies and programs that advance digital inclusion for people with disabilities and older adults—particularly in education, the workplace, and government services.
- **Focus on outcomes.** Governments should promote people-centric design by focusing on desired outcomes rather than specific features.
- **Support interoperability.** Interoperability is a key feature of Microsoft accessible technologies, and the company advocates public policies that allow for a variety of complementary ways to achieve it. Governments should allow technology vendors and purchasers to choose the solutions that best suit their needs.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Microsoft supports the work of governments and policymakers to:

- **Develop and harmonize global standards.** Market-led accessibility standards that are globally harmonized, along with procurement policies that reference them, are the foundation of a robust ecosystem of interoperable technologies.



## Helpful Resources

Microsoft Accessibility website  
[www.microsoft.com/enable](http://www.microsoft.com/enable)

Assistive Technology Industry Association  
[www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)