# Guide for People who have Language or Communication Disabilities

This guide describes accessibility features built into Windows and Microsoft Office, as well as different types of [assistive technology products](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/Accessibility/assistive-technology-partners) that are designed for individuals who have language or communication disabilities. Note that some sections of this guide may be useful to individuals with different types of disabilities like learning or vision.

Microsoft wants to give the best possible experience for all our customers. If you have a disability or have questions related to accessibility, please contact the [Microsoft Disability Answer Desk](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/disability-answer-desk) for technical assistance. The Disability Answer Desk support team is trained in using many popular assistive technologies and can offer assistance in English, Spanish, French, and American Sign Language. Additionally, there is a chat service which customers can use to communicate with a live agent through text. Please go to the Microsoft Disability Answer Desk site to find out the contact details for your region. If you are a government, commercial, or enterprise user, please contact the [enterprise Disability Answer Desk](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/enterprise-answer-desk).

At Microsoft, our mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more. We are committed to delivering great experiences to people with disabilities. If you have feedback to offer, or requests to make of us, we encourage you to let us know through the [Microsoft Accessibility Forum](https://microsoftaccessibility.uservoice.com/forums/307429-microsoft-accessibility-feedback).

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## Setup Accessibility Options in Windows

**Ease of Access** is a location where you can set up accessibility settings and programs available in Windows.

[Learn more about Ease of Access](https://support.microsoft.com/help/17180)

[Learn more about Windows 10 accessibility help](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/products/windows-accessibility?os=windows-10)

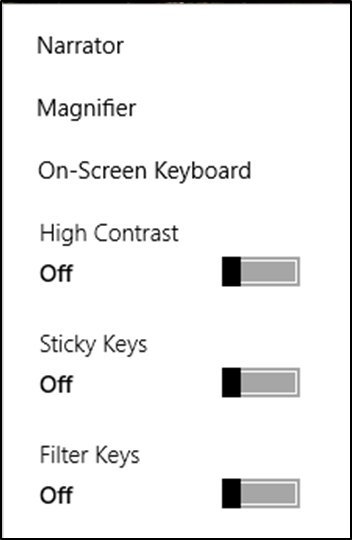
### Turn on Ease of Access options

With Windows you can access commonly used accessibility options right from the sign-in screen. Press the **Windows Logo Key** ""+ **U** to access the **Ease of Access** settings at the sign-in screen. On many keyboards, the **Windows Logo Key** "" is located on the bottom row of keys, to the left or right of the **Alt** key. There you can turn on or off **Narrator**, **Magnifier**, **On-Screen Keyboard**, **High Contrast**, **Sticky Keys**, or **Filter Keys**.

Microsoft also released a new feature on the Xbox One and Windows 10 PC’s called **Game Chat Transcription**. This allows for speech-to-text and text-to-speech capabilities. This is only available in some titles.

[Learn more about Game Chat Transcription.](https://blogs.msdn.microsoft.com/accessibility/2017/03/15/game-chat-transcription-feature-available-today-in-halo-wars-2-for-xbox-one-and-windows-10-pcs/)

*Caption 1: Ease of Access options on the Windows sign-in screen*



After you log on, you can also open **Ease of Access** by pressing the **Windows Logo Key** ""+ **U**.

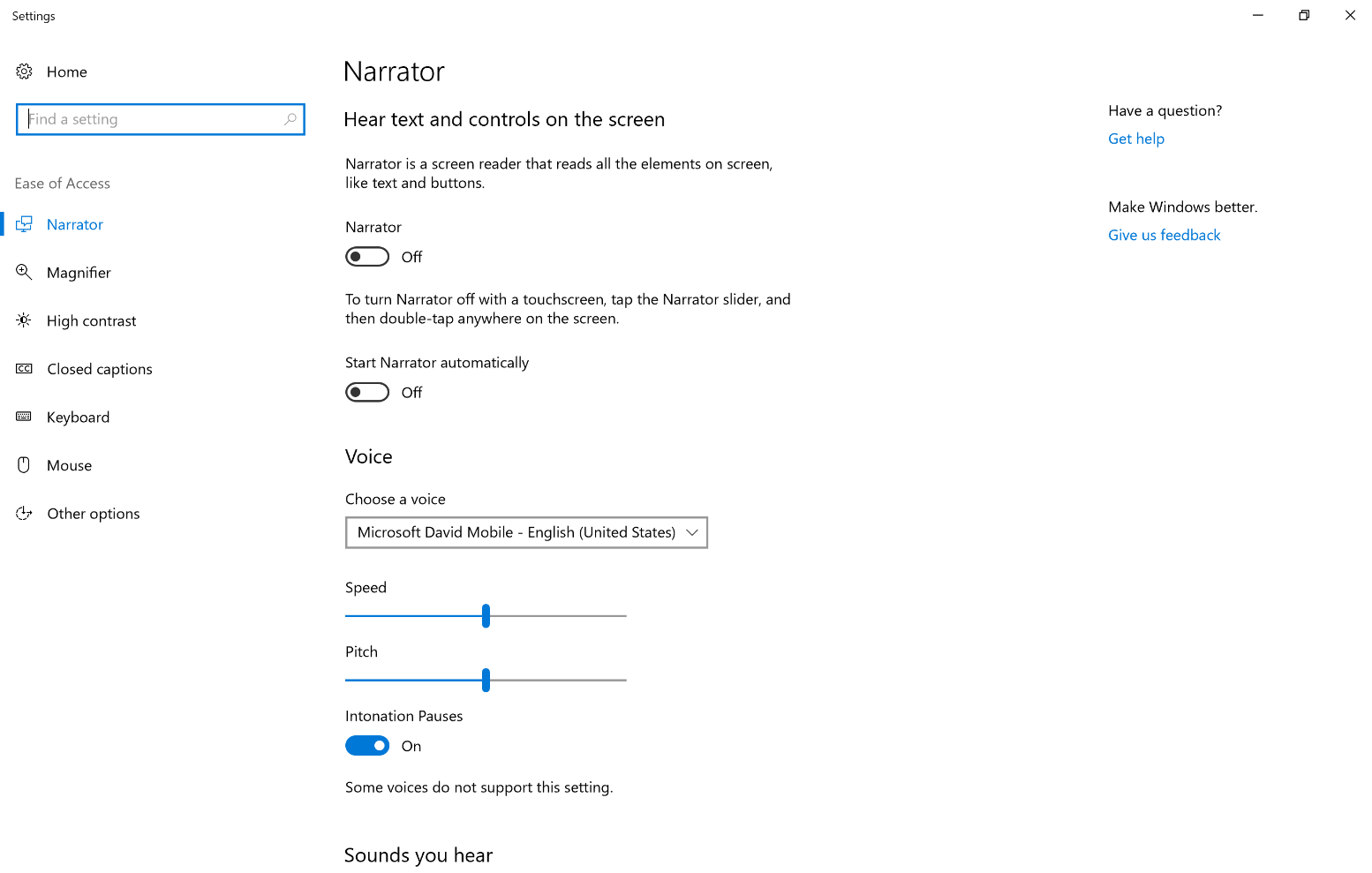
To open Ease of Access settings on a touch-enabled device, swipe in from the right edge of the screen and select **All Settings** > **Ease of Access**.

#### Hear text read aloud with Narrator

**Narrator** is the built-in screen reader that reads text on your screen aloud and describes events, such as notifications or calendar appointments. To start or stop **Narrator**, press **CTRL** + **Windows Logo Key**Windows logo key icon + **Enter**. On Windows Mobile devices, press **Windows Logo Key ""** + **Volume UP** key to toggle **Narrator** on/off.

[Learn more about Narrator](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/22798/windows-10-narrator-get-started)

*Caption 2: Ease of Access settings with Narrator section selected.*



### Use the On-Screen Keyboard to type

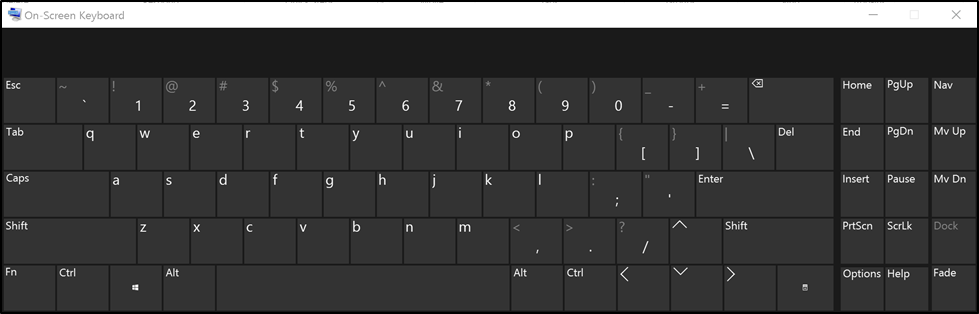
The On-Screen Keyboard is a visual keyboard that can be used by your mouse or another pointing device to select a single key or a group of keys. To open the keyboard, press the **Windows Logo Key** "" + **U** to open **Ease of Access**. Then Select **Keyboard** and turn on the **On-Screen Keyboard**. The keyboard will remain on the screen until it is closed or minimized.

#### Scan through keys

The On-Screen Keyboard allows you to automatically scan through different groups of keys and select them with a single interaction. You can also customize which key starts the scanning process or use alternative input devices.

1. Select the **Options** key.
2. Select **Scan through keys**.
3. Press the **Space Bar** to select the row. Then press the **Space Bar** again to choose the letter or symbol.

*Caption 3: The On-Screen Keyboard in Windows*

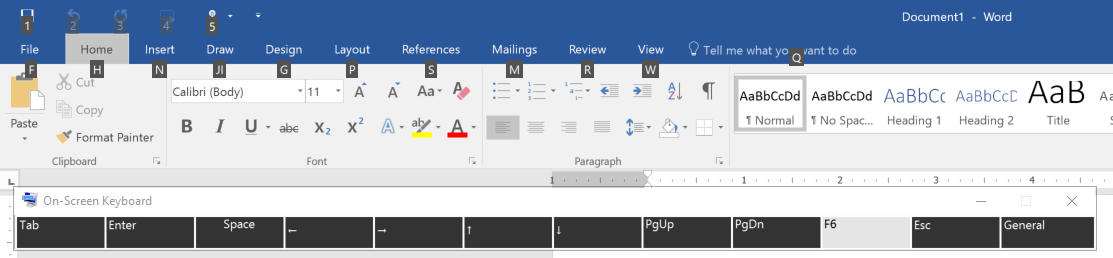
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#### Navigation Mode in the On-Screen Keyboard

Select the **Nav** key to get additional options for keyboard navigation. Here are a few ways you can use this mode:

* Select **PgUp** or **PgDown** to navigate through web pages.
* Select **Tab** to focus on interactive objects.
* Select **F6** to move the focus between feature areas including the Office Ribbon.

*Caption 4: Navigation Mode in Word 2016 moving focus between feature areas*



Select the **General** key to return to the On-Screen Keyboard.

[Learn more about the On-Screen Keyboard](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/10762)

### Use the Touch keyboard

The Touch keyboard has **Word Prediction**, which can be useful for interacting with a touch device.

#### Word Prediction

As you type on the keyboard suggested words will show up at the top of the keyboard. Use this tool to find the words you are looking for.

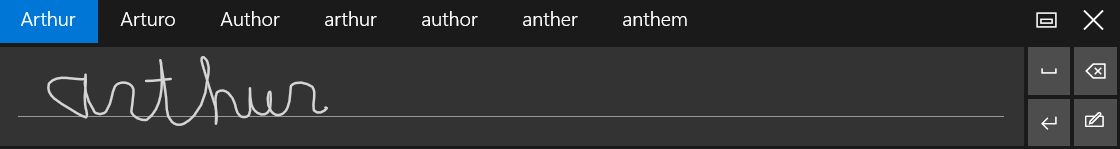
1. In the notification area select **Touch keyboard** "".

#### Handwriting

The **Handwriting** option lets you write with a stylus (such as a Surface Pen) or your finger. This way you can communicate non-verbally on your device instead of speaking.

1. In the notification area select **Touch keyboard** "".
2. Choose the **Handwriting** "" option.

*Caption 5: An example of the Handwriting feature on the Touch keyboard.*



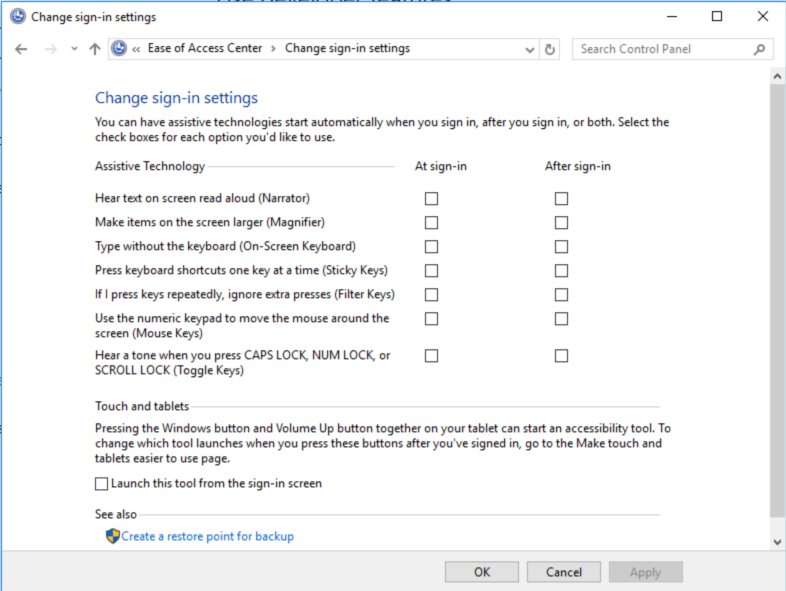
[Learn more about touch keyboard](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/instantanswers/cb27c627-aca5-db03-1f8f-f3833aab8757)

### Customize sign-in settings

You can make accessibility features start automatically when you sign in, and/or after you sign in by customizing your sign-in settings. To customize sign-in settings:

1. Press **Windows Logo Key** "" to open **Start**.
2. Type **Ease of Access Center** and select **Ease of Access Center** from the results.
3. Select **Change sign-in settings**.
4. Select the checkboxes for the options you would like to use and then select **OK**.

*Caption 6: A list of sign-in settings you can change in the Ease of Access Center.*



## Make Accessible Documents with Office

Built-in features in Microsoft Office can help you make your documents, spreadsheets, and presentations accessible to individuals who have speech disabilities. For more information on how to make your content accessible, please visit the [Office Accessibility Center](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Office-Accessibility-Center-ecab0fcf-d143-4fe8-a2ff-6cd596bddc6d?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US) and [Accessibility in Office 2016 and Windows 10](https://support.office.com/en-US/article/Accessibility-in-Office-2016-and-Windows-10-5df36873-d574-4d07-b21d-2dc4e61384ac). Feel free to check back regularly as we frequently add new articles and product tutorials.

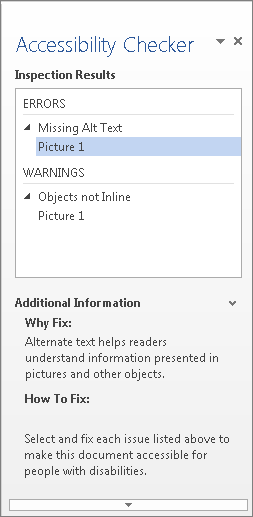
### Accessibility Checker

Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and OneNote include an **Accessibility Checker** that finds some content that might be inaccessible to individuals with disabilities. You can use the **Accessibility Checker** when you are creating content to see what accessibility errors occur and learn how to fix them.

**To Open the Accessibility Checker:**

1. Select **Review**.
2. Select **Check Accessibility**.

*Caption 7: An example of some issues found in the Accessibility Checker.*



[Learn more about the Accessibility Checker](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Use-the-Accessibility-Checker-on-your-Windows-desktop-to-find-accessibility-issues-A16F6DE0-2F39-4A2B-8BD8-5AD801426C7F?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)

[Learn more about the Accessibility Checker on the Mac](https://support.office.com/en-US/article/Use-the-Accessibility-Checker-on-your-Mac-to-find-and-resolve-accessibility-issues-3b84295e-d55b-49f1-b443-523ec45a5232?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)

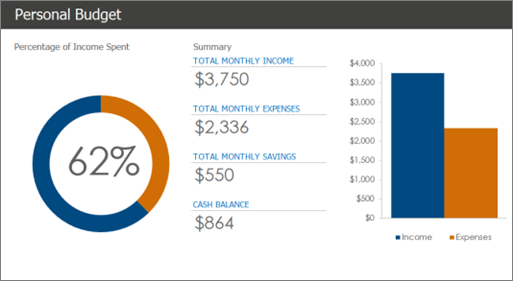
### Using Accessible Templates

In Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel you can select and use accessible templates. These templates have better color contrast, larger font size, simpler table structures, and meaningful alternative text.

Here is how to get them from within those applications:

1. Select **File**>**New**
2. Type **accessible templates** in the **Search for online templates** box
3. Press **Enter** to start the search.

*Caption 8: An example of an accessible template*



[Learn more about accessible templates](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Get-accessible-templates-for-Office-ca086caa-2bd2-4ac8-8c12-4cd495bd4d76?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)

## Use Accessibility Features in Office

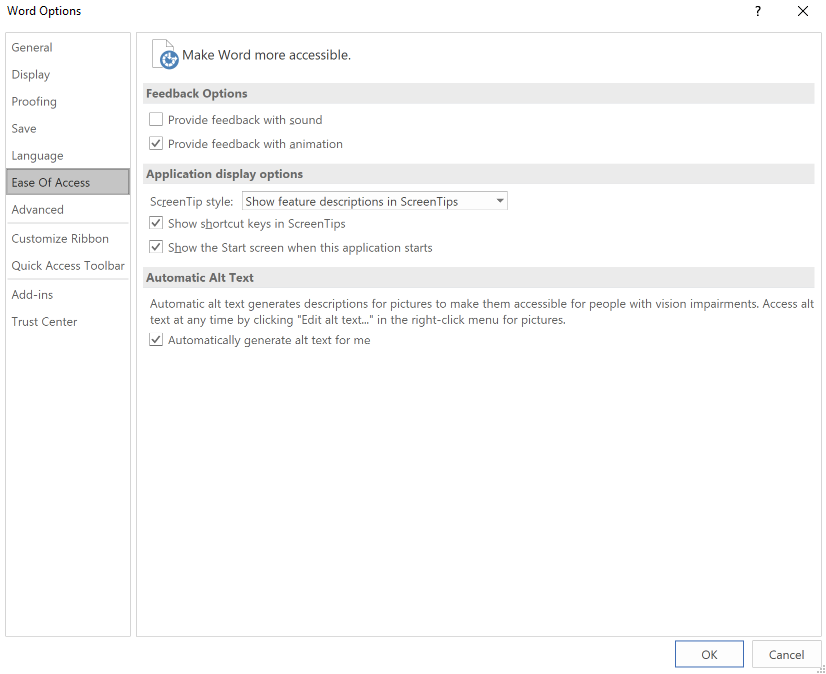
Microsoft Office comes with built-in accessibility features designed for individuals who have speech disabilities. You can also customize options in Office to meet your individual needs and preferences.

### Ease of Access Options in Office:

You can customize common accessibility settings within the Ease of Access options in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. Here is how to get to the Ease of Access options in those programs:

1. Open an Office application
2. Select **File**>**Options**>**Ease of Access**
3. Customize your accessibility options

*Caption 9: An example of Ease of Access options available in Microsoft Word*



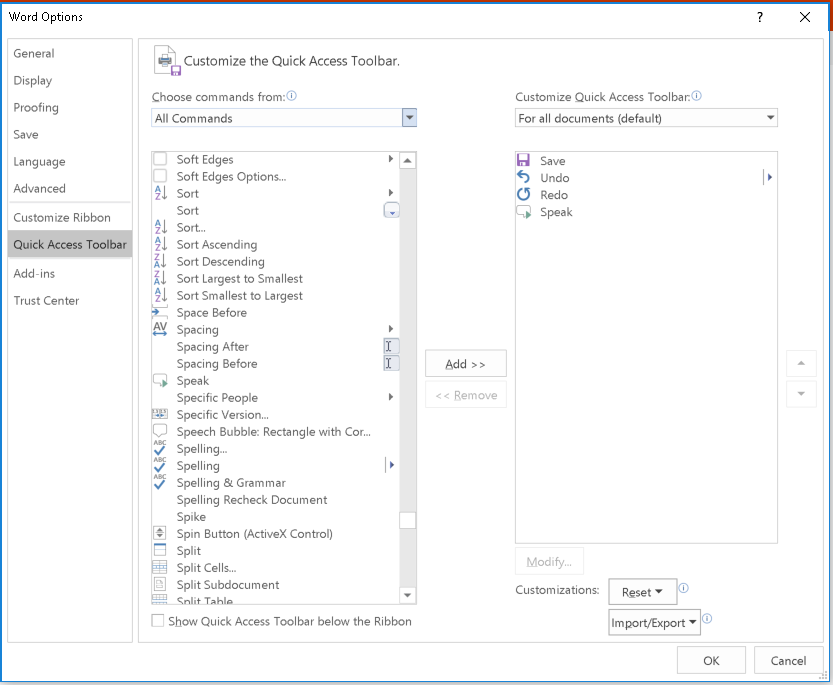
### Use the Speak Command for Text-to-speech

The **Speak** command in Office uses text-to-speech (TTS), which is the ability of your computer to play back written text as spoken words. This provides a user with a speech disability an alternative way to communicate. Depending upon your configuration and installed TTS engines, you can hear most text that appears on your screen in Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, and other programs in Microsoft Office.

You can add the **Speak** command to the **Quick Access Toolbar**.

1. Open **File** (**Alt** + **F**).
2. Select **Options**.
3. Select **Quick Access Toolbar**.
4. Choose **Commands Not in the Ribbon**.
5. Select **Speak**.
6. Select **Add**.
7. Select **OK**.

*Caption 10: Word Options dialog box where the Speak command is added to the Quick Access Toolbar.*



Now, you can quickly hear selected text.

1. Select the text in the document you want to hear.
2. Select the new **Speak** button in the **Quick Access Toolbar**.

*Caption 11: Quick Access Toolbar with the Speak button activated.*

Here is the Quick Access Toolbar in Word 2016 with the Speak command selected.  

[Learn more about text-to-speech](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Accessibility-features-in-Office-2016-be8d4909-d025-4049-9e1c-ac608ec53edb?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)

### Do Things Quickly with Tell Me in Office 2016

**Tell Me** is a tool in Office where you can enter words or phrases about what you want to do next. This helps you move quicker to features in Office 2016. Here is how to use that tool:

1. Press **Alt** + **Q**.
2. Start typing something such as “insert table” or “Accessibility Checker.”
3. Select what you want to do from the list of suggestions.

[Learn more about Tell Me](https://support.office.com/en-US/article/Do-things-quickly-with-Tell-Me-f20d2198-17b8-4b09-a3e5-007a337f1e4e)

### Get Keyboard Shortcuts and Steps for Using Assistive Technology with Office

Office for Windows, Online, Mac, iOS, Android, and Windows Mobile provides support for assistive technologies like screen readers. You can read about the accessibility features for your specific environment at the **Office Accessibility Center**. There you can get all the latest accessibility information on products such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook, and even others outside of the Office Suite such as Skype or OneDrive.

1. Visit the [Office Accessibility Center](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Office-Accessibility-Center-ecab0fcf-d143-4fe8-a2ff-6cd596bddc6d?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US).
2. Select **Use a screen reader and keyboard shortcuts with Office apps**.
3. Select the Office application you want to learn about.
4. Navigate to the section for your device.

## Accessibility Features in Skype

You can use Skype to communicate via text rather than spoken dialogue in real time.

Using the Skype interface for instant messaging is great for meetings and general communication with others. Here is how to setup Skype so you can start messaging your friends and colleagues:

1. Press **Alt** + **2** to open **Contacts**
2. Select a contact under **Skype Contacts**
3. Write your content in the **Type a Message** field
4. Select the **Send** icon.

*Caption 12: Instant messaging in Skype*



[How to setup and use Skype Translator](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA34542/how-do-i-set-up-and-use-skype-translator)

## Find assistive technology for People with Language or Communication disabilities

People who have language or communication difficulties and impairments may be interested in the following assistive technology:

* **Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices** are useful for people with speech disabilities. The user types in a word, phrase, or sentence to communicate—or selects a series of symbols or pictures on the device—and the device "speaks" aloud for the user. Often these devices are used to replace a PC keyboard. In these cases, the user can use one device for both communicating and computer input.
* **Touch screens** are devices placed on the computer monitor (or built into it) that allow direct selection or activation of the computer by touching the screen. The ability to touch the computer screen to select is advantageous for people with language disabilities because it is a fast, direct, and intuitive alternative to using a mouse or keyboard.
* **Speech synthesizers** (also known as text-to-speech (TTS) systems) speak information aloud in a computerized voice.

[Learn more about Assistive Technology products for Windows](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/Accessibility/assistive-technology-partners)

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