BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Have Your Computer Read the Screen Aloud

Rest your eyes and let your computer read email, articles, and documents to you — free and built in

Plain-English comfort-and-accessibility help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Your computer can read the screen aloud for free, with no extra software. On a Mac, open System Settings, Accessibility, Spoken Content, turn on Speak selection, then highlight any text and press the key it shows; turn on Speak screen to read a whole page. On Windows, the easiest route is the Microsoft Edge browser's Read aloud button, which reads any article and highlights each line as it goes; Word has its own Read Aloud button on the Review ribbon.

In either case you can choose a warmer, more natural voice and slow the speaking speed to a comfortable pace in the same settings. If a full screen reader (Narrator or VoiceOver) ever switches on by accident and the computer starts describing everything, turn it off with Windows key plus Ctrl plus Enter, or Command plus F5 on a Mac.

1 The Short Version

Your computer can read almost anything on its screen out loud — a news article, an email, a long document — in a clear voice you can slow down or speed up. It is free, built right in, and a gentle way to rest tired eyes or simply take in words more comfortably by ear. You do not need to buy anything or install anything.

This guide shows you how to switch it on and use it, on both Windows and Mac, from the simplest "read this paragraph" to having a whole page read while you sit back. Pick the parts that suit you and ignore the rest.

- Every modern computer can read text aloud for free, no extra software needed.
- You can read a whole page, or just a sentence you highlight.
- You can choose a warmer voice and slow it down to a comfortable pace.
- It rests your eyes and helps when words are small or you are tired.

TIP

Start by having it read just one highlighted paragraph. Once that feels natural, move up to having it read a whole page. Small steps make the feature feel friendly rather than fiddly.

2 Why Listening Can Be Easier Than Reading

Reading on a screen asks a lot of the eyes — small type, bright light, long passages. Having the computer read aloud lets you take the same words in through your ears instead, which many people find less tiring and easier to follow, especially later in the day.

It is not a sign of struggling; it is simply using the machine for what it is good at. Plenty of people who read perfectly well still enjoy letting the computer read a long article while they rest their eyes or make a cup of tea.

GOOD TO KNOW

Listening and reading use different kinds of effort. On a day when your eyes are tired but your mind is sharp, letting the computer read to you keeps you going comfortably.

3 The Two Kinds of Reading Aloud

It helps to know there are two different tools, because they suit different moments. One reads only what you choose; the other is a full screen reader for people who cannot see the screen at all.

- "Read selection" or "Speak" tools read a piece of text you highlight, or a whole document, on command — gentle and easy to dip into.

- A full screen reader (Narrator on Windows, VoiceOver on Mac) reads and describes everything, and lets you control the whole computer by ear — powerful, but a bigger thing to learn.

For most people who simply want the news or an email read aloud, the "read selection" tools in the next chapters are exactly right. The full screen reader is there if you ever need it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Think of it as the difference between asking someone to read you one letter versus asking them to narrate your entire day. Most of the time, you just want the letter read.

4 On a Mac: Turn On Spoken Content

Apple's Mac has a friendly feature called Spoken Content that reads highlighted text or a whole page aloud with a keystroke, once you switch it on.

1. Open System Settings, then Accessibility, then Spoken Content.
2. Turn on "Speak selection" so it can read highlighted text.
3. Turn on "Speak screen" if you would like it to read the whole page.
4. Note the key it shows for speaking the selection (you can change it to something easy to remember).

> **TIP**
>
> Once Speak selection is on, you simply highlight some words and press the key it shows. Highlighting means dragging over the words so they turn a shaded color — the same way you would select text to copy it.

5 On a Mac: Read a Page or a Selection

With Spoken Content switched on, reading aloud becomes a two-step habit you will quickly do without thinking.

1. To read a sentence or paragraph: drag across the words to highlight them, then press the speak-selection key.
2. To read a whole web page or document: use the Speak screen command you turned on.
3. A small set of controls appears so you can pause, skip, or stop.
4. Press the key again, or use the controls, to stop whenever you like.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> In the Safari web browser, there is often a simpler path too: look in the View or page menu for a "Listen to this Page" option, which reads the article for you without any setup.

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6 On Windows: Narrator and Read Aloud

Windows offers reading in a couple of places. For reading documents and web pages, the easiest tools live inside the apps themselves; for reading the whole computer, there is Narrator.

- Microsoft Edge, the web browser, has a "Read aloud" button that reads any article in a natural voice — this is the easiest place to start.
- Microsoft Word has "Read Aloud" on its Review ribbon to read your documents.

- Narrator (Windows key + Ctrl + Enter) is the full screen reader that reads and describes everything.

> **TIP**
> For everyday reading, start with Edge's Read aloud. Open an article, look for the Read aloud button near the address bar or in the menu, and the page is read to you with easy play, pause, and skip controls.

7 On Windows: Read Aloud in Edge, Step by Step

The Edge browser's Read aloud is the gentlest way to have the computer read to you on Windows, because it needs no setup and offers simple controls.

1. Open the Microsoft Edge browser and go to the article or page you want read.
2. Look for the Read aloud option — often a small toolbar button, or in the three-dots menu.
3. The page begins reading, highlighting each line as it goes so you can follow along.
4. Use the floating bar to pause, skip forward or back, and stop.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Because it highlights the words as it reads them, Read aloud helps you keep your place and can make the words easier to take in both by eye and by ear at once.

8 Choose a Voice You Like

The default computer voice can sound a little flat. Both Windows and Mac let you choose from several voices and download richer, more natural-sounding ones for free, which makes a surprising difference to how pleasant listening is.

- On a Mac, the voice choices live in System Settings, Accessibility, Spoken Content, under System Voice.
- On Windows, voice choices live in Settings under Time & Language, Speech, or within each app's read-aloud controls.

- Try a few until one feels warm and clear to you; some download a higher-quality version the first time.
- Pick a voice in your own accent if it is offered — it is easier to listen to for long stretches.

> **TIP**
> It is worth spending five minutes trying the different voices. A voice you find pleasant turns reading aloud from a novelty into something you will actually reach for every day.

9 Slow It Down or Speed It Up

The speaking speed matters as much as the voice. Too fast and it is hard to follow; a touch slower and it becomes easy and clear. You are in full control of the pace.

1. Find the speaking-rate or speed slider in the same settings where you chose the voice.
2. Nudge it slower if words run together, or a little faster once you are comfortable.
3. Test it on a paragraph and adjust until it feels like a comfortable reading voice.
4. Remember the pace can differ by app — the browser and the document reader each have their own.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> There is no "right" speed. The best pace is simply the one you can relax into. Many people start slow and gradually speed up as their ear gets used to the voice.

10 Reading Email and Documents

The two things people most want read aloud are their email and their documents, and both are easy once the feature is on.

- For email, open the message, highlight the text, and use the speak-selection key (Mac) or read-aloud (Windows app).

- For a Word document, use Word's own Read Aloud button on the Review ribbon.
- For a PDF, open it in a reader or browser that offers read-aloud, or copy the text into a page that does.
- For a web article, the browser's built-in reader is usually the smoothest route.

WATCH OUT

Have the computer read suspicious emails to you rather than clicking anything in them. Hearing a message about an "overdue bill" or "locked account" read aloud often makes the scam easier to spot — and you have touched nothing.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

11 If the Full Screen Reader Turns On by Accident

Sometimes a stray key combination switches on the full screen reader — Narrator or VoiceOver — and suddenly the computer is describing everything and behaving oddly. This is harmless and easy to switch off once you know the key.

- On Windows, press Windows key + Ctrl + Enter to turn Narrator off (the same keys turn it on).
- On a Mac, press Command + F5 to turn VoiceOver off (the same keys toggle it).
- If it keeps happening, you can turn off the keyboard shortcut in Accessibility settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

Knowing this one key combination saves a lot of alarm. A computer that suddenly starts talking and acting strangely is almost always just the screen reader switched on by accident, not a fault.

12 Read-Aloud on Your Phone and Tablet Too

The same comfort is on your phone and tablet, and it travels with you. If your eyes are tired on the sofa or you want an article read while you tidy up, the phone will happily read to you.

- On an iPhone, turn on Speak Screen under Settings, Accessibility, Spoken Content, then swipe down with two fingers from the top to have the page read.
- Turn on Speak Selection too, to read just a paragraph you highlight.
- On Android, turn on Select to Speak under Accessibility, then tap its button and tap the text.
- Many news and reading apps also have their own Listen button built in.

> **TIP**
>
> Setting it up on both the computer and the phone means wherever you are reading, the option to listen instead is only a gesture away. The gestures differ, so practice each once.

13 Pair It With Bigger, Clearer Text

Reading aloud works beautifully alongside the other comfort settings, not instead of them. Larger text, higher contrast, and a reader view that strips away clutter all make the words easier whether you read them or listen to them.

- Turn up the text size on the computer and in your web browser (hold Ctrl and press plus, or Command and plus on a Mac).
- Use the browser's reader view to strip ads and clutter from an article before listening.
- Raise the contrast in Accessibility settings so any text you do read is sharp.
- Combine listening with following along on screen to take words in two ways at once.

GOOD TO KNOW

Listening and reading together — hearing the words while the text highlights on screen — helps many people follow along more easily than either alone, especially with longer or denser material.

14 Good Moments to Use It

Read-aloud is not only for difficult days. Once it is set up, people find all sorts of everyday moments where letting the computer read is simply nicer than reading themselves.

- Catching up on the news in the morning while the eyes are still waking up.
- Getting through a long email or document without eye strain.
- Having a recipe read out, hands-free, while you cook.
- Checking a suspicious message by ear, having touched nothing in it.

TIP

Try it first on something you enjoy — a favorite column or a long article you have been meaning to read. Starting with something pleasant makes the feature feel like a treat rather than a workaround.

15 When to Call Bill

Switching on read-aloud is a small thing that can make a real difference to comfortable days, and most people can set it up from this guide. But the settings are tucked away, the voices take a little trying, and the full screen reader can be confusing if it appears uninvited.

I am glad to come by, turn on the gentle read-selection tools, pick and download a warm voice set to a comfortable pace, and show you the simple habit of highlight-and-listen. I will also make sure you know the one key that quiets the screen reader if it ever starts up on its own.

- You want it set up and a pleasant voice chosen, without hunting through settings.
- The full screen reader keeps switching on by accident and startling you.
- You would like to read email, documents, and the news comfortably by ear.
- You would simply rather be shown the habit once, in person.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Start by reading one highlighted paragraph, then work up to a whole page.

I want to...	Do this...
Read aloud on a Mac	System Settings > Accessibility > Spoken Content; turn on Speak selection
Read a Mac selection	Highlight the words, press the speak-selection key
Read aloud on Windows (easiest)	Open the article in Edge, use the Read aloud button
Read a Word document	Review ribbon > Read Aloud
Pick a nicer voice	Choose and download a voice in the same settings; set a slower speed
Quiet a screen reader that turned on	Windows: Win+Ctrl+Enter. Mac: Command+F5
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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