

Text-to-Speech!



You are NOT crazy; your computer is talking to you!

What is text-to-speech? The Mac can read almost any text that you ask it do read. It even reads the built-in calculator, dictionary, and word processing documents. Text-to-speech simply means the computer takes the text and speaks it out loud in a lovely computerized voice.

How is it used as a learning tool? Any text on web pages, word processing pages, and other text can be selected and read out loud to the student. Using the “text-to-speech” tool hidden in the OSX operating system allows users to have the computer read text out loud. Using the text-to-speech tool assists students that struggle with reading, have a hard time paying attention to reading passages, have dyslexia, and other issues that cause frustration while reading text on a computer.

What do I need to have in order to use this with a classroom of students?

You need an Apple computer running OS X or higher! A set of headphones for each student utilizing the text-to-speech works best. If you have headphones with a built-in microphone students can also read their own writing out loud and listen to their own words. This increases fluency and can be a profound part of the writing process.

It helps to have headphones for each student who is utilizing text-to-speech. Headphones allow each student to focus on their own computer as well as preventing the chaos of multiple computers reading text out loud where everyone in the class can hear the words. This causes confusion and makes it difficult for students to focus.

How do I activate text-to-speech on a computer? What do I need to do so that the computer will read text out loud?

In a nutshell: Within System Preferences (Speech options) the user sets a keyboard shortcut to have the computer read text. Selecting the same keyboard shortcut again stops the computer from reading the text out loud. It is important to create a keyboard shortcut that is NOT used by other programs (Apple + P is print, etc, so don't select that!). One choice is to select to use APPLE (command) and 1 at the same time. Using these two keys together (keyboard shortcut) will first start the selected text to be read out loud as well as to stop the speaking.

PRELIMINARY STEP: (Only has to be one time- after you have done this it does NOT have to be activated each time) n Active the computer shortcut to read ‘text-to-speech’. See the directions on the back of this page for more information!

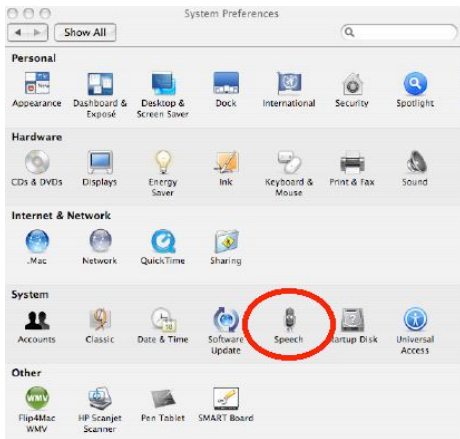
STEP 1: Selecting text to be read out loud: Highlight the text to be read by dragging the mouse over the text, double/triple clicking the text, or ‘select all’ (Apple + A).

STEP 2: Activating the ‘text to speech’: Use your keyboard shortcut and wait a moment. The speaking will begin and run to the end of your highlighted passage.

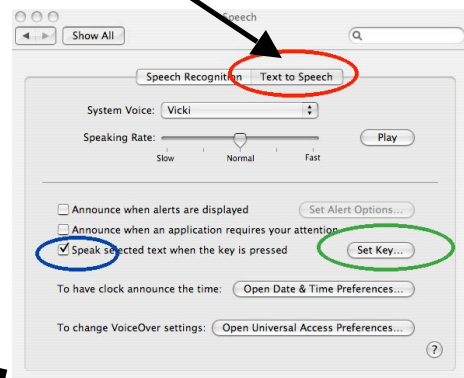
STEP 3: Starting & Stopping the ‘text to speech’ mid-talking. In order to stop the ‘text to speech’ mid-talking, just select the same keyboard shortcut that started the computer reading the text. For example, if you set the preferences to launch ‘text-to-speech’ is Apple (Command) + 1, then do the same to cancel the speaking.

Details:

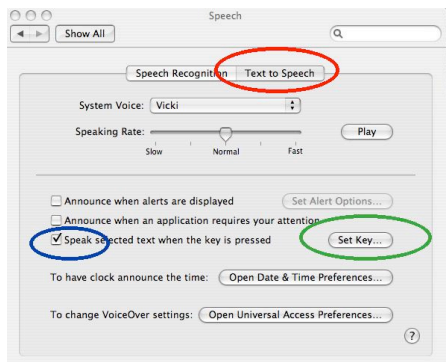
STEP ONE: Open System Preferences & Click on the SPEECH icon!



STEP TWO: Choose 'text to speech' button.



STEP THREE: Check off the box next to "Speak selected text when the key is pressed"



STEP FOUR: Choose the keys to activate 'text to speech'. I like to use the APPLE (command) and 1 key because it won't override other keyboard shortcuts often used by the students.



STEP FIVE (optional step): "Hearing Voices": You can easily choose a different voice for the text-to-speech. When you are in the System Preferences → Speech → "Text to Speech" → "System Voice" → use the drop-down menu to select the voice. (Hint: be cautious about students selected a voice other than the female or male voices)

