

# Reading Tools Guide

This guide provides an overview of free and low-cost reading supports available to the CSU campus. It is merely a starting point; more tools and software programs are available through the Assistive Technology Resource Center.

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## ReadSpeaker Suite (Canvas)

ReadSpeaker includes a suite of reading and studying tools accessed from your Canvas account.

*  webReader (play button in the green Canvas menu): reads aloud content within the Canvas page
* docReader (speaker icon next to Canvas documents): reads aloud documents your instructor has uploaded into Canvas course modules
* TextAid (link in your Canvas course menu): upload your own documents, including PDFs, into your own library. You can collect highlights and annotations into simple study guides
* Web Reader Extension (link in TextAid menu): download a browser extension to read any website aloud

The ReadSpeaker tools allow you to listen to texts, make visual adjustments including text spacing, size, page color, collect highlights and annotations, and more! These are the most robust reading supports available to all students.

See tutorial videos and more at our [ReadSpeaker Quick Start](https://www.chhs.colostate.edu/atrc/assistive-technology-resources/quick-start-guides/readspeaker-for-canvas/) page.

## Built-In Reading Tools

Built-ins are accessibility tools that are freely available through your computer’s operating system or software you are using. Popular built-in reading tools for various platforms are described below.

### Microsoft Office

#### Read Aloud

Listen to your documents in Microsoft Word (desktop app) with the **Read Aloud** function located in the **Review** tab. Simply place the cursor where you’d like to start listening, then click the Read Aloud icon. Adjust playback settings in the **toolbar** that appears.

 

#### Immersive Reader

To change the visual layout of Word documents, open the **Immersive Reader** from the **View** tab in Microsoft Word and other Office applications.

 

Immersive Reader opens your document in a customizable reading pane where you can change the **page color**, **text** **spacing**, **line focus**, and other settings to your preference. Immersive Reader also includes the Read Aloud function and is available in all Microsoft 365 online applications including Teams, PowerPoint, Word, and Outlook.

### PDF Readers

There are several built-in options for reading PDFs aloud, depending on which PDF reader you use. If you use Adobe Acrobat Reader DC, you can activate Read Out Loud by going to **View🡪 Read Out Loud🡪 Activate Read Out Loud**. Once activated, return to that same menu to select whether you want to read a single page or the entire document. If you don’t already have it, you can download Adobe Acrobat Reader DC for free here: [Adobe Download Website (https://get.adobe.com/reader/)](https://get.adobe.com/reader/). Adobe has other helpful reading tools such as highlighting and annotation.

If you use a different PDF reader, look for similar functionality, as your PDF reader may have an analogous feature.

### Apple Devices

If you are an Apple user, you can have text read aloud in almost any document or file format (as long as it has been made accessible) without needing add-ons or additional software.

On a Mac, go to **System Preferences🡪 Accessibility🡪 Speech🡪** and check **Speak selected text when the key is pressed**. The keyboard shortcut listed can be used to speak aloud any highlighted text. This can even be used when reading a PDF in Canvas without downloading it. You can change the keyboard shortcut that activates spoken text by clicking **Change Key**.

## Computer-Based Tools and Software

If you need more support than what built-ins offer, there are several tools you can use to read on your computer. Which tool you choose to use will depend on what you need to read (PDF, Word doc, textbook, etc.) and which features are important to you. The following is an overview of reading supports available for reading various file types on your computer.

### VitalSource Online Textbooks

VitalSource is a library of online textbooks. To access VitalSource, go to [VitalSource Bookshelf (https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/user/signin)](https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/user/signin) and create an account if you do not already have one**. Make sure to use your colostate.edu email**. Download the app associated with the device you plan to read on from [The VitalSource App Download Page (https://support.vitalsource.com/hc/en-us/articles/201344733-Bookshelf-Download-Options)](https://support.vitalsource.com/hc/en-us/articles/201344733-Bookshelf-Download-Options) and follow the prompts to complete the download. Open the VitalSource Bookshelf App on your device, click Explore, and search for your texts. Click ‘Borrow’ to check out books. You can search your book or use the table of contents to navigate to various sections of your textbook. Use the Play button at the bottom of the screen to read text aloud. Use study features in the toolbar on the left side of the screen, such as highlighting, annotating, bookmarks and flashcards.

### NaturalReader

NaturalReader can read many file types, including PDF, Word, .txt, EPUBs, and more. Its basic features are free, including unlimited reading, dyslexia fonts, and the pronunciation editor. Start reading directly in the Online Reader or download the desktop application.

Premium plans (starting at $9.99/month) allow the reader access to unlimited reading with premium voices (natural sounding), MP3 creation, added file types, and reading inaccessible documents.

NaturalReader also provides a Chrome extension and a free smartphone app. Learn more or use [NaturalReader online](https://www.naturalreaders.com/webapp.html).

## Apps

There are many apps that can read files aloud on your phone or tablet. Most are free and can allow you to turn off the screen and listen while you multi-task.

### ClaroPDF

ClaroPDF is free and available for iPhone and Android devices to read and annotate PDF documents. You can open PDFs in ClaroPDF from any mobile app, including Canvas. Then tap anywhere in the document, press play, and ClaroPDF will read aloud and highlight words as it goes.

*Note: ClaroPDF will not read inaccessible (image) PDFs, but it will still allow you to annotate them. To read inaccessible PDFs, upgrade to ClaroPDF Pro.*

### Voice Aloud Reader

Open and read multiple file types including PDF, Word doc, TXT, HTML, and more. Share documents from Canvas, Drive, or Files. You can even export messages from WhatsApp to Voice Aloud Reader to be read to you. Using the Google Chrome extension, you can send articles on your computer to your Voice Aloud Reader app reading list to be read in your app.

### Voice Dream Reader

*Note: Voice Dream Reader uses the same speech synthesizer as some of the tools you can receive for* ***free*** *as a CSU student, including ReadSpeaker.*

Voice Dream Reader ($59.99/year) is an iOS app. It can read most file types, including PDF, EPUB, DAISY, Word docs, PowerPoint, and websites. It includes tools like screen masking for focus, highlighting and annotation, and can use your device’s camera to scan and read physical documents.

Read aloud with over 60 natural-sounding voices and play readings offline through your device. For more information, go to [The Voice Dream Website](https://www.voicedream.com/reader/) or search for Voice Dream Reader in the App Store.

### Speed Reading Apps

Flash Reader, Spreeder, and Speed Reader are speed reading apps. You can upload the document you need to read and set your reading speed, then the app will flash one word at a time, allowing you to get through your reading more quickly. Some users find this increases their focus as well. Watch this video for a preview: [Speed Reading Demo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8dIVNDMA_0).

## Library Reading and Entertainment

Public libraries are a wonderful free resource that extend far beyond schoolwork and research. Next time you’re taking a break from schoolwork, look at some entertainment options including movies, music, TV shows, and even local recreational passes! Check your local library’s website for more information on the digital platforms they use and how you can access them.

### Poudre River Public Library (Northern Colorado)

With a free account at the [Poudre River Public Library](https://www.poudrelibraries.org/download/), you can check out all kinds of materials through their mobile app partners:

**Libby**: unlimited eBooks and audiobooks

**Flipster**: digital magazines

**Hoopla**:eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, comes, movies, TV shows, and more. Limit 10 items/month.

**Kanopy:** movies, TV shows, and classes. Limit 4 items/month.

**Odilo**: eBooks, movies, and audiobooks in Spanish. Limit 10 items/month.