

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is ReadSpeaker, and why do we have it?

A: ReadSpeaker is a company that uses text-to-speech technology to speech-enable websites well as online documents and forms. Our license specifically integrates with Blackboard, for student and faculty use within the Learning Management System.

Q: Why do we have ReadSpeaker?

A: 2 reasons. The features of this program help enhance a student's learning with a multi-sensory experience. It also supports people that experience reading difficulties, dyslexia, visual impairment, processing disorders, English language learners, and readers who experience difficulty reading on screens.

Q: Why would students use this?

A: Besides from helping alleviate challenges noted above, it's an excellent example of Universal Design, wherein multifaceted teaching is proactively built into a system and provides an enhanced learning experience for *any* user.

Q: What *can't* ReadSpeaker do?

A: As much as we wish it could read everything, our current license is with the English language pack only; foreign language pronunciation is questionable. It also does not read math and science equations very well. ReadSpeaker is installed in *Blackboard only*, so if you link or embed material that is hosted on another website, ReadSpeaker will not read that material.

Q: What do I need to know about having this in my courses?

A: Almost nothing! ReadSpeaker is a background utility, which will have little to no impact on your course design. It's there for users who want to use it, but will not impact the learning experience of those who don't. However, the more time you are willing to have your materials in blackboard in a ReadSpeaker accessible format, the more time it may help enhance learning experiences and reduce the impact of any challenges previously noted. For example, if a student needs a test in audio format, it can now be readily taken by a student by turning on ReadSpeaker (if your content is in accessible format).

Notable Features

- **Embedded Highlighting:** Enables website visitors to see synchronized highlighting of the text that is currently being read, on a word by word and/or sentence basis depending on the setting that has been chosen by the user.
- **User text selection:** Text on a web page can be selected using a mouse or trackpad and only the selected text will then be spoken.
- **PDF and Word document reading:** Online PDF and Word documents are read by ReadSpeaker products.

ReadSpeaker

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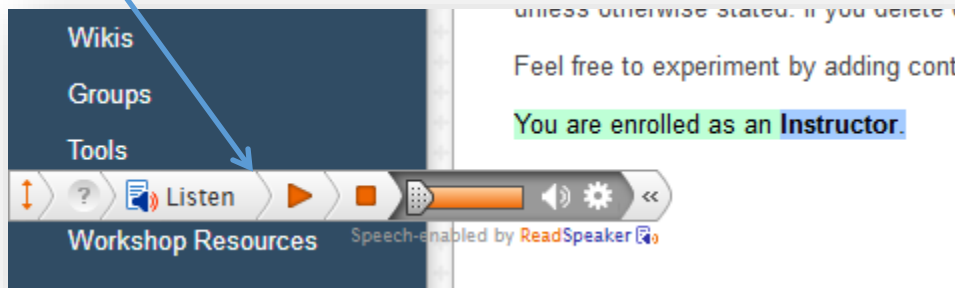
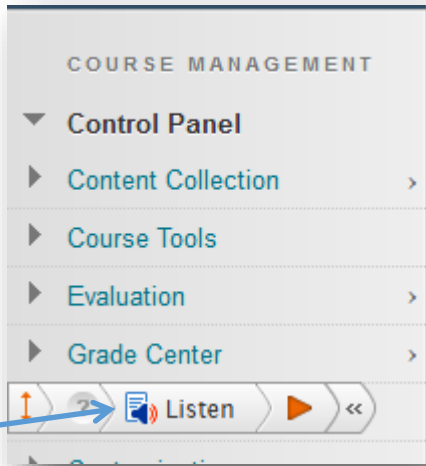
The ReadSpeaker utility can be accessed via the speaker icon, which will be visible at the bottom of the course page.

It will also appear beside any *selected* text in the Blackboard course architecture, allowing users to specify what they would like read.

This works for text in items, assignment directions, discussion board posts, tests and quizzes...generally any text that has been entered in the course creation process.

Users can set up ReadSpeaker to their own visual and audio preferences

ReadSpeaker controls

A screenshot of the ReadSpeaker settings dialog box. It is divided into two main sections: 'General' and 'Text mode settings'.
General section:

- Speed: Medium
- Language for menus: English
- Select reading area by: Mouse selection
- Sentence highlighting: Light green
- Word highlighting: Light blue

Text mode settings section:

- Text appearance: Black on White
- Text size: Normal
- Typeface: Arial
- Preview: Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet

At the bottom of the dialog box, there are 'Close' and 'Save' buttons.

ReadSpeaker docReader

Reads the following file types:

MS Office (.xlsx, .docx, .pptx)

Rich Text (.rtf), PDF, ePubs

When a compatible document is uploaded, the ReadSpeaker icon will appear next to it. If the icon is clicked, the docReader will launch in a new window.

Users can read the whole document at once, or listen to selected sections. They may configure reading speed, text color and highlighting color, highlight by sentence or by word, change the typeface, zoom, or use a page mask or reading ruler (pictured below) to follow along.

