
Accessibility Tools for Learning

V4.2

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1 Preface

This document provides an outline of the core assistive and educational technologies that may be of benefit to students/staff while working and studying from home. Some of these tools are free to use for the duration of the current academic year (e.g. Read & Write) while other applications fall under a “freemium” type licence where end-users sign up to the free version of the application and may have an option to upgrade if they wish. Please also note, to use *some* of the accessibility tools suggested in this document, you may be asked to activate the said product(s) using your staff/student email address.

2 Narration Tools

Narration (text-to-speech) technology enables text to be read back to the end-user. The following subsections outline the various text-to-speech (or narration tools) that are freely available to both students and staff.

2.1 Mac OS and Windows

2.1.1 Microsoft Office

Microsoft office Pro plus is available on the Mac and Windows platform.

2.1.1.1 Prerequisites

Thanks to the IT Services Department, every student and staff member in the MTU has access to Microsoft Office Pro Plus, free of charge. In order to use the accessibility features of Microsoft Office, please ensure that you have Microsoft Office installed on your computer. Further information on downloading and installing, as well as online access, are outlined in the following subsections.

2.1.1.1.1 Downloading and Installation

For students downloading and installing the said software, follow the instructions in the link below:

[Students - Microsoft Office](#)

For staff downloading and installing the said software, follow the instructions in the link below:

[Staff - Microsoft Office](#)

If you have any technical difficulties installing the software, please contact MTU IT Services Department Technical Support on your campus.

2.1.1.1.2 Microsoft Office Online Access

Please note that you can also log on to Microsoft Office using your student/staff ID and password which is the same password to log on to your account within the MTU.

Simply click on the following link below and log on using your staff email (e.g. joe.bloggs@mtu.ie) or MTU student email.

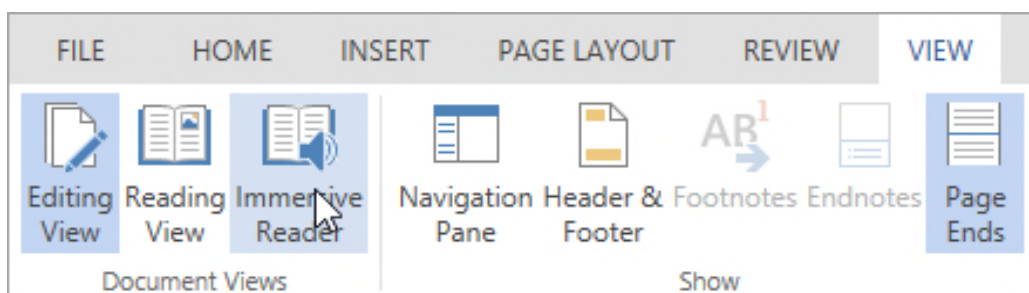
[Microsoft Office Online Logon](#)

Note for Staff: You may need to download the Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in order to log on successfully. Further information about this is outlined in the following link:

[MTU Multifactor Authentication](#)

2.1.1.2 Immersive Reader

The Microsoft Immersive Reader narrates the text in Microsoft Word.



To activate Immersive Reader, undertake the following steps:

- In the Microsoft Word ribbon, click **View**
- Then click **Immersive Reader**

The following outlines a summary of points in relation to this software:

- It's free as long as students log on with their student email account.

- It's relatively easy to use.
- It can only read back the text within Microsoft Word.

Further information can be found by clicking the link below:

[What is the Immersive Reader? - YouTube](#)

Further information can also be found here:

[Learning Tools in Word - Office Support](#)

2.1.2 Chrome Browser

The Google Chrome browser has a plug-in narrator. The Google Chrome browser is available to download on the Windows and Mac OS. To download Chrome on Windows and Mac OS, click on the following link:

[Google Chrome Download and Installation](#)

2.1.2.1 ClaroRead Plug-In

As stated, in the Google Chrome browser, there is a text-to-speech chrome extension called ClaroRead. This plug-in enables the narration of text on most websites.



To install it, simply click on the link below and then press the "Add to Chrome" button.

[ClaroRead Chrome - Chrome Web Store](#)

A few points to note about this plug-in:

- It's free to use (at the time of writing).
- The Google Chrome browser must be installed on the computer, prior to use.

- It can read back most text within HTML web pages.
- It can read back Google Docs text files.
- It does not work on the Windows desktop.
- It's only available for use within the Chrome browser.
- It doesn't provide the capability of reading back PDFs.

If you have any technical difficulties installing the software on your browser please contact Claroread technical support: support@clarosoftware.com

2.1.3 Adobe Reader - PDF

Adobe Reader is a PDF document reader which is available on Windows and Mac OS.



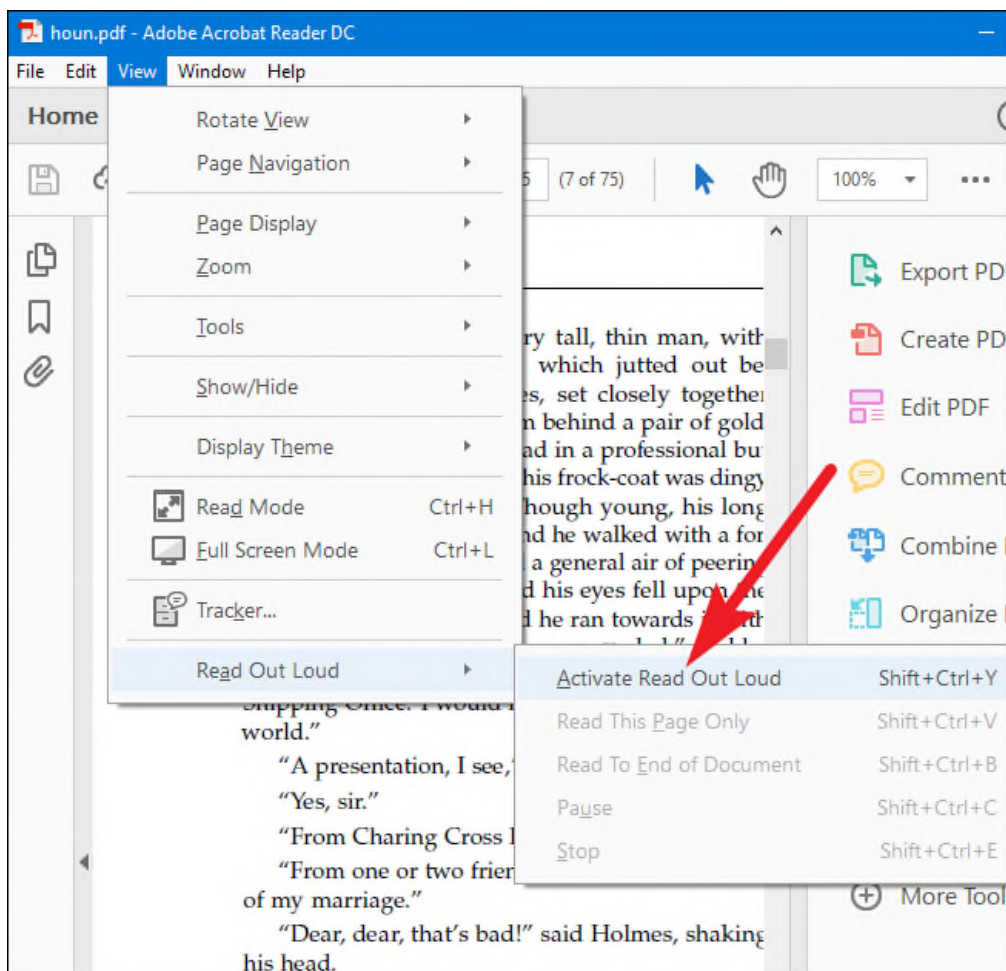
It has accessibility features, in particular, a narrator. Although this is a very basic, it can be used as a last resort if other solutions are not available for reading PDF documents.

To download Adobe Reader, click on the following link and choose your operating system:

[Adobe Acrobat Reader Download](#)

2.1.3.1 Accessibility Features

As stated in the above section, Adobe Reader has accessibility features which enable the narration of *text-based* PDF documents. Note, that this narrator cannot read *image-based* PDF documents.



To activate the narrator of Windows:

- Click on **View**.
- Click on **Read Out Loud**.
- Click **Activate Read Out Loud**.

An outline of the Adobe Reader accessibility features, including the narrator, can be found here:

[Accessibility features - Adobe Acrobat Reader DC](#)

The following outlines a few points in relation to the Adobe Reader Narrator:

- It's free if students have Adobe Reader installed on their Windows computer.
- It only reads back the text within PDF (*text based*) documents and not *image*

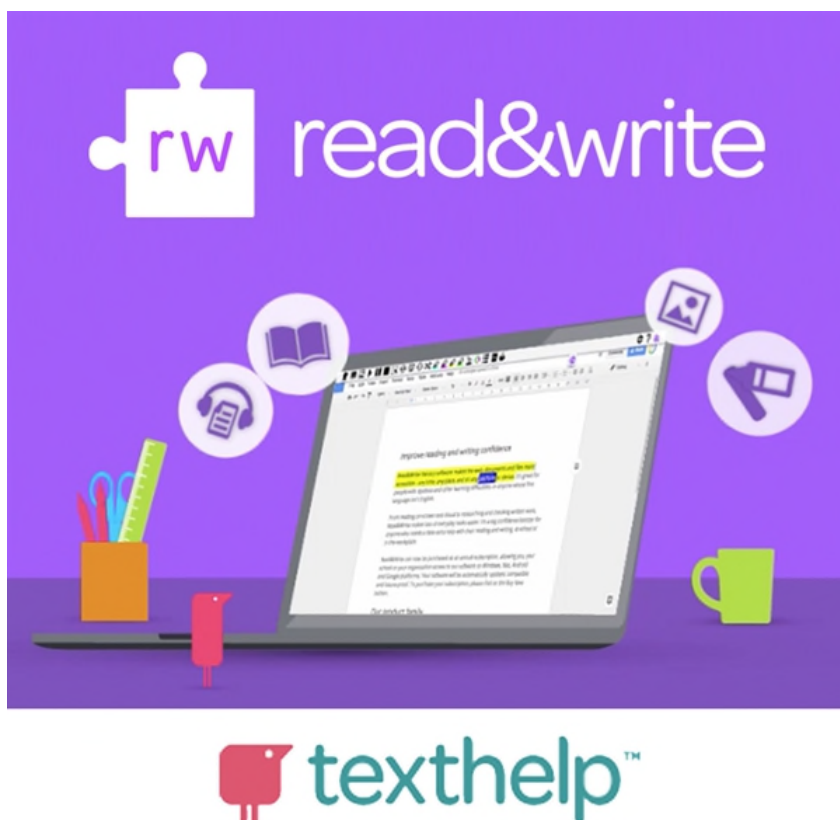
based documents.

- It can be slightly cumbersome in stopping and starting.
- It doesn't highlight the text as it is read.

2.2 Windows

2.2.1 Read and Write

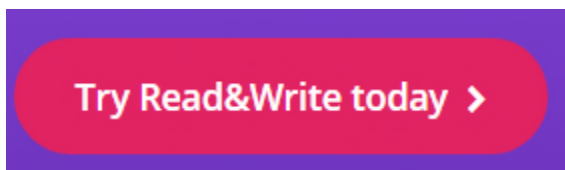
Read&Write is a narration and literacy software which can narrate text *anywhere* on the computer screen. For the current academic year, the MTU has a site license for this software. This enables the software to be used by MTU students/staff on both personal computers and work computers until the end of the academic year.



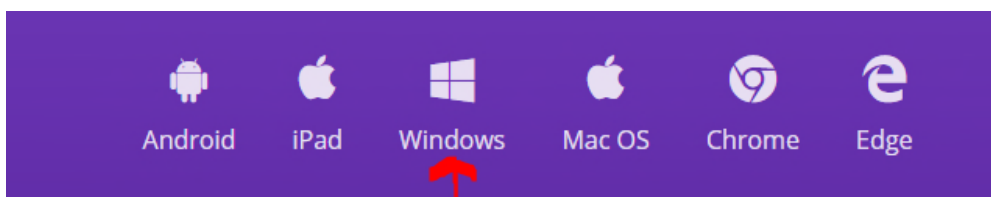
To download and install the software, you will need to undertake the following steps (an Internet connection is required):

- Click on the following link: [Read&Write For Education](#)

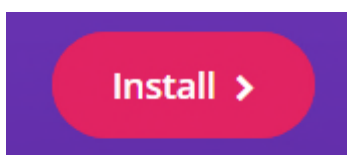
- Then, inside the web page, click "*Try Read & Write today*" in the website link.



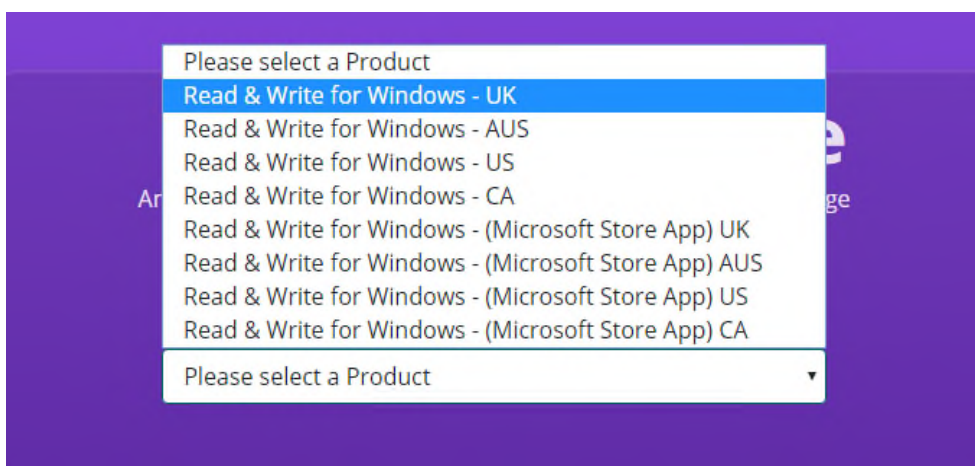
- Next, click the *Windows* button



- Then, click on the install button.



- Then click on the *Read & Write for Windows-UK*



- Following on from this, download and install the application.
- Then double click on the executable and press *Accept and Install*



Hi, almost ready to install

By clicking the "Accept and Install" button,
I acknowledge that I accept the
[User terms](#) and [Privacy Policy for Texthelp](#)

Accept and Install

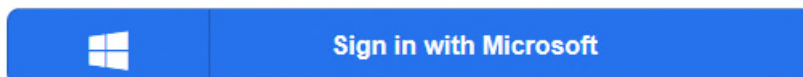
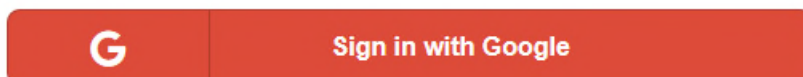
- When the application is installed on the Windows desktop, open it by double clicking the icon below that should be on your desktop and on the top right-hand corner click on the sign in button.



- When the application launches, on the top right-hand corner of the application, click on the sign in button as outlined below:

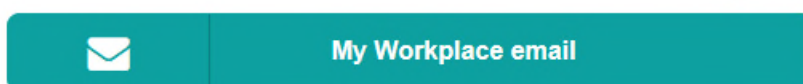


- Click on the *Show More* button:

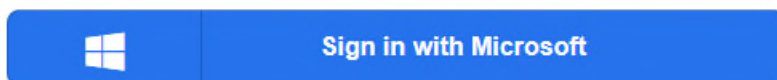
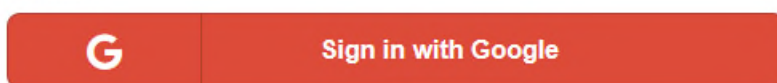


Show More ▾

or



- Then click on the *Use Take-Home Code*



Show Less ▲



Then enter the following code: **HU3YUQ2HBN** and continue with the installation process.

If you are having problems with the installation process, contact Texthelp Technical Support: support@texthelp.com

The following instructional video outlines how to install also:

[Read & Write - Windows installation - YouTube](#)

The following playlist shows how to use the software:

[Read & Write for Education - YouTube](#)

Note: With the installation of *Read & Write* for Windows, you do not need to provide any personal information.

2.3 Mac OS

2.3.1 Speech

The Mac operating system has an inbuilt narration tool called *Speech* which enables text to be narrated to the end-user. Please note, this Speech functionality is not to be confused with Siri/Voice Control which enables an end user to dictate input.



To activate this on the MacBook or desktop Mac undertake the following steps:

- On your Mac, choose Apple menu > System Preferences, click Accessibility, then click Speech.
- Select the “Speak selected text when the key is pressed” tick box.

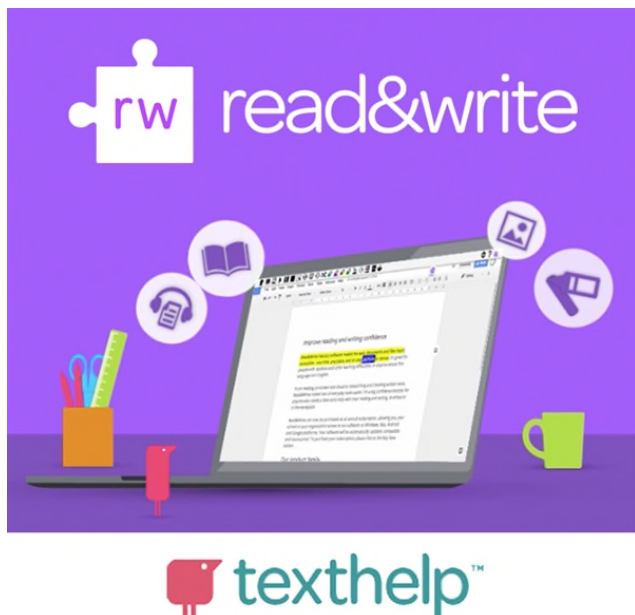
Further information can be found by clicking on the link and choosing your operating system: [Speech Selection](#)

You'll also find below a link showing how to use this software on various Apple platforms: [How to Use Siri](#)

If you are having difficulties using Speech, please contact Apple technical support, quoting your product serial number and they may be able to help you. The Apple technical support telephone number is: 1800 80 40 62

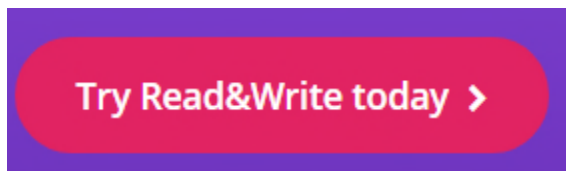
2.3.2 Read & Write for Mac OS

Read&Write for Mac is a narration and literacy software which can read back text anywhere on the computer screen. This software is available free of charge to download to students/staff of the MTU until the end of the academic year.

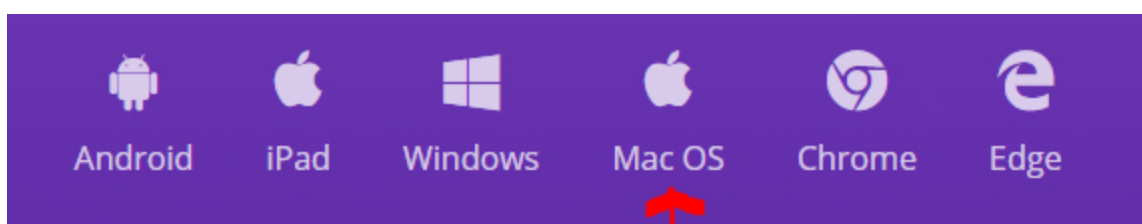


To download and install the software, you will need to undertake the following steps (you will need an Internet connection for this):

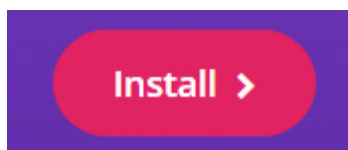
- Click on the following link: [Read&Write For Education](#)
- Then, inside the web page, click "*Try Read & Write today*" in the website link.



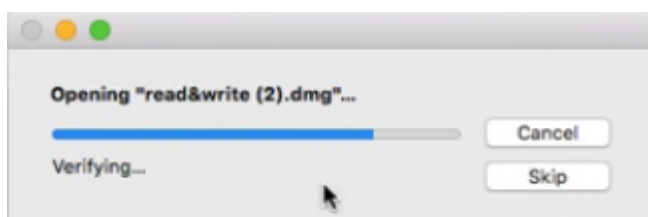
- Next, click the *Mac OS* button



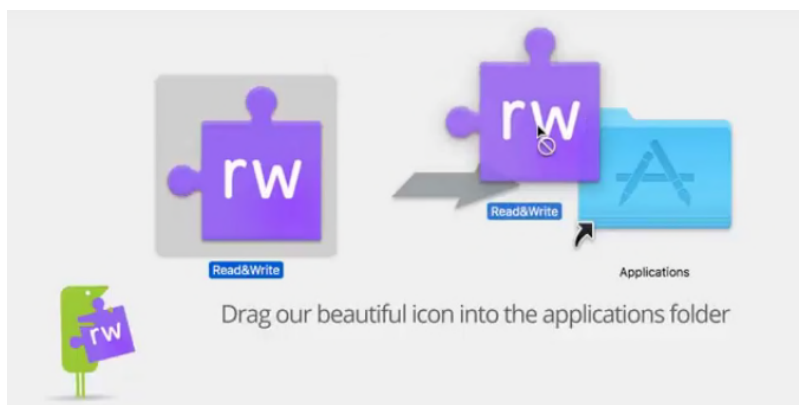
- Then, click on the install button.



- Then download the application "*read&write.dmg*"
- When the "*read&write.dmg*" file has downloaded, double-click on it.
- You will then see a window appearing which outlines the progress of the application installed:



- Then drag and drop the application into the *Applications* folder as depicted below:



Do not launch the application until you have activated the product first. This is outlined in the following subsection.

2.3.2.1 Activation - Serial Code

Contact Texthelp directly to obtain a serial code activation key:

customercare@texthelp.com

2.3.2.2 Instructional Videos

The following link outlines how to use the software. For students, it would be imperative that they watch all of *Core Features* videos prior to using the software for their online assessments/exams:

[Read & Write for Mac - Core Features](#)

Those who wish to review all of the functional features of Read & Write for Mac, including the features above, the following link outlines the instructional videos:

[Read & Write for Mac - All Features](#)

2.4 Mobile

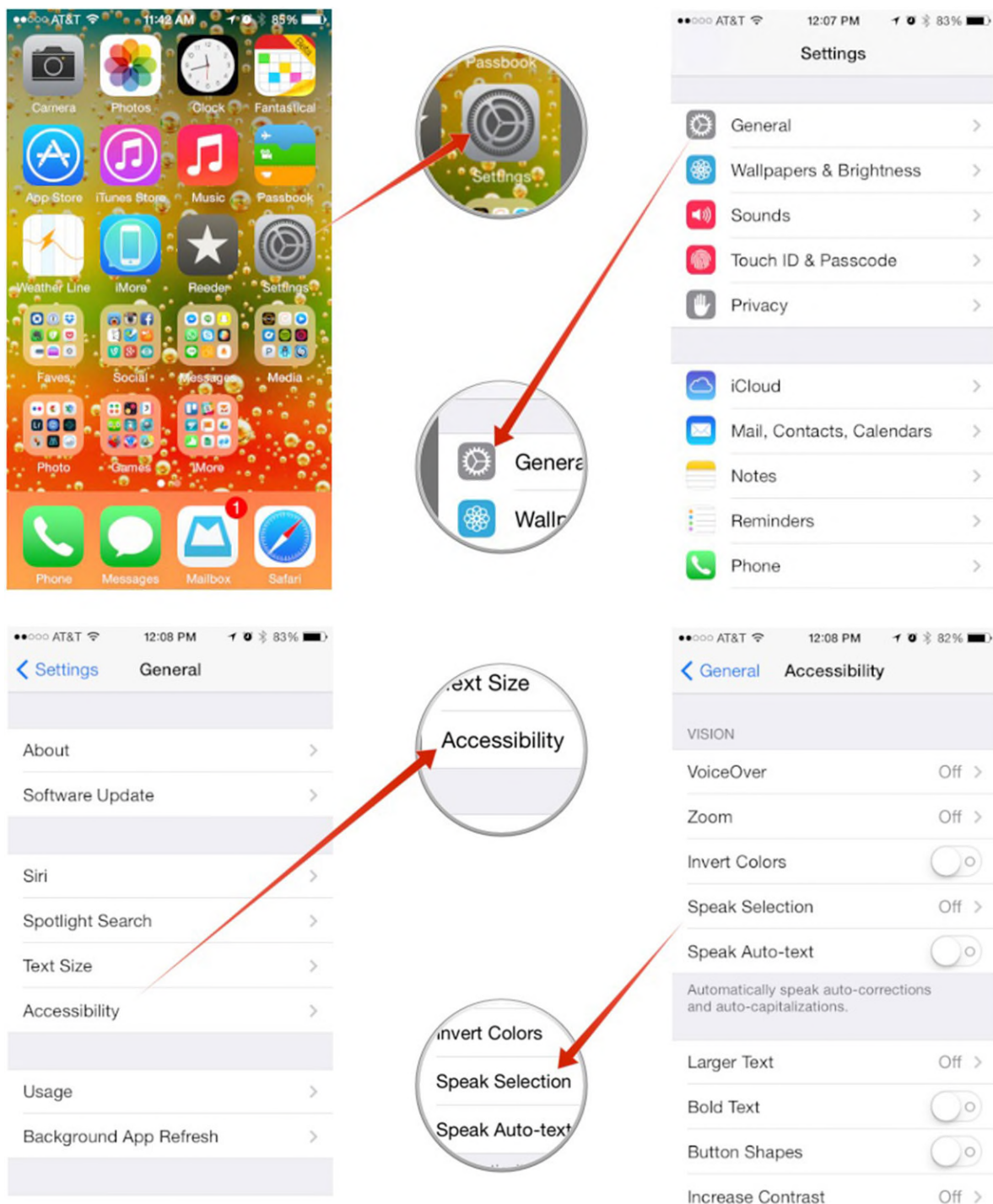
2.4.1 iPhone

The following subsections outline the narration tools and apps that are available on the mobile Mac platform iPhone.



2.4.1.1 Speech

This feature is similar to Read&Write and also enables background highlighting of text that is narrated. This feature can be used for those with dyslexia, visual impairment or literacy challenges.



Speech Selection: A speech button will appear when selected text is highlighted that enables text to be narrated.

- Settings
- General

- Accessibility
- Speech
- Enable announcements inform you when the battery is low - click Options and configure
- Enable Speak Selected Text - like Read Write Gold alternative - change Shortcut key by pressing Change Key button
- Speech Selection
- Voices
- Choose a voice of choice.
- Highlight Content

To use with notes:

- Open Notes/Website
- Press and hold text
- Highlight specific text
- Press Speak

Further information on how to enable speech, click on the following link and choose your particular iOS: [iPhone/iPad Speech](#)

Please note, the Assistive Technology Service cannot provide technical support in relation to Apple products, including Siri. If you are having difficulties using Siri, it is suggested that you contact Apple Technical Support and they may be able to help you (telephone number: 1800 80 40 62).

2.4.1.2 Seeing AI

This app is free for iPhone users and can be downloaded from the App Store. As well as reading text, this app enables users to use their phone as a narrator for the world around them. In principle, this can also be utilised for reading text from a computer screen provided there is no glare and the lighting is suitable.



An overview of this app is outlined below:

[Seeing AI app from Microsoft - YouTube](#)

Further information about this app can be found the following link:

[Seeing AI app – Tutorial - YouTube](#)

The following outlines some points in relation to Seeing AI:

- It's free for iPhone users and not android-based smartphones.
- It can be used to read text primarily in hardcopy format.
- It can also be used, in principle, to read text in soft copy format by pointing the phone camera at the screen where the text is displayed.
- The text would need to be of a certain font size and there should no background glare or excess brightness of the screen. As well as that camera flash on the phone should be switched off.
- For those students who only require occasional use of text-to-speech software, this would be an optimal solution in terms of reading text in any format from the screen e.g. PDF documents and so forth.
- As a consequence of the quality of the iPhone camera, the quality of the text captured is quite satisfactory.
- If a student depends on text-to-speech software to a significant level (i.e. they require every aspect of the text to be read back) this may not be an optimum

solution as students may have repetitive strain injury from holding the phone for long periods of time.

2.4.2 Android

The following subsections outline the narration tools and apps that are available on the Android mobile platform.



2.4.2.1 Claro Scan Pen

The Claro Company also provides a free app on the Android Google Play store, which enables text to be narrated (at the time of writing). Search for "*Claro Scan Pen*" on the Google Play store.



Further information as well, as where to download, is available here:

[Claro ScanPen Android - Text to Speech App](#)

The following outline a few points in relation to Claro ScanPen:

- It is relatively easy-to-use.
- It's free to use on the android-platform.
- As with the Seeing AI app, dependent on the environment, it may also be possible to enable the reading back of text from a computer screen. Provided there is optimum environment lighting and the glare from the screen is negligible. Glass-based screens can be more difficult and challenging.
- As with all of these smart phone-based text to speech apps, they are heavily dependent on the quality of the camera, environment, and lighting. Invariably, the quality of the text captured is dependent on the quality of the camera on the phone.

If you have any technical difficulties in installing and using the software, please contact Claread technical support: support@clarosoftware.com

3 Dictation Tools

Dictation (Speech to text) technology enables end users to compose text in the form of reports, assignments or essays using the voice. This technology has significantly improved over the past number of years, in particular, on the Google Docs and Microsoft Word platforms. However, one of the drawbacks is that it's only good for *basic* English. The accuracy of subjects specific vocabulary or abbreviation may be less accurate. Nonetheless, these technologies can significantly improve the time in the composition of reports, assignments and essays. The following subsections outline the dictation features on Windows, Google Docs and Mac OS.

3.1 Mac OS and Windows

The following subsections outline the dictation functionality in Microsoft Office 365 as well as Google Docs. Both of these platforms are *web-based*. That means they can be used on an Internet browser within the Mac OS or indeed within the Windows operating system.

3.1.1 Microsoft Office

As stated above, Microsoft Office can be downloaded and installed on both windows and Mac platforms by MTU students and staff.



3.1.1.1 Downloading and Installation

For students downloading and installing the said software, follow the instructions in the link below:

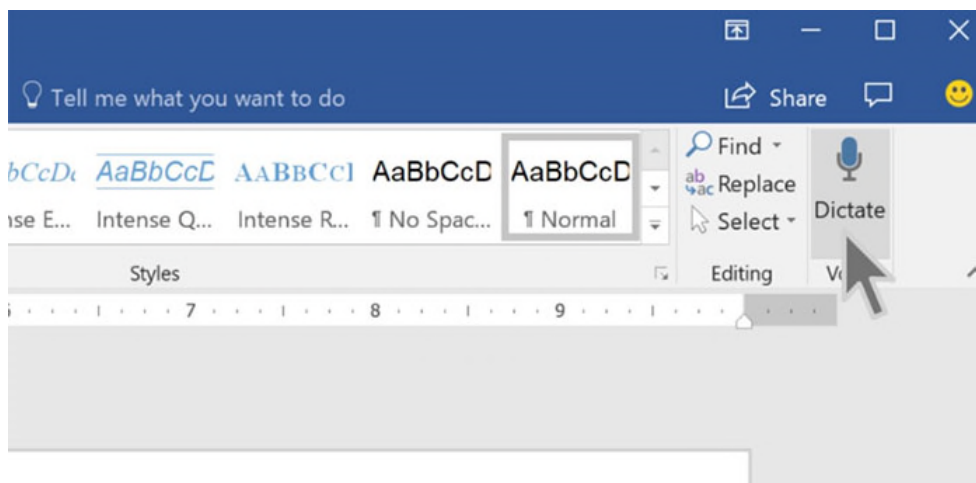
[Students - Microsoft Office](#)

For staff downloading and installing the said software, follow the instructions in the link below:

[Staff - Microsoft Office](#)

If you have any technical difficulties installing the software, please contact the MTU IT Services Department Technical Support in your campus.

3.1.1.2 Microsoft Word Dictate



The latest version of Microsoft Word has quite an accurate dictation function for Basic English vocabulary. To activate Microsoft Dictate, you will need to open Microsoft word either download the latest version of Office365 onto your computer or log onto Office365 with your MTU staff/student logon details (e.g. MS0012345@mtu.ie).

In the Microsoft Word ribbon:

- Click **Home**
- Then click **Dictate**

You will also need to have a microphone on your computer. Most laptops have an inbuilt microphone which should already be configured and set up for use.

3.1.2 Google Docs

Google Docs is available via Internet browser which can be used on both Mac and Windows platforms. The following subsection outlines the voice typing functionality within Google Docs.

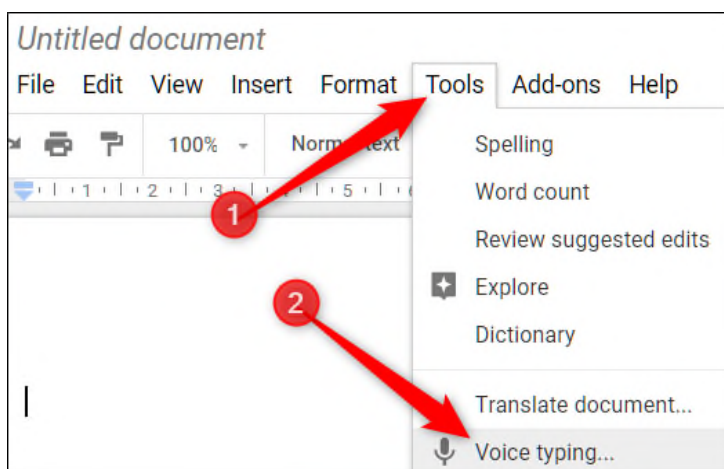


3.1.2.1 Voice Typing

Google Docs also has a very accurate dictation solution for Basic English vocabulary. This can be accessed online by logging into Google Docs using a Gmail account. If you do not have a Gmail account, it is quite easy to create. You will then be able to log on to Google Docs. To use this feature, undertake the following steps:

Open up a new blank Google document

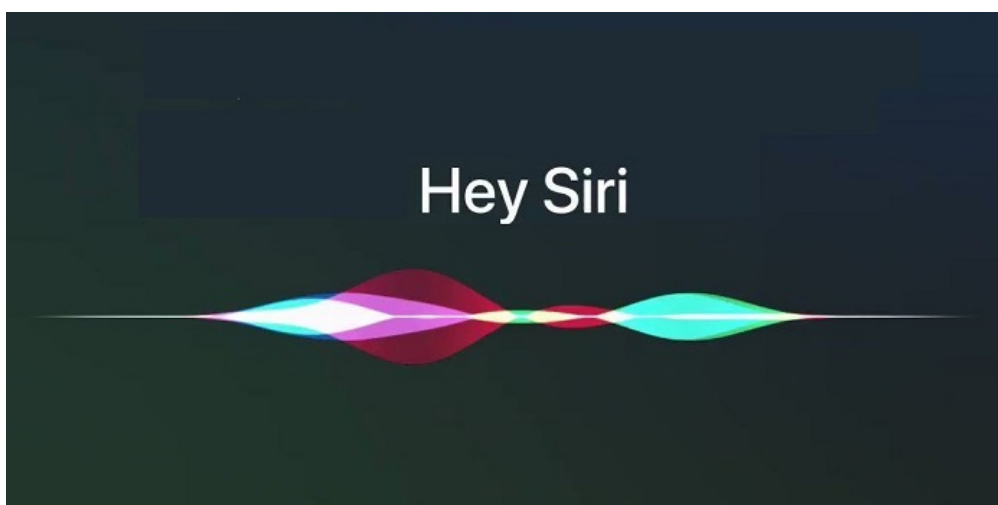
- Click **Tools**
- Click **Voice Typing** (you may be asked to provide access to the microphone on your computer)



3.2 Mac

3.2.1 Siri

For those students and staff that have Mac computers/laptops, Apple has its own speech to text software named Siri.



This can be used to dictate assignments and essays. The following link gives an outline of how to use Siri to dictate messages and documents on the Mac:

[Dictate Messages and Documents on Mac](#)

Voice Control is similar to Siri however, it enables the complete control of the iPhone or Mac computer using voice. The following videos provide an overview of the functionality of Voice Control:

[Introducing Voice Control on Mac and iOS](#)

[Dictation Voice Control on your iPhone](#)

Note: The various Mac OS/iOS versions will have a differing method of accessibility and usability. As well as that, the quality of the Siri/Voice Control is dependent on the Mac OS version as well as Internet connectivity and hardware. It is therefore advisable

for the end user to research the functionality of Siri/Voice Control on their own particular Mac operating system version.

If there are difficulties using Siri, please contact Apple Technical Support quoting the product serial number and they may be able to help resolve. The Apple Technical Support telephone number is: 1800 80 40 62

4 Other Learning Tools

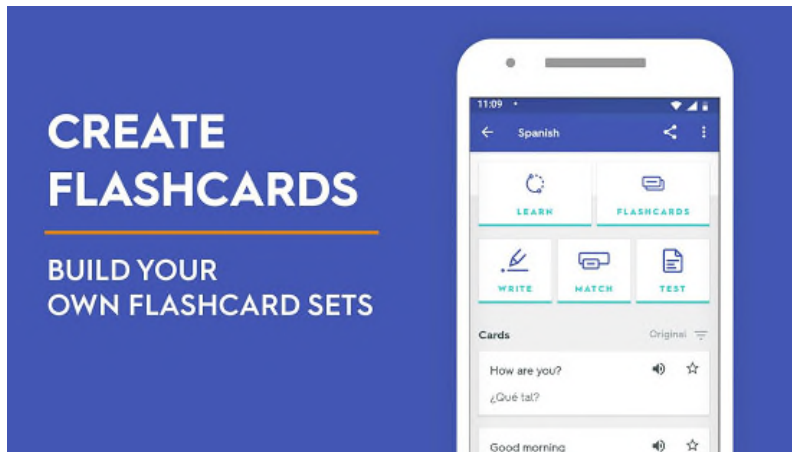
4.1 All Platforms

The following subsections outline study and revision applications that are available via web browser and mobile devices.

4.1.1 Study and Revision

4.1.1.1 Quizlet Flashcards

Quizlet is a study tool which enables students learn and revise using flashcards. It is available via a browser as well as mobile devices. Quizlet incorporates metrics to enable students to monitor their progress when learning any particular topic. It is easily visual and fun way of learning for students.



Some of the benefits of flashcards would include:

- Revision and Enforcement of Topics.
 - *Study of any topic/subject e.g. languages, science, engineering and humanities.*
- Measured Metrics

- *Progress indicators on studying which displays the number of correct/incorrect answers.*

- Facilitates “Micro-Study”
 - *Study any time-any where-any duration*

Further information can be found by visiting the Quizlet website:

[Quizlet Website](#)

The app is available on the Google Play store:

[Quizlet - Apps on Google Play](#)

The app is also available on the Apple App Store:

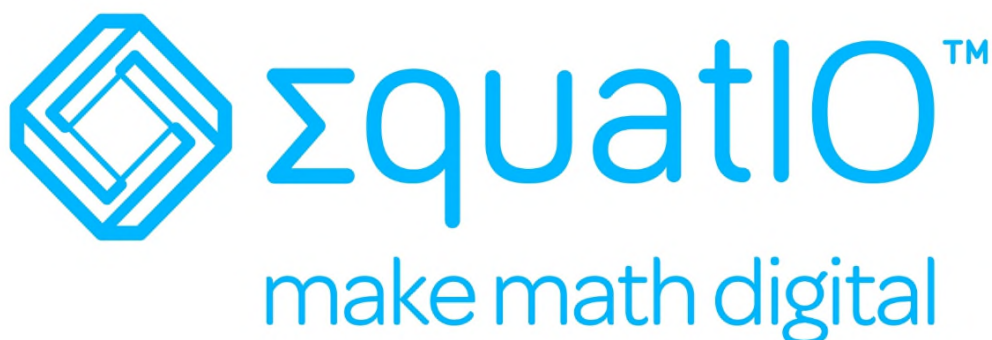
[Quizlet on the App Store](#)

This is a “freemium” type product where the basic product is free but users have the opportunity to upgrade. There may be a subscription-based charge if upgrading.

4.1.2 Maths and Chemistry Writing Software

4.1.2.1 EquatIO for Google Chrome

EquatIO enables the rapid *composition* of mathematical expressions, equations, graphs and chemistry formulas digitally.



The end user simply types or writes their mathematical expression into a keyboard or touch screen and the software will convert it into digital (textual) mathematics. The end user can also *dictate* certain mathematical expressions.

An overview of this software is outlined in the following link:

[EquatIO for Google Introduction - YouTube](#)

The following link provides a more in-depth overview of the functions of EquatIO:

[EquatIO Feature Overview](#)

The following link outlines how to use EquatIO for remote learning. This may be useful for lecturers/tutors who teach Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based subjects:

[EquatIO for Remote Learning](#)

EquatIO is free to use by lecturers/teaching staff (at the time of writing). EquatIO can also be used by students as a trial version and charges may apply thereafter.

For further information, please contact Texthelp Technical Support Services:

support@texthelp.com

Please also note that in order to use *EquatIO*, you will be asked to activate the said product(s) using your staff email address.

4.1.2.1.1 Installing and Activating

The following video tutorial outlines how to install and activate EquatIO in your Chrome browser.

[EquatIO: Take Home Installation](#)

If there are difficulties with any aspect of the installation process, please contact Texthelp Technical Support Services: support@texthelp.com

4.2 Windows and Mac OS

The following subsection outlines a free touch typing tool that is available via web browser irrespective of the operating system.

4.2.1 Touch Typing

Typing.com is an online browser based free typing tutor. It contains rich functionality in helping end-users build up the touch-typing ability is abilities.



In order to use the software you need to log on and create a user account.

[Free Typing Tutor - Typing.com](https://www.typing.com)

Please note, users are required to provide personal details in order to create an account.

4.3 Mobile

The following subsections outline an innovative mind mapping application that is available to download on both the iOS and android mobile devices.

4.3.1 Mind Mapping

4.3.1.1 SimpleMind

Simple Mind is a free mind mapping tool which can be installed on the smart phone (iOS/android). You can also upgrade to the paid version of this software.



You'll find an outline of the software by clicking on the following link:

[A Quick Look - SimpleMind - YouTube](#)

The software can be downloaded from the Google Play Store:

[Android - SimpleMind Lite – Apps on Google Play](#)

The software can be downloaded from the Apple Apps Store:

[iPhone - SimpleMind+ Mind Mapping - App Store](#)

Please note, in order to use this product you may be required to provide personal details in order to create an account. For instance, if you are downloading the app via Google Play Store or Apple Apps Store, you need to have a Google play or Apple Apps Store account.

5 Windows 10 Virtual Desktop for DSS Students

The following subsection is only applicable to DSS students registered on the Cork based MTU campuses.

Virtual desktops enable students to logon to an operating system remotely. This particular operating system has the core assistive technology software tools installed. In essence, students logging onto the virtual desktop would have a similar experience as if they were logging on to a computer in the Assistive Technology Service (located on the MTU Cork campus).

The IT Services Team (Cork MTU campus) have kindly facilitated this Windows 10 virtual desktop (VMware) for students registered with the Disability Support Service in the Cork campuses. The Cork campuses would encompass Bishopstown, CCAD, NMCI and CSM.

Sincere thanks to the IT Services Manager, Dr Jonathan McCarthy, for supporting this and his team Aidan McDonald, Emma Callanan and with particular gratitude to Aaron Krawczyk for implementing this solution seamlessly.



Please note that there is a limited number of VMware remote desktops available and consequently the issuing of usernames and passwords is on a case-by-case basis. This is based on the needs of the DSS registered student.

Unfortunately, the said virtual desktop service is currently not available to DSS students in the Tralee campus.

For further information, please contact the Assistive Technology Officer, Mark Burleigh

The following link outlines how to access the VMware service:

[View Desktop Access: Cork Institute of Technology](#)

The following subsections outline the core assistive technologies on the said virtual machines.

5.1 Read Write Gold

Read & Write Gold 11 is available for use within the virtual desktop. The video tutorials for using the software can be found by clicking on the link below:

[Read Write Gold 11 - YouTube](#)

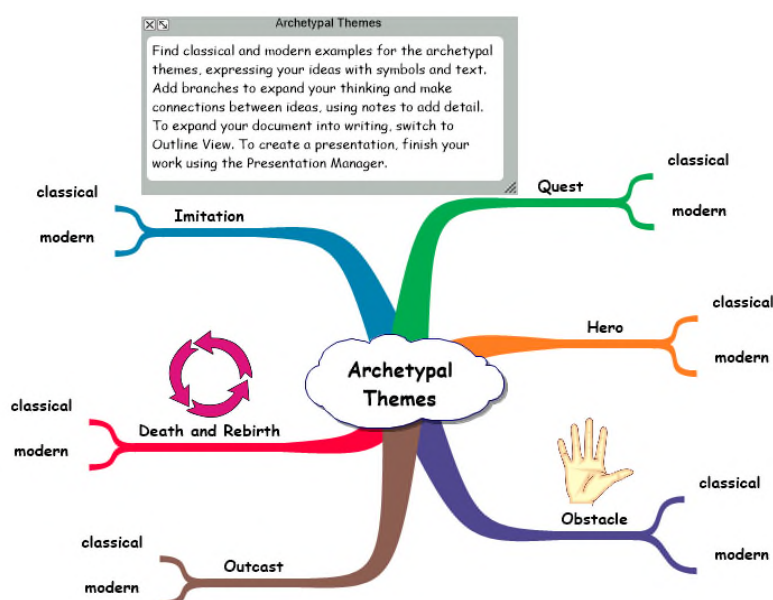
If using Read Write Gold 11 for exams and online assessments, you would need to use Screenshot Reader. This is the third video in the above playlist. This function can read back text in any aspect of the computer screen, be it a browser, PDF document, image and so forth.

5.2 Mind Mapping

There are two mind mapping software applications available for use within the virtual desktop and these are outlined in the following subsection.

5.2.1 Inspiration

Inspiration is a colourful mind mapping software which is quite beneficial to students in helping them to compose assignments and PowerPoint slides. As well as that, it also helps with revision. It has feature rich functionality, some of which would include the ability to auto generate, fully formatted Microsoft Word documents with table of contents as well as PowerPoint slides and so forth. It also contains a rich amount of templates to help with science, humanities and planning.

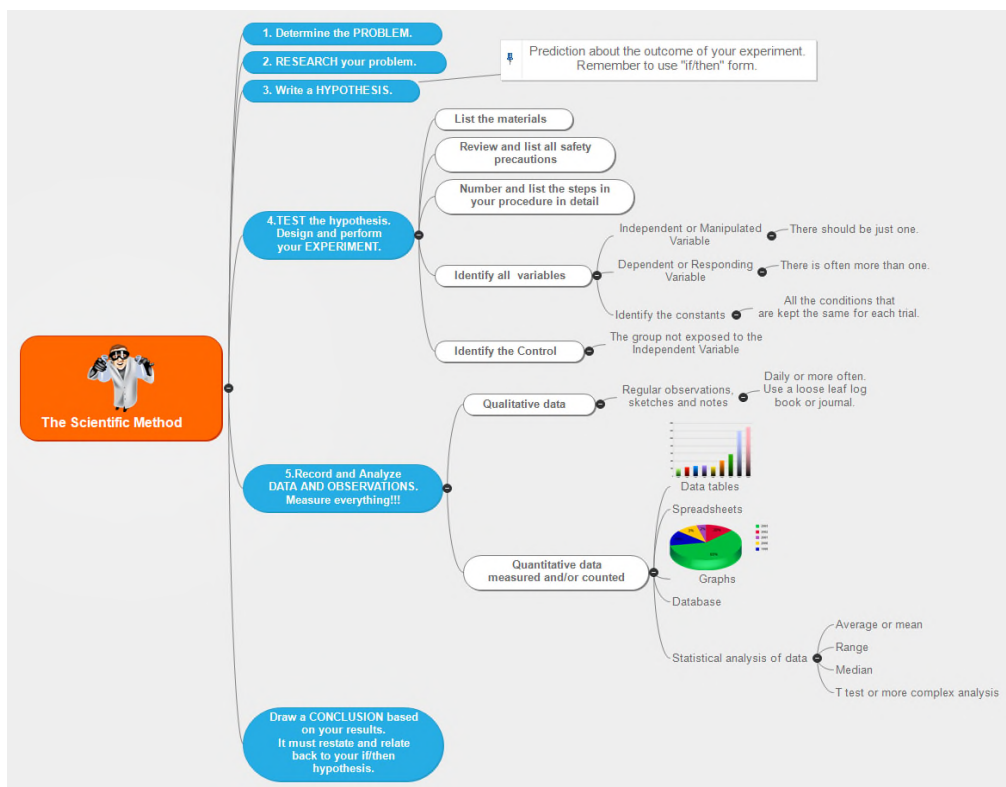


The following link provides an outline of video tutorials in relation to Inspiration:

[Mind Mapping for Writing Assignments and Idea Creation - YouTube](#)

5.2.2 MindView

MindView 6 is a professional mind mapping software which performs the same functionality as Inspiration. However, it has more professional templates when exporting projects and assignments to Microsoft Word/PowerPoint. It also contains a feature rich amount of templates for various subjects.



The following outlines a video tutorial in relation to MindView:

[MindView 6 Quickstart Tutorial Video - YouTube](#)

5.3 Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office is also installed on the AT virtual desktop which would include Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

6 Conclusions

This document provides an outline of the various core assistive technology tools available for use by students/staff registered with the MTU. These core assistive technologies may be of particular benefit to students with specific learning differences like dyslexia/dyspraxia. These tools could also be considered as educational technologies which may also benefit the *general* student/staff population. These benefits would include improved efficiencies in the areas of documentation productivity, report/assignment composition, revision, teaching and learning. A substantial proportion of the said assistive technologies are free to use both in the workplace/campus and in the home environment. Terms and conditions would apply in regards to the activation of various assistive technologies. For instance, one would need a valid MTU email address in order to activate certain products like Read & Write. The same requirement would be necessary in the activation of Office365 which contains a rich functionality in regards to literacy tools. Assistive technology tools are continually evolving. Indeed, new and emerging assistive technologies are developing on a constant basis. As a consequence, this document would be considered a snapshot of the current core technologies available.