

# EXPLORING FREE WEB-AND TABLET-BASED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR READING, WRITING AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

A Tip Sheet for Parents

From

**PACER CENTER**   
CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES™



# WHERE DO I START?

Finding the right technology always starts with understanding the needs of who's using it. Read "Locate free assistive technology online in five easy steps: a guide for parents" to develop a fun and effective game plan for exploring these tools with your child. This article is available for free online in the 2014 Winter PACESetter at <http://www.pacer.org/newsletters/pacesetter/>

After reading the article you'll see this tip sheet is used during step 4: Choosing the right keywords for your search.



# WHY ARE KEYWORDS IMPORTANT?

Keywords are how you explain to a search engine such as google what you're looking for, so it's important that these words tell the search engine what you need. This tip sheet connects your child's needs to matching keywords that will result in productive searching. Many of these keywords describe technological features that break down barriers to your child's learning. The technology listed in this guide is for reading, writing and organization skills and is only scratching the surface of what's available. By using the keywords in this guide you'll find many more technologies to explore. Consider stopping by the Simon Technology Center Lending Library during open hours to explore these tools first hand. Check out <http://www.pacer.org/stc/library/> for open hours and more information.



# WHERE DO I SEARCH?

This guide will cover free apps for Apple (iOS), Android, and Windows 8 devices as well as apps and extensions for the Google chrome web browser. Websites listed will work on most web browsers unless indicated otherwise.

Google

is a good place to start by using search phrasings such as:

Free (keyword) apps for iOS, android

Free (keyword) apps or extensions for chrome

Free (keyword) online



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## Step 1

**Find what's interesting to you  
and go to its corresponding  
page in the guide**



I WANT TO...

### **Organization**

Keep track of and be reminded of my assignments and responsibilities

Stay focused and eliminate distractions

Manage my time and attention to get things done



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## MANAGE MY TIME AND ATTENTION

### Step 2

Read through the descriptions of the example tools on the page. To find more information and use a particular tool click “More information found here” at the bottom of the description.

## TO GET THINGS DONE

Keywords to use:

- Time Announcer or Speaking Clock [L]
- Looping Timer [R]
- Workflow Tools [C, R]
- Time Management Tools [L,C,R]

### Step 3

To find more tools like the examples provided, use the corresponding keywords that describe them. L= example on the left C= example in the center R= example on the right



### Automatic Time Announcer

The Automatic Time Announcer App for Android announces the time aloud during set intervals, serving as a reminder of how much time is passing. You may set these intervals to occur from as little as 10 seconds apart to as much as 1 hour apart. For some, having an auditory reminder of time passing promotes better time management and encourages them to stay on task.

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### 30/30

30/30 provides a colorful and fun way to create a sequential list of timed tasks. You can add or subtract time for each task as you work. A system like this creates a “workflow” which helps some people focus their attention and manage their time more efficiently. Breaks can be a part of your workflow if you benefit from them. For Apple devices only, [more information found here.](#)



### Timer Loop

Managing distractions can be difficult because once distracted you can forget to redirect your attention. Tools like Timer Loop help create auditory reminders as a cue to ask yourself if you’re are on or off task. Timer loop lets you loop these reminders to run in the background as you work to remind you to stay on task. For Chrome Web Browser only.

[More information found here.](#)



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## Step 4

Combine your selected keyword with the appropriate search phrasing from page 4.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "free speaking clock online" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, navigation tabs for "Web", "Shopping", "Videos", "Images", "News", "More", and "Search tools" are visible. The "Web" tab is selected. Below the tabs, the search results are displayed. The first result is titled "Talking Clock - Speaking Clock - Online Clock - Online Stopwatch" with the URL "www.online-stopwatch.com/talking-clock/". The second result is titled "Alarm Clock Online - Speaking Clock" with the URL "www.speaking-clock.com/alarm-clock.html".

Google free speaking clock online

Web Shopping Videos Images News More Search tools

About 2,310,000 results (0.20 seconds)

**Talking Clock - Speaking Clock - Online Clock - Online Stopwatch**  
[www.online-stopwatch.com/talking-clock/](http://www.online-stopwatch.com/talking-clock/) ▾  
A Free Online Talking Clock! Easy to use **Speaking Clock** - totally free, can be downloaded or used **online**. Set how often it talks. Try it now!

**Alarm Clock Online - Speaking Clock**  
[www.speaking-clock.com/alarm-clock.html](http://www.speaking-clock.com/alarm-clock.html) ▾  
The official World **Clock**. Home. Fast search by City ... Free Alarm **Clock Online**. Wake up at the specified time. Current time. 00:00:00. # Wake up time set #.

## Step 5

Quickly skim your search results and click on those that seem like a good fit. If you can't find what you're looking for, try a different keyword or change the phrasing of your search.



# I WANT TO...

## Writing

- Write my ideas by speaking aloud Pg 10
- Spell words correctly as I write Pg 11
- Organizes my ideas Pg 12
- Use a different keyboard to make typing easier Pg 13

## Reading

- Have text read aloud to me Pg 14
- Display text so it's easier to see and read Pg 15
- Summarize text for faster reading Pg 16



# I WANT TO...

## Organization

Keep track of and be reminded of my assignments and responsibilities

Pg 17

Stay focused and eliminate distractions

Pg 18

Manage my time and attention to get things done

Pg 19

# WRITE USING MY VOICE

## Keywords to use:

- Speech to Text [L,C,R]
- Dictation [L, C, R]



Siri

Siri allows users to write with their voice in any application. Look for the microphone icon on the keyboard of your apple device (available in all apple devices made since Fall 2012). Siri also responds to voice commands, allowing you to write emails notes, and more, hands free. [More information found here.](#)



Talk Typer

A free website with surprising accuracy, talk typer will write your sentences after you speak them (works only in the google chrome browser.) This website will read your writing back to you to help ensure that it translated your voice correctly to text. Try it out at <http://talktyper.com/>



Built in Dictation

Many computers and tablets have built in features that allow you to write with your voice. Look for the keywords above in your options menu or in the accessibility section to turn these features on.

# HELP CORRECT MY SPELLING

Keywords to use:

- Contextual Spell Checker [L]
- Advanced Spell Checker [L]
- Word Prediction [R]



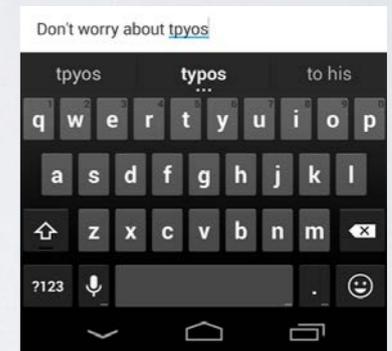
Ginger

Ginger is an advanced spell checker that examines the context of a sentence, providing the right words when other spell checking engines come up blank. Ginger is free to use on Android devices, as well as Windows computers and some web browsers. [More information can be found here.](#)



Google Voice Search

If you ask Google Voice Search “how do you spell” and then the word, it will spell the word aloud back to you. This allows quick spell check support when handwriting or using regular spellcheckers. Voice search is available on many browsers and tablets, [more information can be found here.](#)



Android

The standard keyboard in android devices predicts your words as you type to assists your spelling as you type. Tap a word selection to insert it into your writing. Android devices also have a accessibility feature called talk back that will speak aloud the letters and words as the user is typing. [More information can be found here.](#)  
[Talkback information found here.](#)

# ORGANIZE MY IDEAS

Keywords to use:

- Mind mapping [L, C]
- Outlining tools [L, C]
- Graphic organizers for writing



## Inspiration maps lite

Inspiration offers a fun and quick way to “map” your ideas and turn them into a bulleted outline. The app also features a “rapid fire mode” which allows users to quickly enter their ideas and organize them on the map. Inspiration also includes helpful templates for common assignments. The lite version (lite version means the free version of an app) allows users to create up to five mind maps. Available only for Apple devices, [more information found here.](#)



## Mindmeister

Like Inspiration, Mindmeister allows you to map your ideas and turn them into a bulleted outline. With a free account, you can create up to three maps and access them from online or Apple and Android devices. Mindmeister also offers reminder and priority level features to their maps to be used as a planning tool for larger assignments. [More information found here.](#)



## Audio Note Lite

Audio Note lite records up to ten minutes of audio and syncs the audio to digital text/handwriting in a virtual note. Think aloud while you sketch ideas and record your voice on the device. When done, you can touch your drawing and hear what you were thinking during the exact moment you were drawing that part of the diagram. Available for apple and android devices, [more information found here.](#)

# TYPE USING A DIFFERENT KEYBOARD

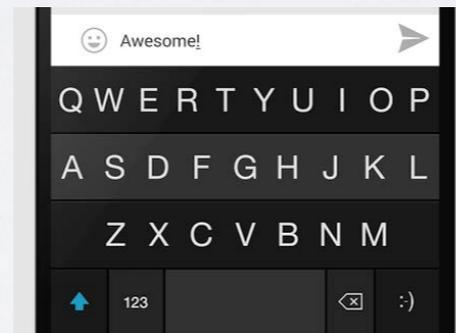
Keywords to use:

- Alternative keyboard app [L,C]
- On screen keyboard (for computers) [R]
- Swiping keyboard (for tablets) [L]



## Touch Pal Keyboard

Touch pal allows you to drag your finger from letter to letter to type out words, instead of typing using multiple fingers. You may change the look and feel of the keyboard to suite your needs. The app also offers word prediction. Available for Windows 8, Android and Apple devices. [More information found here.](#)



## Flesky

Flesky is a truly unique keyboard. You may type as little as two letters, hit space and Flesky uses advanced word prediction to fill in your words and say them aloud. If Flesky's predictions are correct, it's possible to write more in less time with less spelling errors. Available for Apple and Android devices. [More information found here.](#)



## On Screen Keyboard

Built into many Windows computers are on screen keyboards which allow you to type using using a mouse, a smaller amount of keyboard keys, or switches. A scan feature allows you to type using a switches that can be activated in multiple ways. [More information found here.](#)

# HAVE TEXT READ ALOUD TO ME

Keywords to use:

- Text to speech (TTS) [L,C,R]



## Select and Speak

Using this tool, any text highlighted in the chrome web browser will be read aloud with a surprisingly natural voice. Change the speed, pitch and even the language of the voice to find your preferred reading pace. This can be valuable tool when reading long web articles for school or leisure. [More information found here.](#)



## Speak Selection

Speak selection is a built in feature that reads aloud any text a user selects on their apple device. As the text is read, the words spoken are highlighted, creating a quick and engaging reading experience. The variety of voices and adjustable reading speed allows you to customize a reading voice that suits your style. [More information found here.](#)



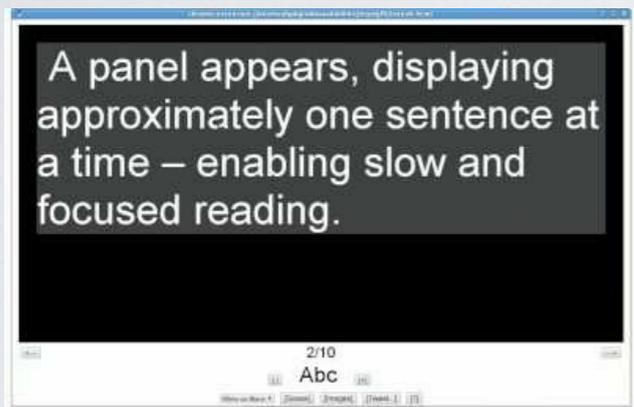
## TTS in your computer

TTS come pre-included into many Windows and Mac computers and can be quickly used with keyboard shortcuts. This tool can be used with any text on your computer and comes in handy for proofreading and other uses. For Mac [click here](#) for Windows [click here](#).

# DISPLAY TEXT SO IT'S EASIER TO SEE AND READ

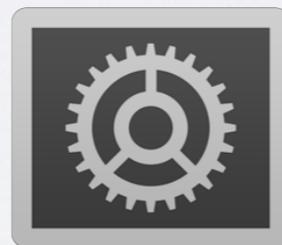
Keywords to use:

- Read it Later Services/Apps
- Text Display Options (search in settings menu and online) [C]
- Online teleprompter (use with your favorite text to speech tool )



## Cortexit

This tool reduces distractions when reading online and makes reading more interactive. Using this tool, any text highlighted in the Chrome web browser will open in a separate window where only one sentence at a time is displayed. You scan the text using the arrow keys to jump from sentence to sentence. The color contrast and size of the text is adjustable. [More information found here.](#)



## Text Settings

The accessibility menu of your computer or tablet will offer various ways to change the way text is displayed. Larger text, increased contrast and zooming are a few examples of the many ways that text can be optimized for readability. For Apple devices [visit here](#), for Windows computers [visit here](#) for Mac [visit here](#).



## Clearly

Evernote clearly reduces visual clutter on webpages and gives you control over the size, color and font type of text on a web-page. This custom reading environment can help with attention, comprehension and enjoyment when reading online. [More information found here.](#)

# SUMMARIZE TEXT FOR FASTER READING

Keywords to use:

- Summary Tool [C,R]
- Text Compactor [C,R]
- Text Summarizer [C,R]



## Instagrok

This unique online tool functions like a search engine, but instead of displaying web pages, it provides a visual map of a topic displaying key facts. Create a free account to journal about a topic and explore its key facts. For some people Instagrok provides a faster and more engaging way to explore a topic. [More information found here.](#)



## TLDR

TLDR (stands for too long, didn't read) generates a short summary of the information on a webpage. It uses an algorithm to examine word usage, paragraph structure, grammar and other elements of the text. It provides a way to get a summary of information on a webpage without having to read through a lot of text to find important information. [More information found here.](#)



## TextCompactor.Com

Paste your text into this webpage, decide what percentage of the original text you want read, and read the summary provided. Copy and paste your summary into [rewordify.com](http://rewordify.com), for a summary which replaces words you have yet to learn with words you're familiar with. These tools work best with non-fictitious subject matter, such as historical events. [More information found here.](#)

# KEEP TRACK OF ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Keywords to use:

- Task Lists [L,C]
- To Do List Manager [L,C]
- Online Student Planner [R]



Wunderlist

Wunderlist allows you to create and access to do lists from online or your mobile devices. Due dates reminders, notes and files can be attached to each to-do to make Wunderlist as in depth as a planner or as simple as a grocery list. Available online and on Apple, Android, or Windows 8 devices. [More information found here.](#)



Evernote

Whether it's homework, pictures, to do lists, websites or more, Evernote provides a system of capturing, storing, and finding important information. Information is stored as "notes" in virtual notebooks you create for individual classes, assignments and more. You may add a reminder to important information to be notified when something is due. Available online and for Apple and Android devices. [More information found here.](#)



My homework

My Homework offers a virtual alternative to the paper planners students are familiar with. There are various options to view past, current and upcoming assignments to see what homework you've done and what needs to be completed in the future. Reminders can be added to assignments to notify you of your assignments before they're due. You can access your planner from online, and on multiple devices, [more information found here.](#)

# STAY FOCUSED AND ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Keywords to use:

- Site Blockers / Online Filters [L]
- Parental Controls [L, R]
- Productivity Tools [L]
- Minimalist Text Editor/Word Processor [C]



## Stay Focused

Stay focused enables you to decide when and how much time you want to spend on websites that distract you. You can block a select list of websites, or even block all websites except the ones you've deemed ok to use. Stay Focused can block distractions for a set number of hours or during certain day's and times to promote study routines by eliminating distractions during study sessions. For Chrome web browser only. [More information found here.](#)



## Writer

Writer is an online typewriter simulator that produces typewriter sounds as you type. Writer features a simple blank screen so you type free from distractions. You can adjust the font, color, and size of the text and volume and variety (electric or manual) of typewriter sounds. Writer features a word counter, and all works are saved to your free account. For Chrome web browser only. [More information found here.](#)



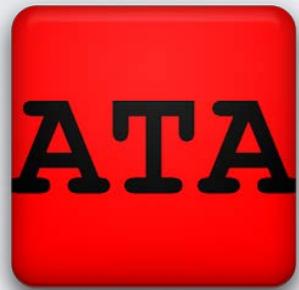
## Guided Access

Guided access is a feature built into any Apple mobile device using iOs 6 above. When enabled, it will lock you into using only one app. In order to exit out of the app, you must type in a 4 number passcode. By locking yourself in an app, you will have to thoughtfully enter a password to exit and pursue a distraction. [More information found here.](#)

# MANAGE MY TIME AND ATTENTION TO GET THINGS DONE

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