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ReadSpeaker® TextAid Browser Extension

There are a number of ReadSpeaker TextAid browser extensions available, which speech enable the text content of web pages of websites, Google Docs, Microsoft Word Online pages, emails in Gmail and Outlook online, and PDF documents in the user's browser, so that the user can listen to the text. They also provide writing assistance tools for Google Docs, Microsoft Word Online pages, and emails in Gmail and Outlook online. At present, there are three such products: ReadSpeaker TextAid Chrome Extension, supporting both the Google Chrome and Opera browsers, ReadSpeaker TextAid Edge Extension for Microsoft Edge, and ReadSpeaker TextAid Firefox Extension for Mozilla Firefox.

Product Description

The TextAid browser extensions show a ReadSpeaker icon on the browser's toolbar.



Clicking this icon when on a web page that is supported by this tool, displays a toolbox, including a player and several feature buttons. The tool works on (most) web pages of websites, PDF documents, Google Docs pages, Microsoft Word Online pages, and emails in Gmail and Outlook online.



On all supported pages, when the user first selects text and then clicks on the Listen button, the selected text is read out loud while it is highlighted in one color and the word currently being read is highlighted in another color.

On Google Docs and Microsoft Word Online pages, depending on the settings, when the user clicks the Listen button without first selecting text, the reading will start at the beginning of the document or at the current cursor position. Again, the text that will be read is highlighted in one color and the word currently being read is highlighted in another color.

Using the buttons on the player, the user can stop the audio version of the content, pause and restart it, and close the player (which stops the reading).

Users who have difficulty spelling correctly can benefit from the writing assistance feature, which will sound or spell out letters they type in a Google Doc, Word Online document, or email in Gmail or Outlook online and read out each word when completed.

The buttons in the toolbox enable the following features:

- Move - Drag the toolbox to another position on the screen.
- Settings - Allows the user to
    - choose the user interface language

    - choose a reading mode (only for Google Docs and Word Online): start reading at cursor position or read the whole document,
    - turn highlighting off or on,
    - choose whether to highlight only words, only the text that will be read, or both,
    - and choose the colors used for highlighting words, for the text that will be read, and for the text being highlighted.
- Writing Assistance (only for Google Docs, Word Online, and emails in Gmail and Outlook online) - Allows the user to
    - turn writing assistance on or off
    - choose between letters being sounded out or spelled out.
- Voice Settings - Allows users to adjust the reading speed.
- Reading Language - Shows a list of available languages to choose from for reading the content.
- Snapshot - Allows having text that cannot be selected read aloud from a pop-up window.

The audio is generated using ReadSpeaker text-to-speech technology.

The TextAid browser extensions are cloud-based software in combination with SAAS (Software As A Service) that can be activated in the supported browser via the browser's web store. The text-to-speech feature of the tool will only work for licensed users.

Features

ReadSpeaker icon in browser toolbar

The TextAid browser extension can be activated on supported pages by clicking the ReadSpeaker icon in the browser's toolbar. This will activate the tool and show the extension's toolbox on the page open on the active tab of the browser.

The extension can be deactivated by clicking the Close button in the toolbox on any page.

When the TextAid browser extension is active, the toolbox will automatically be shown when any supported page is opened. When it is not active, the toolbox will not be shown when a supported page is opened, and the user will have to click the ReadSpeaker icon in the browser toolbar to activate the tool again.

Text to speech

The TextAid browser extensions can read text out loud using state-of-the-art text to speech (TTS).

Synchronized highlighting

Words are simultaneously highlighted as they are read while the text that will be read is highlighted in a different color.

The user can choose to have only words highlighted, only the text to be read, or both, or turn highlighting off.

Colors for highlighting

A default combination of colors is provided for highlighting words (light blue) and the text (light green), and the highlighted text itself (black).
The user can personalize these colors. Eight colors are available as background color for highlighting the text and/or words. Underlining can be chosen as an alternative. 6 colors are available for the highlighted text itself.

Reading Speed

The default reading speed (or speaking rate) is “normal”. The user can personalize the reading speed from very slow to very fast on a sliding scale.

Reading selected text

If text is selected on the web page, the selected text will be read out loud when the Listen button is clicked.

Reading the whole document

This feature is only available in Google Docs and on Word Online pages. If the text reading mode is set to “Read the whole document”, the whole text on the page will be read out loud provided it is no larger than 12,000 characters. If the document is longer than this, only the first section of the document will be read.

Reading text from cursor position

This feature is only available in Google Docs and on Word Online pages. If the text reading mode is set to “Start reading at cursor position”, clicking the Listen button will result in a section of the text with a maximum of 12,000 characters being read out from the cursor position onwards.

Reading text using Snapshot

If there is text on a page which cannot be selected, the Snapshot feature can be used to read out the text. The user selects an area on the screen with the mouse. A snapshot is made of the selected screen area and sent to an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) provider. The text content is returned and read out loud from a pop-up window. The OCR is done using third party technology. Please note that there is a limit to the number of OCR conversions per month per TextAid user, and using the Snapshot feature in a TextAid browser extension counts too (see limitations section below).

Reading multiple languages

The user can select a reading language from a list of languages in a drop-down list to determine in which language the text must be read. The TextAid browser

extensions can read in multiple languages. Presently supported languages (Q4, 2018) are: American English, British English, Australian English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish.
Note: if the user selects text and asks for it to be read in a language that does not match the text, the reading will not sound correct.

User friendly user interface

The user interface (UI) for the TextAid browser extensions is available in (Q4, 2018) Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish.

Technical Specifications

Supported devices

The TextAid browser extensions are cross-platform solutions for pcs and laptops. They should work with:

- all commonly used online pcs and laptops (including Chromebooks for the Chrome extension).
- all major operating systems:
    - Windows, macOS for all browser extensions,
    - Chrome OS, for Chrome extension only,
    - and more provided adding extensions for the browser is supported.

ReadSpeaker TextAid Chrome Extension is browser specific for Chrome and also supports Opera.
ReadSpeaker TextAid Edge Extension is browser specific for Microsoft Edge.
ReadSpeaker TextAid Firefox Extension is browser specific for Mozilla Firefox.

Simple to add extension to browser, TTS is cloud-based

Users do not need to download and install separate software for the TextAid browser extensions to work on their computers and/or tablets. It is simply a matter of following the steps for adding an extension to your browser. This stores the extension on your device and adds a ReadSpeaker icon to the browser's toolbar which allows users to activate the TextAid browser extension on supported pages. The text-to-speech software the tool calls on to generate speech is cloud-based and hosted by ReadSpeaker.
Note that a TextAid browser extension can be added to the supported browser by anyone, but the text-to-speech feature of the tool will only work for licensed users. All users of ReadSpeaker TextAid are licensed users when logged in to TextAid.

Users

Any of the TextAid browser extensions can be used by licensed TextAid users at no extra cost. To use the extension they must be logged to to TextAid.

The extension for Chrome can also be sold separately (without TextAid) to organizations that have Google accounts. Individual licensed users who are not licenced TextAid users are recognized through the email address or domain with which they are logged in to the Chrome browser.

Text-to-Speech software

The TextAid browser extensions call on ReadSpeaker's text-to-speech software which generates the audio for reading text out loud. It is cloud-based and hosted by ReadSpeaker in a high-security environment with a high level of redundancy and failover and with the following properties:

- double redundant enterprise load balancing and failover

- 100% Gigabit network (internally and to the Internet)
- IBM server hardware with virtualization engine
- redundant power supply
- highly scalable and high availability design
- environmentally friendly
- Storage Area Network (SAN) storage over Gigabit iScsi
- UPS and diesel engine power backup
- 24/7 video and audio surveillance
- Level 3 security
- Argonite-based automatic fire-fighting system
- automatic server monitoring every 3 seconds with alarm system
- automatic daily backup

Reads web pages over HTTPS

TextAid browser extensions can read web pages that are encrypted using SSL encryption. Also, the security of all data transfers executed by the TextAid browser extensions is guaranteed by the SSL encryption.

Reads static and dynamic text content

TextAid browser extensions can read any clear text content as long as it is presented using standard HTML technology regardless of how it is generated on the customer's web server.

Reading limit

TextAid browser extensions have a default reading limit of 12,000 characters per activation, including spaces.

User settings

The settings the user selects through the features in the toolbox are saved by the browser, so that the TextAid browser extension will have the same settings for that user, when using the service again on the same device.

Requirements and Limitations

User must be logged in

ReadSpeaker TextAid browser extensions will only work for users while

- logged in to their ReadSpeaker TextAid account, or
- (Chrome extension) logged in to Google Chrome with an email address for which the ReadSpeaker TextAid Chrome Extension has been licensed by ReadSpeaker, or
- (Chrome extension) logged in to Google Chrome with an email address belonging to a domain for which the ReadSpeaker TextAid Chrome Extension has been licensed by ReadSpeaker.

Time to first audio

TextAid browser extensions do not start the playback of the audio until the speech is fully generated by the ReadSpeaker text-to-speech software, which means the longer the selected text to read, the longer the time to first audio. This is also the reason for the reading limit of 12,000 characters. Future improvements include faster time-to-first audio.

Snapshot

Optical character recognition is performed by third party OCR software. The result will be on a best effort basis. ReadSpeaker cannot guarantee that all characters will be correctly recognized.

For the TextAid account of the user, the default maximum number of conversions with OCR per month is 25. Using the Snapshot feature in a TextAid browser extension is included in this count. Optionally, this maximum can be increased. This will be specified in your order confirmation.

Supported web pages

TextAid browser extensions will function correctly only on web pages where the content is presented using standard HTML technology.
Reading PDF documents in the browser is supported with the exception of PDFs open in Google drive.
The tool doesn't appear on web pages that have been explicitly listed within the tool as not supported, including Word Online document preview pages, Google Drive pages, Google Sheets, and Google Slides as well as special browser tabs (e.g. empty tab, for Chrome and Opera: pages starting with “chrome://” such as chrome://settings, chrome://extensions, for Edge and Firefox: pages starting with “about:” such as about:flags (Edge),about:config (Firefox)).

JavaScript support

If the user’s browser does not support JavaScript, the TextAid browser extension will not work.

TextAid browser extension and mobile devices

TextAid browser extensions do not support mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) as these do not support installing extensions.

Intended Use

Customers may only use a TextAid browser extension, which is a licensed service for text to speech, in accordance with this product specification. It may be used

only by licensed users to listen to the content of supported pages, and only when the service is activated with the Listen button of the toolbox generated and displayed by the TextAid browser extension.
Any other use of TextAid browser extensions is not considered intended use.

Disclaimer

Features listed in this document are guaranteed only if the TextAid browser extension has been implemented according to the instructions provided by ReadSpeaker. Specifications and features as described in this product specification can be changed by the manufacturer without prior notice.