

# Screen Readers and Scanning

Screen readers and scanning and reading programs both talk, so what's the difference?

Often, when people are considering assistive technology for computer use by a person who is blind or visually impaired, confusion arises when it comes to the topic of speech output.

A "screen reading program" allows a user who cannot see the information displayed on the computer monitor to operate the device independently with synthesized speech output and/or Braille output provided by a refreshable Braille display.

The information is not just "dumped" out, but is controlled by the screen reading program, so the person can read it in a controlled manner.

The screen reading program allows access to many computer-based applications such as word processors, Internet browsers, E-mail programs, spreadsheet programs, etc.

On the other hand, a "scanning and reading program" is a program whose specific function is to allow a person who cannot read printed material to gain access to that information through the use of synthetic speech and display enhancements, plus a scanner.

These programs are "self-voicing," which means that they incorporate speech output in their design, so that material which is either typewritten or typeset, such as newspapers, books, magazines, etc. may be scanned into the computer, and then read.

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## Sources

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[JAWS for Windows](#)

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

[Window-Eyes](#)

<http://www.gwmicro.com>

[HAL](#)

<http://www.dolphinusa.com>

[OpenBook](#)

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

[Kurzweil 1000](#)

<http://www.kurzweiledu.com>

[Scan and Read](#)

<http://www.readingmadeeasy.com>

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