SIGHTLINES BY HAYLEY COMPANION · SEMINAR 01 · PRACTICAL TRACK

Reading and writing without your eyes: screen readers and braille displays

The whole seminar in one page. Read it once before you watch, then keep it open while you practise.

THE TWO SETTINGS TO CHANGE FIRST

- **Speed.** Push your screen reader's speech rate up a little every week. Turn it back down for anything hard: a maths line, a foreign word, code. Speed is a dial, not a one-time choice.
- **Punctuation level.** Set it to "some," not "all" and not "none." "All" reads every comma aloud and you drown. "None" hides where sentences end. "Some" is the quiet middle.

THE FOUR KEYBOARD MOVES THAT DO NINETY PERCENT OF EVERYTHING

- **Next heading.** Leap from section to section, skipping the rest of the page.
- **Heading list.** Bring up every heading at once and pick one, like a table of contents.
- **Read next line.** For when you want the detail, one line at a time.
- **Read continuously.** For when you want a chapter to run while you do something else.

The shape to remember: headings to find it, lines to study it, continuous to enjoy it.

THE EXACT KEYS

- **VoiceOver (Mac, built in):** turn on with Command and F5. Open the rotor with VO and U to get the heading list (VO is Control and Option). Read from here with VO and A.
- **VoiceOver (iPhone and iPad, built in):** turn on in Settings, Accessibility, VoiceOver, or ask Siri. Use the rotor (a two-finger twist) to set navigation to Headings, then flick down to move heading to heading.
- **NVDA (Windows, free):** press H to jump to the next heading, Insert and F7 for the elements list (choose Headings), Down arrow to read the next line, and Insert with Down arrow to read continuously.
- **TalkBack (Android, built in):** set the reading control to Headings, then swipe up or down to move between them.

BRAILLE ALONGSIDE SPEECH (IF YOU HAVE A DISPLAY)

- Use **speech** to get through a lot of text fast.
- Use **braille** for anything where the exact characters matter: spelling, a web address, a maths expression, a name.
- They are not a choice. They are two hands on the same job: speed in your ears, accuracy under your fingers.

YOUR FIVE-MINUTE PRACTICE TASK

- Open any article or document on your own device.
- Set punctuation to "some."
- Bring up the heading list and jump to a heading.
- Read one paragraph. If you have a braille display, read its first line by touch.

Four moves, two minutes. If you can do that, you have the skeleton of everything.

FREE DOWNLOADS AND WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- **NVDA screen reader (Windows, free forever):** nvaccess.org/download
- **VoiceOver (Mac, iPhone, iPad):** built in. Apple's guide: support.apple.com/voiceover
- **TalkBack (Android):** built in. Google's guide: support.google.com/accessibility/android
- **NVDA keyboard shortcut list:** search "NVDA commands quick reference" at nvaccess.org
- **AbilityNet (free UK advice on assistive technology):** abilitynet.org.uk

WATCH THE SEMINAR

The full fifteen-minute video for this companion lives on the Sightlines by Hayley channel and on the seminar page, where the complete script is also published. Next in the practical track: seminar 02, your phone is the best aid you own.

Sightlines by Hayley is a youth-led project in Woking, Surrey, founded by Hayley Huixi Xie. Free to use and free to share. App and organisation names are correct at the time of writing; check the current version of each tool.