Accessibility Features in Windows

Windows makes it easy to find options helpful for students who have difficulty seeing the screen, or for students who are blind and need to use the computer without a display. Below you will find accessibility features in Windows 7 and Windows Vista organized by how to make the computer easier to see, how to use the computer without a display (or monitor), and by keyboard shortcuts.

Make the computer easier to see

For students who have vision impairments and low vision, start by using the **Make the computer easier to see** page in the Ease of Access Center found in Windows 7 and Windows Vista.

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| **Tip** To go to the Ease of Access Center, press Windows logo key Description: winkey + U. |

1. In Windows 7 or Windows Vista, open the[Make the computer easier to see](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/Make-the-computer-easier-to-see-optimize-visual-display) page by clicking the **Start** buttonDescription: Picture of the Start button**,** clickingControl Panel,clicking **Ease of Access,** clicking **Ease of Access Center**, and then clicking **Make the computer easier to see.**
2. On the **Make the computer easier to see page**, you can select the options that you want to use:
   * **Choose a High Contrast theme.** This option allows you to set a high-contrast color scheme that heightens the color contrast of some text and images on your computer screen, making those items more distinct and easier to identify.
   * **Turn on or off High Contrast when Left ALT+LEFT SHIFT+PRINT SCREEN is pressed.** This option allows you to toggle a high-contrast theme on or off by pressing the LEFT ALT+LEFT SHIFT+PRTSCN (Print Screen) keys.
   * **Turn on Narrator.** This option sets Narrator to run when you log on to your computer. Narrator reads aloud on-screen text and describes some on-screen events (such as error messages appearing) while you're using the computer. For more information about using Narrator, see   
     [Hear text read aloud with Narrator](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/Hear-text-read-aloud-with-Narrator).
   * **Turn on Audio Description.** This option sets Audio Descriptions to run when you log on to your computer. Audio Descriptions describe what's happening in videos.
   * **Change the size of text and icons.** This option allows you to make text and other items on your screen appear larger, so they're easier to see. For more information, see [Make the text on your screen larger or smaller](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/Make-the-text-on-your-screen-larger-or-smaller).
   * **Turn on Magnifier.** One of the most common accessibility solutions for a computer user with low vision is a screen magnifier. Microsoft Windows includes a screen magnifier program called Magnifier which enlarges portions of the screen making it easier to view text and images and to see the whole screen more easily. Magnifier in Windows 7 now includes full-screen mode, lens mode, and docked mode. The magnification quality is improved and you can set the magnification level up to 16 times the original size, and choose to track what you magnify by movement of your mouse, the keyboard, or text editing. For more information about using Magnifier, see [Make items on the screen appear bigger (Magnifier)](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/Make-items-on-the-screen-appear-bigger-Magnifier).



**Figure 2-1**. Magnifier in lens mode

* + **Adjust the color and transparency of the window borders.** This option allows you to change the appearance of window borders to make them easier to see.
  + **Fine tune display effects.** This option allows you to customize how certain items appear on your desktop.
  + **Make the focus rectangle thicker**. This option makes the rectangle around the currently selected item in dialog boxes thicker, which makes it easier to see.
  + **Set the thickness of the blinking cursor.** This option allows you to make the blinking cursor in dialog boxes and programs thicker and easier to see.
  + **Turn off all unnecessary animations.** This option turns off animation effects, such as fading effects, when you close windows and other elements.
  + **Remove background images**. This option turns off all unimportant, overlapped content and background images to help make the screen easier to see.

For additional information about how to use accessibility features in Windows and other Microsoft products, see the Microsoft Accessibility Tutorials available online at [www.microsoft.com/enable/training/](http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/).

Use the computer without a display

For students who are blind, or partially blind, assistive technology products will be critical for productive computer use. To get started, Windows has many features that enable students to use the computer without a display. For example, you can have screen text read aloud by using Narrator or you can have Windows describe screen activity to you.

For students who are blind and cannot use a monitor you can turn on or adjust settings to **Use the computer without a display** in the Ease of Access Center. Below, you’ll find assistive technology products that will be needed for students who are blind or partially blind.

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| **Tip** To go to the Ease of Access Center, press Windows logo key Description: Picture of Windows logo key + U. |

1. In Windows 7 or Windows Vista, open the [**Use the computer without a display**](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/Windows7/Use-the-computer-without-a-display-optimize-for-blindness) page by clicking the **Start** button Description: Picture of the Start button, clicking **Control Panel**, clicking **Ease of Access**, clicking **Ease of Access Center**, and then clicking **Use the computer without a display**.
2. On the **Use the computer without a display** page, select the options that you want to use:
   * **Turn on Narrator.** Windows comes with a basic screen reader called Narrator, which reads text on the screen aloud and describes some events (such as an error message appearing) that happen while you're using the computer. This option sets Narrator to run when you log on to Windows. Narrator reads aloud on-screen text and describes some on-screen events (such as error messages appearing) while you're using the computer. For more information about Narrator, see [Hear text read aloud with Narrator](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/Hear-text-read-aloud-with-Narrator).
   * **Turn on Audio Description.** This option sets Audio Description to run when you log on to Windows. Audio descriptions describe what's happening in videos.
   * **Turn off all unnecessary animations.** This option turns off animation effects, such as fading effects, when windows and other elements are closed.
   * **How long should Windows notification dialog boxes stay open?** This option sets how long notifications are displayed on the screen before they are closed.