

# Teaching SSI students to use cursor and heading navigation skills effectively when using a screen reader in Microsoft Word



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# Screen reader hotkeys vs. Windows hotkeys

- Screen reader software **reads aloud information displayed on the computer screen.**
- It allows people who can't use the mouse **to use a combination of keyboard shortcuts (hotkeys)** to fully access a computer.
- The VI individual must **use a range of Windows hotkeys** (shortcuts that work when screen reader is off) **and screen reader specific hotkeys** (that only work when screen reader is on).

## Windows hotkeys (work all the time)

**Windows Key** = open Start Menu to launch an app or file

**Ctrl + Home** = jump cursor to top of document

**Ctrl + Alt + Tab** = display all open apps on your screen

**Windows Key + D** = jump to desktop and minimise all windows

## Screen reader specific hotkeys (only work when screen reader is on)

**Caps Lock + Down** = Read from cursor

**Ctrl** = stop talking

**Caps Lock + I** = read current line

**Caps Lock + F6** = open Heading List

**Caps Lock + F12** = current date & time

# Using a keyboard or braille display hotkeys?



# I have split this session into three sections

**1. Cursor navigation for reading and writing**

**2. Headings - how to add them and navigate using them**

**3. Resources to teach headings and cursor navigation skills**

# Why is it being able to control your cursor in Word important?

- By being able to move your Windows cursor accurately using with just hotkeys, **you are able to choose where to read and where to type with precision.**
- You will **build fluency in skipping to key information.** This is vital for a screen reader user who will have to put up with a lot of audio overload.

## Cursor navigation for reading and writing

In this section, I will discuss:

- **Moving your cursor** around a word document using hotkeys
- **Selecting text** to edit or delete using hotkeys
- Manipulating selected text (**delete, copy, cut, paste**) and formatting using hotkeys

**Note: all of these are Windows Hotkeys and work without screen reader on. I recommend having it on to hear what your student will hear.**

## **Word - moving your cursor around the document**

I can move the cursor to top of document using keyboard hotkeys

**Ctrl + Home**

I can move the cursor to end of document using keyboard hotkeys

**Ctrl + End**

I can move the cursor to end of current line using keyboard hotkeys

**Home**

I can move the cursor to start of current line using keyboard hotkeys

**End**

## **Word - moving your cursor around the document**

I can move the cursor up or down a line using keyboard hotkeys

**Down/up arrow**

I can move the cursor one character left or right using keyboard hotkeys

**Right/left arrow**

I can move the cursor one word left or right using keyboard hotkeys

**Ctrl + right arrow**

**Ctrl + left arrow**

## Word - selecting text to edit or delete

I can select a word from left to right by using keyboard hotkeys

Place the **cursor** at the **start of the word**  
Press **Ctrl + Shift + right arrow key**

I can select a word from right to left by using keyboard hotkeys

Place the **cursor** at the **end of the word**  
Pressing **Ctrl + Shift and left arrow key**

I can select all using keyboard hotkeys

**Ctrl + A**

## Word - selecting text to edit or delete

I can select all text from current cursor position to end of the line

**Shift + End**

I can select the whole paragraph from current cursor position

**Ctrl + Shift + Down Arrow**

I can read current selection

**Note: This is a screen reader hotkey.** *It is a really good way to check what is selected before you manipulate the text*

**Caps Lock + Shift + Down Arrow**

**Note: introduce the concept of the clipboard when teaching these skills. I use the analogy of a basket or backpack.**

## **Word - manipulating selected text**

I can delete selected text using keyboard hotkeys

Press the **backspace** or **delete** key

I can copy selected text to the clipboard using keyboard hotkeys

Once text is selected, press **Ctrl + C**  
This will save it to the Clipboard

I can cut selected text to the clipboard using keyboard hotkeys

Once text is selected, press **Ctrl + X**  
This will save it to the Clipboard

## Word - manipulating selected text

I can paste text from clipboard using keyboard hotkeys

Place your cursor where you want your text to be pasted and press **Ctrl + V**

**Note:** *if you copied then the text will remain in the original location, and you will have a copy here. There are now two copies of the same text. The text will remain in your Clipboard until you copy or cut another item.*

*If you used cut, then the text will permanently move.*

## **Activity One - Selecting text and using cut, copy & paste (8 minutes)**

Find the **Activity One word document**, in which I have created three mini-tasks to practise some of these hotkeys:

- Task One - hedgehog (selecting, copy & pasting - the basics)
- Task Two - Scrambled sentences (copy & paste)
- Task Three - Scrambled sentences (cut & paste)

# What are Headings?

- Headings are a fixed point in a word document that allow a screen reader user to **jump to the most relevant section** without listening to all the unneeded information.
- Headings **need to be added to a new word document.** You can do this with your mouse or with hotkeys.
- You can create styles for many different items in your document, but the most important are **heading levels** and the **main body of your text**, which is called the **Normal style**.
- Headings are built into (most) websites and **published documents**.

# Headings

There are two aspects of headings that you should be aware of when working with an SSI computer user:

**Adding Headings  
into a Word  
document for a  
screen reader user**

**Using a screen  
reader to  
navigate by  
Headings**

# Adding Headings into a Word document for a screen reader user

Put  
Headings  
into a word  
document

Select the phrase (or just have your cursor on the line it is on) and then press:

**CTRL + ALT + 1** = Heading Level 1 (main heading)

**CTRL + ALT + 2** = Heading Level 2 (sub-heading)

**CTRL + ALT + 3** = Heading Level 3 (sub-sub-heading)

**Note: This is a Windows Hotkey but always check with screen reader**

# Adding Headings into a Word document for a screen reader user

Change a heading back to Normal Style

Highlight the Heading (or have your cursor on the line it is on) and then press:

**CTRL + Shift + N** = Normal Style

# Using a screen reader to navigate by Headings

Search  
Headings  
Windows -  
shows list  
of  
headings  
(**slow  
way**)

**Caps Lock + F6** then **ARROW UP/DOWN** and  
**Enter.**

This will jump the cursor down to the chosen heading. Then press **Caps Lock + Down Arrow** to read from there.

## Scan Mode/Quick Keys

- **Quick Keys Navigation (JAWS)** or **Scan Mode (Narrator)** is a mode that lets you jump to different elements in a document with **a single key**.
- It is **automatically switched on when web browsing** but in Word, it needs toggling on. It will remain on until it is toggled off and you can't type using your cursor until it is.
- It is **solely for navigating quickly** around a document or webpage.

**Caps Lock and Spacebar** = Scan Mode on/off (Narrator)

**Caps Lock and Z** = Quick Keys mode on/off (JAWS)

# Using a screen reader to navigate by Headings

Jump to next/previous Heading using Quick Keys (**quick way**)

Turn **Scan Mode on (Caps Lock + Space)**

Letter navigation

**H** = Jump the next Heading

**Shift + H** = jump to previous Heading

Number navigation

You can also use numbers to go the next heading:

**1** = jump to next Heading Level 1

**Shift + 1** = jump to previous Heading Level 1

**2** = jump to next Heading Level 2

**Shift + 2** = jump to previous Heading Level 2

## **Activity - Selecting text and using cut, copy & paste (15 minutes)**

Find the **Activity Two word document**, in which I have created three mini-tasks to practise some of these hotkeys:

- Task One - Adding Headings into a Word document for a screen reader user
- Task Two - Navigate by Headings (slow way)
- Task Three - Navigate by Headings (quick way)

# Resources to teach headings and cursor navigation skills

- It takes **hours of practice to embed** some of these skills
- Teaching this skills to students can **be a little dull...** I found making engaging and fun activities a good way to help with this.
- I have **embraced the use of Generative AI** engines (CoPilot and Gemini) to help quickly make resources to help with some skills.
- I want to share some with you!

## Resources

- Scrambled Sentences (select, copy & paste)
- Blackwood Manor - Choose your own adventure (headings)
- Finn's Floating Summer - comprehension (reading, headings, typing, cursor navigation)
- Daddy Robot - Improve this sentence (typing, cursor navigation)
- Inside Out Information (headings)
- The Hillsborough Disaster 1989 (headings, cursor navigation, typing)

# Concluding Thoughts

- By building these skills across key stages, we are **introducing transferable, life-long tech skills** that will help build a sense of job-readiness for our students.
- By using the **familiar and 'safe' environment of MS Word, we can introduce skills** and hotkeys that users can use across a whole range of apps that they will use throughout secondary, further and higher education.
- **It is our duty as teachers for VI** to ensure school-leavers have these skills to ensure they are in the best possible position to thrive.

**Any  
Questions?**

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