A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES ON MAC

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A Teacher's Guide to Accessibility Features on a Mac

Apple devices continue to be some of the most accessible pieces of technology out there. It's no surprise then that Apple products are popular within the Special Educational Needs sector in the UK and beyond. And quite rightly so. Pupils can navigate through their products to better their educational experiences. The iPad's intuitive and customisable nature is well documented. However, not enough is said about the built-in Accessibility features within a Mac. Despite it being a more powerful machine with more complexities to explore, the Mac is still supremely accessible. It can cater for a huge number of needs and individuals can easily adapt the way that a MacBook functions to meet their preferences. In this Teacher's Guide, we will be taking you through some of the most impactful Accessibility features as well as giving you a general overview of how they all work. Let's start by looking into how you find the Accessibility features in the first place.

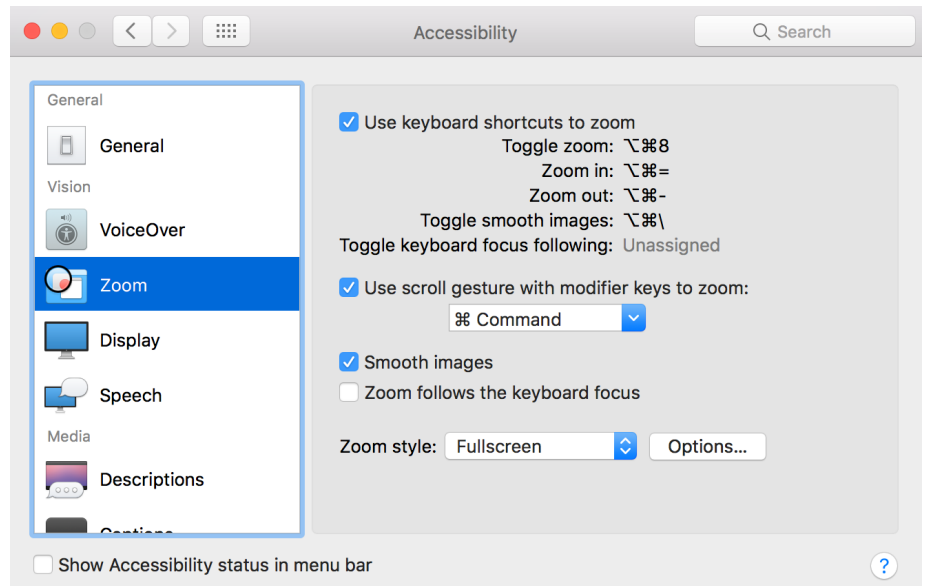## HOW TO FIND ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES ON A MAC
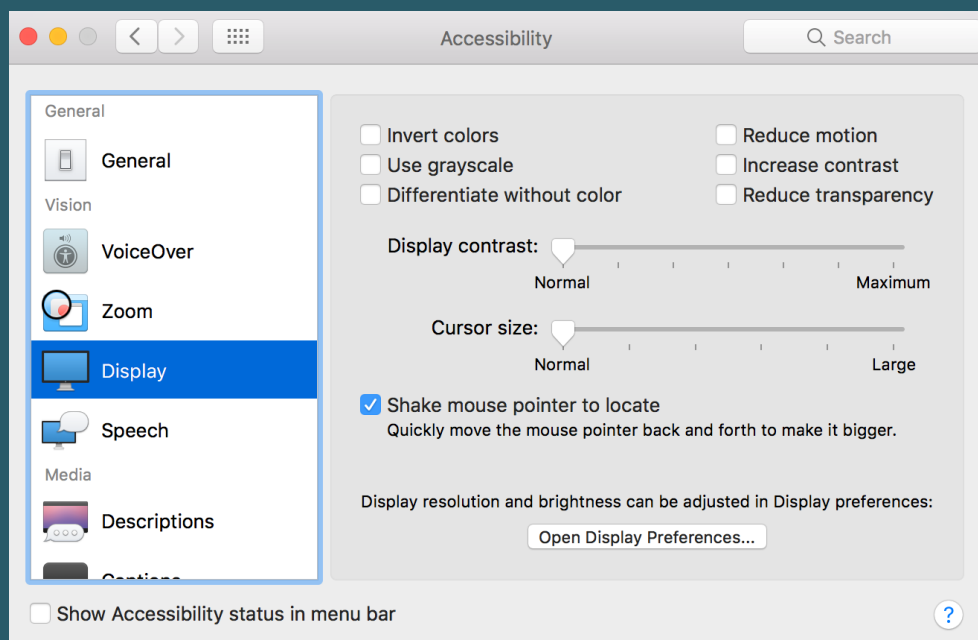

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ZOOM & DISPLAY

The accessibility options are subdivided into Vision, Media, Hearing and Interacting. Within those subdivisions you'll find a number of different options.

With the Mac's focal point being its screen, you'll find that there are a larger number of visual accessibility options. Some are more specific than others. Two features that are fairly universally useful for learners with visual impairments are 'Zoom' and 'Display.

As you could probably guess, 'Zoom' enables you to focus on certain parts of the screen by hovering your cursor over the area of choice and selecting specific keyboard commands. 'Display' is a bit more convoluted.
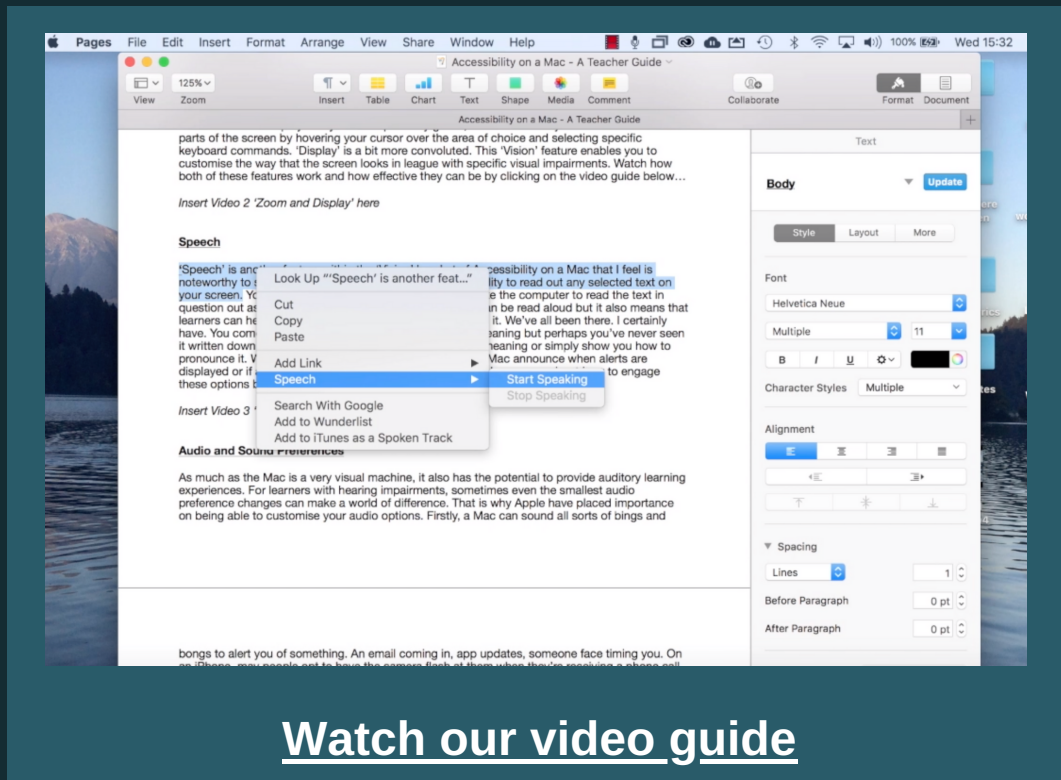
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This 'Vision' feature enables you to customise the way that the screen looks in league with specific visual impairments. Watch how both of these features work and how effective they can be.

SPEECH

'Speech' is another feature within the 'Vision' bracket of Accessibility on a Mac that is noteworthy to say the least. By default, the Mac has the ability to read out any selected text on your screen.

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You can choose how fast or slow you would like the computer to read the text in question out as well. This feature means that smaller text can be read aloud but it also means that learners can hear any given word to help them comprehend it.

Every teacher has been there. You come across a word that you are 99% sure of its meaning but perhaps you've never seen it written down before. 'Speech' helps to confirm a word's meaning or simply show you how to pronounce it. Within 'Speech' you can also opt to have the Mac announce when alerts are displayed or if an application needs your attention. You can learn more about how to engage these options by watching the video above.

AUDIO & SOUND PREFERENCES

As much as the Mac is a very visual machine, it also has the potential to provide auditory learning experiences. For learners with hearing impairments, sometimes even the smallest audio preference changes can make a world of difference. That is why Apple have placed importance on being able to customise your audio options.

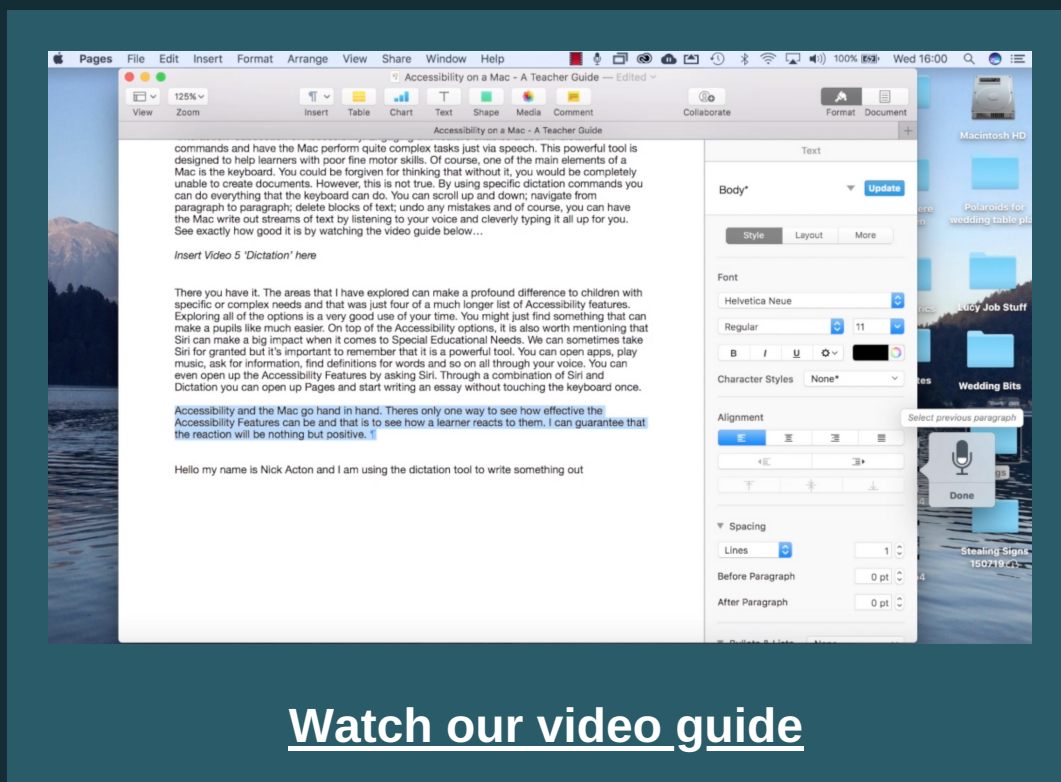Firstly, a Mac can sound all sorts of bings and bongs to alert you of something.

An email coming in, app updates, someone face timing you. On an iPhone, may people opt to have the camera flash at them when they're receiving a phone call rather than relying on sounds.

Within the 'Audio' subsection, you can engage a similar function whereby the screen flashes at you when an alert occurs. For more complex audio options you can also access the sound preferences from within this area of the Accessibility. See how it all works by watching the guide.

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DICTATION

The last area of Accessibility to explore is 'Dictation'. This can be found within the 'Interaction' subsection of Accessibility. Engaging this feature enables a user to dictate commands and have the Mac perform quite complex tasks just via speech. This powerful tool is designed to help learners with poor fine motor skills. Of course, one of the main elements of a Mac is the keyboard. You could be forgiven for thinking that without it, you would be completely unable to create documents. However, this is not true. By using specific dictation commands you can do everything that the keyboard can do. You can scroll up and down; navigate from paragraph to paragraph; delete blocks of text; undo any mistakes and of course, you can have the Mac write out streams of text by listening to your voice and cleverly typing it all up for you. See exactly how good it is by watching the video guide below.

Watch our video guide

There you have it. The areas that we have explored can make a profound difference to children with specific or complex needs and that was just four of a much longer list of Accessibility features. Exploring all of the options is a very good use of your time. You might just find something that can make a pupil's life much easier. On top of the Accessibility options, it is also worth mentioning that Siri can make a big impact when it comes to Special Educational Needs. We can sometimes take Siri for granted but it's important to remember that it is a powerful tool. You can open apps, play music, ask for information, find definitions for words and so on all through your voice. You can even open up the Accessibility Features by asking Siri. Through a combination of Siri and Dictation you can open up Pages and start writing an essay without touching the keyboard once. Accessibility and the Mac go hand in hand. There is only one way to see how effective the Accessibility Features can be and that is to see how a learner reacts to them.

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