# Unit 1: Module 1, Activity 1 Screen magnification software

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## What is screen magnification?

Screen magnification does just what it says and simply magnifies what is displayed on the screen. The degree of magnification can vary according to the preferences of the person using it. Greater levels of magnification result in less information being displayed on the screen. In some instances the magnification can be so extreme that only two or three words are displayed on the screen at a time.

Many people who use screen magnification also change the contrast and colour settings to make it easier to read. For example, they may set a black background with white text to make the text stand out more.

## Val’s story

This short video shows Val using screen magnification software. As you watch, identify two things that you should do when you are producing a Word document so that Val can read it easily.

Watch the video before continuing:

* [Activity 1: Screen magnification video in MP4 format](http://dl.groovygecko.net/anon.groovy/clients/rnib/activity_1_screen_magnification.mp4)
* [Activity 1: Screen magnification video in WMV format](http://ms.groovygecko.net/groovyg/clients/rnib/activity1-screen-magnification.wmv)

In the video Val explains that:

* she uses four-times screen magnification which means that she can only view a small proportion of the screen at any one time. Therefore text that is aligned to the left is much easier to find than text that is centred or right aligned
* fancy, curly text and italics are much harder to read for her. That's why RNIB uses Arial typeface within documents we produce on our own computers as it is a clear and simple design
* text can become difficult or impossible to read on her high contrast display because the document author has changed the font from the default colour setting (ie from the Automatic black text on a white background which is there whenever you open a new document)
* using capitals for whole words has also been shown to hamper reading for screen-reader users and fully-sighted readers. Therefore, don't be tempted to use capitals to try and emphasise text.

## Key point

Making a document accessible (ie so it can be read) for screen-magnification users includes following these guidelines:

* left align all your text - don't be tempted to centre headings; with the exception of textbooks and educational materials when the Title Heading style is used at the start of the document for the book title
* use Arial and keep the font colour in its default “automatic” setting (don't change the colour of the text)
* don't use italics, underlining, or long blocks of bold or capitals.

Producing Word documents in Arial and left aligning text can take a bit of getting used to. Research has shown that more people can read 14 point compared to smaller sized print.

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