# Unit 1: Module 1, Activity 2 Screen readers with speech output

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## What is a screen reader?

Computers can be adapted for someone who can't see the screen by adding software called a screen reader, which enables the computer to “talk”. The screen reader will speak the text in its focus and the user navigates through their document, menus, dialog boxes, edit fields and so on by using a standard computer keyboard instead of using a mouse. By pressing combinations of keys (called keyboard shortcuts) users can work rapidly, bypassing the menu systems. For example, a keyboard shortcut commonly used by mouse users as well as keyboard users is Control S to save.

## Mark’s story

This video shows Mark using a screen reader called JAWS for Windows. As you watch, identify what Mark says is most important to him when he is reading a document.

Watch the video before continuing:

* [Activity 2: Screen reader video in MP4 format](http://dl.groovygecko.net/anon.groovy/clients/rnib/activity_2_screen_reader.mp4http:/dl.groovygecko.net/anon.groovy/clients/rnib/activity_2_screen_reader.mp4)
* [Activity 2: Screen reader video in WMV format](http://ms.groovygecko.net/groovyg/clients/rnib/activity2-screen-reader.wmv)

In the video, Mark stresses the importance of having a document in which heading levels are used to give it structure. It's essential so that he can use his screen reader to find out quickly:

* what's in the document, and
* where it is.

## Key point

Structuring documents by using heading levels is not something which is only helpful to people using speech output. We all benefit from well-structured documents, however we read them. The principle of using heading levels to structure documents is one of the most important skills in writing effectively for any audience.

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