

# VoiceOver Utility on macOS

## Comprehensive Guide to All Settings, Sub-Settings, and Options

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### How to Access VoiceOver Utility

#### Shortcut:

- Press **VO + F8** (VO = **Control + Option** by default) when VoiceOver is on.

#### Via System Settings:

- Go to Apple menu (🍏) > System Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver
  - Click **Open VoiceOver Utility**
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### VoiceOver Utility Main Interface

#### Search Field

- Search for any setting or option within VoiceOver Utility.
- **Shortcut:**
  - ★ Type in the search field.
  - ★ Navigate results: **VO + Left/Right Arrow** or **VO + Up/Down Arrow**
  - ★ Activate result: Press **Enter** (not **VO + Space**)

#### Utility Categories Table

- **Displays all categories** (*General, Verbosity, Speech, Navigation, Web, Sound, Visuals, Commands, Braille, Activities, VoiceOver Recognition, Screen Sharing*).
- **Navigation:** Use *arrow keys* or *VO navigation commands*.

#### Help Button

- Opens the VoiceOver User Guide for the current category.
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### Menu Options

#### Import Preferences...

- **Shortcut: Command + Shift + I**
- Import a file containing VoiceOver preferences.

#### Export Preferences...

- **Shortcut: Command + Shift + E**
- Save As VoiceOver Archive with your VoiceOver settings.
- **Export Options:**
  - ★ **All:** All modified settings.
  - ★ **Basic:** Basic preferences.
  - ★ **Braille Input Keys:** Custom commands for braille displays.
  - ★ **Hot Spots:** Saved hotspots.

- ★ **Labels:** Custom labels made with **VO + I**.
  - ★ **Pronunciations:** Custom pronunciations.
  - ★ **Command Assignments:** Custom commands.
  - ★ **List of Custom Activities:** Any created activities.
  - **Set Up Portable Preferences...**
    - **Shortcut: Command + Shift + V**
    - Prepare your preferences for use on other Macs.
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## Categories and Detailed Settings

**NOTE:** Selecting the **? Button** on the settings page in focus will open the corresponding reference page in the VoiceOver Utility section of the VoiceOver User Guide.

### General

- **Enter/Edit Greeting:** Enter or change what VoiceOver speaks when it starts.
- Use the checkbox to show the *Welcome Dialog*.
- **Portable Preferences:** Turn On/Off Portable Preferences which let you take your VoiceOver preferences with you to use with other devices. **NOTE:** Can only be turned on if you have an external device connected.
  - ★ **Set Up... button:** Choose an external device where your portable preferences will be saved.
- Use the checkbox to *Allow VoiceOver to be controlled by Apple Script*

### Verbosity

- **Speech Tab:** Control how much information VoiceOver provides.
  - ★ **Default Speech Verbosity:** Select the drop-down to choose *High, Medium, or Low* depending on how much information you want VoiceOver to speak.
  - ★ **Detailed List of Controls:** Select the **v** to adjust the verbosity of individual Controls (i.e., Button, Checkbox, Dock Item, Heading, Image, Link, List, Menu Item, Table, etc.) listed under High, Medium, and Low.
- **Braille Tab:** Control how much information VoiceOver provides.
  - ★ **Default Braille Verbosity:** Select the drop-down to choose *High, Medium, or Low* depending on how much information you want VoiceOver to provide to a Refreshable Braille Display.
  - ★ **Detailed List of Controls:** Select the **v** to adjust the verbosity of individual Controls (i.e., Button, Checkbox, Dock Item, Heading, Image, Link, List, Menu Item, Table, etc.) listed under High, Medium, and Low.
- **Text Tab:** Use the drop-downs to adjust the verbosity for each of the following:
  - ★ Punctuation: *All, Some, None, or Custom*
  - ★ Repeated punctuation: *Always Spoken or Spoken with Count (First 2, 3, 4, or 5 Times)*
  - ★ Repeated spaces: *Do Nothing, Speak with Count, or Play Tone*
  - ★ Line indentation: *Do Nothing, Speak Number of Spaces and Tabs, Speak Level, Sound Level (Customize Level)*
  - ★ While typing speak: *Characters, Words, Characters and Words, or Nothing*
  - ★ When moving the cursor: *Speak text the cursor passes or Speak text to the right of the cursor*

- ★ When text attributes change: *Do Nothing, Play Tone, or Speak Attributes*
- ★ When encountering a misspelled word: *Do Nothing, Play Tone, Speak Attributes, Change Pitch*
- ★ When encountering a link/attachment: *Speak, Change Pitch, Play Tone, or Do Nothing*
- ★ Read numbers as: *Words or Digits*
- ★ When reading a capital letter: *Change Pitch, Play Tone, Speak Cap, or Do Nothing*
- ★ When deleting text: *Change Pitch, Play Tone, Speak, or Do Nothing*
- **Announcements Tab:**
  - ★ Use the checkboxes to enable each of the following:
    - \* *Announce when mouse cursor enters a window*
    - \* *Announce when a modifier key is pressed*
    - \* *Announce when the Caps Lock key is pressed*
    - \* *Speak header when navigating across a table row*
    - \* *Automatically speak text in dialog boxes*
    - \* *Speak Zoom magnification changes*
    - \* *Speak VoiceOver cursor magnification changes*
  - ★ Use the drop-downs to select choices for the following:
    - \* When status text changes under VoiceOver cursor: *Play Tone, Speak Text, or Do Nothing*
    - \* When progress indicator changes under VoiceOver cursor: *Play Tone, Speak Update, or Do Nothing*
    - \* When number of rows change under VoiceOver cursor: *Play Tone, Speak Update, or Do Nothing*
    - \* When system dialogs are displayed: *Play Tone, Speak & Play Tone, or Do Nothing*
    - \* Speak size and position in: *Inches, Millimeters, or Points*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to enable *Speak text under mouse after delay*
    - \* Use the Slider to adjust the amount of delay from *Short to Long*
- **Hints Tab:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to enable *Speak instructions for using the item in the VoiceOver cursor*
  - ★ Use the drop-downs to select choices for the following:
    - \* When an item has a help tag: *Do Nothing, Speak Notification, or Speak Help*
    - \* When an item has custom actions: *Do Nothing, Speak Actions, or Play Sound*
    - \* When an item has more content: *Do Nothing, Speak Custom Content, or Play Sound*
  - ★ Speak hints after delay
    - \* Use the slider to adjust the amount of delay from *Short to Long*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to enable *Append phonetic pronunciation to single characters*

## Speech

- **Voices Tab:**
  - ★ **Primary Voice** - Select the drop-down to choose the following:
    - \* **Voice** - select the drop-down to choose the *primary VoiceOver voice*
    - \* **Rate** - use the slider to adjust the *rate (speed) of the voice*
    - \* **Pitch** - use the slider to adjust the *pitch (sound frequency or tone) of the voice*

- \* **Speech Volume** - use the slider to adjust the volume of the voice
- \* **Timbre** - use the up/down control to adjust the quality of the voice, independent of pitch and volume
- \* **Sentence Pause** - use the up/down control to adjust the pause time between sentences
- \* **Reset Voice Settings** - use the button to reset the voice settings back to default
- \* **Play button** - use the play button to play a sample of the primary voice using your adjusted settings
- \* **Done button** - select the Done button to close the Primary voice pop-up window
- ★ **[+|-] (Plus | Minus) button:**
  - \* **+ (Plus) button** - select + to add additional voices for use with VoiceOver
  - \* **- (Minus) button** - select a voice you have added and then select - to remove it
- ★ Use the checkbox to *Detect Languages* which will automatically switch voices based on language of the text spoken by VoiceOver
- ★ **Mute Speech** - use the checkbox to mute the VoiceOver speech
- **Pronunciation Tab:**
  - ★ **[+|-] (Plus | Minus) button:**
    - \* **+ (Plus) button** - add custom pronunciations for words/phrases
    - \* **- (Minus) button** - select a custom pronunciation you have added and then select - to remove it

## Navigation

- **Initial position of the VoiceOver cursor** - select the drop-down to choose *Keyboard focused item* or *First item in window*
- **Grouping behavior** - select the drop-down to choose *Standard*, *Bookend groups*, *Announce groups*, or *Ignore groups*
- Use the checkbox to enable *Synchronize keyboard focus and VoiceOver cursor*
- **Mouse pointer** - select the drop-down box to choose *Ignores VoiceOver cursor*, *Follows VoiceOver cursor*, or *Moves VoiceOver cursor*
- Use the checkbox to enable *Allow cursor wrapping*
- Use the checkbox to enable *Skip redundant labels*
- Use the checkbox to enable *Automatically interact when using tab key*
- Use the checkbox to *Enable fast searching*. If enabled, select the drop-down to choose *Left Command Key* or *Right Command key*. **NOTE:** When you use the left Command key for fast search, the right Command key behaves normally and vice versa.

## Web

- **Navigation Tab:**
  - ★ **Navigation webpages by** - select the radio button for either *DOM order* or *Grouping items*
  - ★ **When navigating web tables** - select checkboxes to enable:
    - \* *Group items within*
    - \* *Speak column and row numbers*
  - ★ **Navigate images** - select the drop-down to choose *Never*, *With Descriptions*, or *Always*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to *Enable Live Regions*

- ★ Use the checkbox to *Always allow keyboard commands to navigate websites*
- **General Tab:**
  - ★ **When loading a new webpage** - select checkboxes to enable:
    - \* *Speak webpage summary*
    - \* *Automatically speak the webpage*
  - ★ **While a webpage loads** - select the drop-down to choose *Speak Progress, Play Tone, or Do Nothing*
- **Web Rotor Tab:** - select or de-select checkboxes to enable or disable the following items (and use command + up-arrow and command + down-arrow to reorder the items):
  - ★ **Links**
  - ★ **Frames**
  - ★ **Landmarks**
  - ★ **Tables**
  - ★ **Form Controls**
  - ★ **Headings**
  - ★ **Articles**
  - ★ **Buttons**
  - ★ **Text Fields**
  - ★ **Images**
  - ★ **Lines**
  - ★ **Lists**
  - ★ **Live Regions**
  - ★ **Non-Visited Links**
  - ★ **Visited Links**
  - ★ **Static Text**
  - ★ **Radio Groups**
  - ★ **Checkboxes**

## Sound

- Use the checkbox to *Mute sound effects*
- Use the checkbox to *Enable audio ducking*
- Use the checkbox to *Enable positional audio*
- **Output Device** - select the drop-down to choose *System default or one of the audio output devices available* to the Mac or MacBook

## Visuals

- **Cursor Tab:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to *Show VoiceOver cursor*
  - ★ **VoiceOver Cursor Magnification** - use the slider to adjust this from *Small to Large*
  - ★ **When reading text, move VoiceOver cursor by** - use the drop-down to select *Sentence or Word*
- **Panels and Menus Tab:**

- ★ Use the checkbox to *Show caption panel*
- ★ **Show Braille Panel** - select the drop-down to choose *Off, On, or Automatic*
- ★ **Font Size for Panels and Menus** - use the slider to adjust this from *Small to Large*
- **Touch Tab**
  - ★ **Background Transparency** - use the slider to adjust this from *0% to 100%*

## Commands

- **VoiceOver modifier** - use the drop-down to choose *Control + Option, Caps Lock, or Control + Option OR Caps-Lock*
- **Also control VoiceOver with:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *NumPad*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Option Key* and select the drop-down to choose *Right Option Key, Left Option Key, or Both Option Keys*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Trackpad* and select the *Trackpad Options... button* to open the Trackpad Options dialog which shows the following information:
    - \* **Trackpad Options** - To enable using the Trackpad to control VoiceOver, hold down the VoiceOver modifier and rotate two fingers clockwise anywhere on the trackpad. To turn it off, hold down the VoiceOver modifier and rotate two fingers counterclockwise.
      - ➔ Use the checkbox to *Automatically select items in lists and tables*
      - ➔ Use the checkbox to *Pause speech when not touching the trackpad*
      - ➔ Use the checkbox to *Scroll gesture moves content instead of scroll bar*
      - ➔ Select the *Edit User Command Set... button* to open a dialog and explore or change the VoiceOver commands assigned to Trackpad gestures. Select the *Done button* to close the dialog.
      - ➔ Use the checkbox to *Ignore trackpad when VoiceOver is on*
      - ➔ Select the *Done button* to close the Trackpad Options dialog
- **Quick Nav:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Arrow-key Quick Nav*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Single-key Quick Nav*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Always allow typing in text fields*
- **Left and right arrow keys** - select the drop-down to choose *Do Nothing, Toggles arrow-key Quick Nav, Toggles single-key Quick Nav, or Toggles all Quick Nav*
- **When toggling Quick Nav** - select the drop-down to choose *Speak or Play Tone*
- **Command set** - select the radio button for either *Built-in or User (0 custom)*. If User is chosen, select the *Edit... button* to open the Edit User Command Set dialog which allows you to edit VoiceOver command keystrokes. When you are finished editing the VoiceOver Command keystrokes, select the *Done...button* to close the Edit User Command Set dialog.

## \*\*\*\*\*Braille\*\*\*\*\* START HERE!!!

- **Translation Tab:**
  - ★ **Input and Output** - use the drop-down to select *Uncontracted, Contracted, or Eight dot*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Match Input and Output Tables*
  - ★ **Translate after** - use the drop-down to select *typing whitespace or a delay*

- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Equations use Nemeth Code*
- ★ Choose tables (from the list) to add to the Braille Table rotor. Switch tables in the rotor using *Control + Option + Command + Shift + Left Arrow* or *Control + Option + Command + Shift + Right Arrow*
- ★ **[+|-] (Plus | Minus) button:**
  - \* **+ (Plus) button** - select + to add additional Braille languages
  - \* **- (Minus) button** - select a Braille language you have added and then select - to remove it
- **Layout Tab:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show multiple items*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Use dots 7 and 8 to indicate VoiceOver cursor*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Use word wrap*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Turn pages when panning*
  - ★ Use checkbox to select *Display text style*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show alert messages for duration:*
    - \* Use the slider to adjust the duration from *Short to Long*
    - \* **Ignore Chord Duration** - use the slider to adjust the duration from *0 seconds to 1 second*
    - \* **Auto Advance Duration** - use the up/down control to adjust the number of seconds
- **Status Tab:**
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show general display status*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show extended general display status*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show text style*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show extended text style*
  - ★ **Braille Display** - Will show the status of the Braille display
  - ★ **Show status on the** - select the *Left or Right* radio button
- **Displays Tab:**
  - ★ Select the *Assign Commands... button* to open a dialog box to assign VoiceOver commands to keys on your Braille display
    - NOTE:** Braille Keyboard Input allows typing using letter keys corresponding to each of the eight Braille dots and the space key. Press *Control + Option + Y* to toggle Braille Keyboard Input
  - ★ **[+|-] (Plus | Minus) button:**
    - \* **+ (Plus) button** - select + to add additional Braille Displays for use with VoiceOver
    - \* **- (Minus) button** - select a Braille Display you have added and then select - to remove it
  - ★ **Allow input from** - select the drop-down to choose *Primary braille display, All braille displays, or No braille displays*
- **Braille Access Tab:**
  - NOTE:** Quickly access Braille Notes, BRF files, and more using a Braille display. Press dots 7 and 8 together to start Braille Access.
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Launch App*
  - ★ Use the checkbox to select *Braille Notes*
    - \* Select the *Show Detail button* to open a Braille Notes dialog box
      - ➔ **Sort By** - select the *Date Edited or Date Created* radio button

- ➔ **Sort Direction** - select the *Newest First or Oldest First* radio button
- ➔ Select the *Done button* to close the Braille Notes dialog box
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *BRF Files*
  - \* Select the *Show Detail button* to open a BRF Files dialog box
    - ➔ **Fit BRF Content to Display** - select the *On/Off button*
    - ➔ **Hide BRF Page Indicators** - select the *On/Off button*
    - ➔ Select the *Done button* to close the BRF Files dialog box
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Calculator*
  - \* Select the *Show Detail button* to open the Calculator dialog box
    - ➔ **Math Code** - select the *Nemeth or UEB* radio button
    - ➔ Select the *Done button* to close the Calculator dialog box
- ★ Use the checkbook to select *Live Captions*
  - \* Select the *Show Detail button* to open the Live Captions dialog box
    - ➔ **Source** - Use the drop-down to select the audio source for Live Captions
    - ➔ Select the *Done button* to close the Live Captions dialog box
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Time*
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Open to Last Position*
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Speak List Items*
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show Back Button*
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Speak Typing Feedback*
- ★ Use the checkbox to select *Show Visuals*

## Activities

- Set up activities to change VoiceOver settings for specific uses
  - ★ **[+|-|...] (Plus | Minus | ...) button:**
    - \* **+ (Plus) button** - select + to add an activity
      - ➔ Enter a name for the activity
      - ➔ **Settings to apply for this activity** - select checkboxes for the settings that will apply to that activity
      - ➔ For each setting checked, select the *Set... button* to open the Settings dialog to choose settings that will apply to the activity
      - ➔ **Automatically switch to this activity for:**
        - **Contexts** - Use the drop-down box to select *Word Processing, Narrative, Messaging, Social Media, Spreadsheet, File System, Source Code, and Console*  
**NOTE:** Multiple Contexts can be selected for the activity
        - **Apps and Websites** - Use the drop-down box to select or add Apps and Websites for the activity  
**NOTE:** Multiple Apps and Websites can be added or selected for the activity
    - \* **- (Minus) button** - select an activity you have added and then select - to remove it
    - \* **... button** - choose *Duplicate Activity, Reset Activity to My Current VoiceOver Settings, or Reset Activity to VoiceOver Default Settings*

## VoiceOver Recognition

Using on-device intelligence, your Mac will automatically improve the accessibility of images. VoiceOver Recognition should not be relied upon in circumstances where you could be harmed or injured, in high-risk situations, for navigation, or for diagnosis treatment of any medical condition.

- Use the checkbox to select *Image Descriptions* (Your Mac will speak descriptions of images in apps and on the web.)
- Select the *Download Additional Languages... button* to open the Languages available for download dialog box to download additional languages for VoiceOver
  - ★ Select the *Download button* for each language you want to download
  - ★ Select the checkbox for *On-Device Mode* to Always translate offline using downloaded languages. Offline translations may not be as accurate as online translations. Siri and Safari will always process translations online.
  - ★ Select the *Translation & Privacy... button* to read the Translation and Privacy policy
  - ★ Select the *Done button* to close the Languages available for download dialog box

## Screen Sharing

You can use VoiceOver to control another Mac using Screen Sharing

- Select the *Open Screen Sharing... button* to start the Screen Sharing process
- **When interacting with a shared screen:**
  - ★ **Speed pitch** - use the drop-down to select *Raise pitch, No change, or Lower pitch*
  - ★ **Voice** - use the drop-down to select *Default voice or a different voice you have added*  
**NOTE:** Add voices to your Voice Rotor to use them here.
  - ★ **VoiceOver cursor color** - use the drop-down to select *No change or the default system color (i.e., Blue)*
  - ★ **Stop Interactive Behavior** - use the drop-down to select *Leaves shared screen or Stays in Shared Screen*
  - ★ **NOTE:** You can always leave the shared screen by pressing Control + Option + Command + Shift + R
  - ★ **If remote device has VoiceOver on** - use the drop-down to select *All commands control remote device or Most commands control remote device*
- **On the other device:**
  - ★ **VoiceOver Speech and Sound** - use the drop-down to select *Audible or Silent*
  - ★ **VoiceOver Visuals** - use the drop-down to select *Visible or Hidden*

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## Additional Features

### Help Topics

- Each category includes a help button for detailed guidance.

### Search and Navigation

- Use the search field to quickly locate any setting.
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## Shortcut Keys for Common Actions

- Open VoiceOver Utility: **VO + F8**
  - Search Field Navigation: **VO + Left/Right Arrow** or **VO + Up/Down Arrow**
  - Activate Search Result: **Enter**
  - Import Preferences: **Command + Shift + I**
  - Export Preferences: **Command + Shift + E**
  - Set Up Portable Preferences: **Command + Shift + V**
  - Create Custom Label: **VO + /**
  - Start/Stop VoiceOver: **Command + F5**
  - Lock/Unlock **VO Keys**: **VO + ;** (Semicolon)
  - Open Rotor: **VO + U**
  - Start Reading: **VO + A**
  - Pause/Resume Reading: **Control**
  - Read Next/Previous Item: **VO + Right/Left Arrow**
  - Read Paragraph: **VO + P**
  - Read Sentence: **VO + S**
  - Read Word: **VO + W**
  - Read Character: **VO + C**
  - Jump to Top/Bottom of Page: **VO + Home/End** (desktop), **VO + Fn + Up/Down Arrow** (laptop)
  - Activate Item: **VO + Space Bar**
  - Interact with Grouped Items: **VO + Shift + Down/Up Arrow**
  - Open Keyboard Help: **VO + K**
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## References

- [VoiceOver Keyboard Shortcuts on a Mac - Deque University](#)
- [Get started with VoiceOver on Mac - Apple Support](#)
- [WebAIM: Using VoiceOver to Evaluate Web Accessibility](#)