

Useful apps on phones and tablets for adult literacy learners

Deirdre Madden, [Disability Support Service](#), Access, University College Cork (UCC) gave a workshop at NALA's Adult Literacy Learner Day in Cork city in March 2024. The workshop was on using technology to make learning easier. Deirdre gave a run through in using the apps listed below and kindly shared the links with NALA.

Access, University College Cork (UCC) created a free to use website [Technology to Make Learning Easier](#) with courses and resources. The website has videos on how to use apps and helpful tips to make reading, writing, planning and studying easier. UCC originally aimed the website at Transition Year students and teachers. The website focuses on apps that are free to download and use. The idea is to help you speed up and improve your homework, projects and classroom based assessments.

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1. Getting your phone or tablet to read text to you

Often Apple, and Android, phones and tablets have a built in text-to-speech tool. This text-to-speech tool will read text on the phone aloud to you. Text-to-speech apps can:

- ease your reading load,
- help with pronunciation, or
- give you an option of revising information through listening.

If you type work on an Apple or Android tablet, text-to-speech tools can read your typed work aloud. This can help you to:

- listen to your work independently, and
- identify and correct your mistakes.

For Apple iPads and iPhones

There are usually two text-to-speech options built in:

- **“Speak Selection”**: A speak button will appear when you select text allowing you to hear that text read aloud.
- **“Speak Screen”**: Swipe down with two fingers from the top of the screen to hear readable content of the screen.

Under the settings, you can adjust the voice, speed of the voice and pronunciation (for example get it to pronounce Siobhán as “Shivaun”). You can choose from 36 different languages aloud. This can help language students to tune their ear for aural exams and help with pronunciation. See this [video about activating “Speak Selection” and “Speak Screen” on your iPad or iPhone](#).

For Android tablets and phones

Many Android phones come with a built in text to speech tool called **“Select to Speak”**. See this [video for activating “Select to Speak” on your Android device](#).

Some Android devices come with these tools already built in. If yours does not have Select to Speak built in, you can [download the “Android Accessibility Suite”](#) for free.

2. Talk into your phone and have it write down what you say

Speech-to-text apps are available for both Apple and Android phones and tablets. You can use a speech-to-text app if you have difficulty writing. You can:

- speak into your phone or tablet and with the app and it will write down what you say as written text,
- use the written text in a text message, or
- copy and paste it into a document.

Speech-to-text app for Apple phones or tablets

This [video shows how you can talk to your iPad or iPhone and get it to type what you say](#). To start open any app that uses the keyboard (for example your text messages). Tap on the text field to bring up the keyboard. Tap on the dictation button, the microphone between the Emoji button and Space Bar. Start speaking. Tap “Done” when you are finished speaking. Click here for [Apple’s guide to using dictation](#). See also a video here that shows you [how to dictate text while using an Apple external keyboard](#).

Speech-to-text app for android phones and tablets

You can [download “Live Transcribe”](#), a speech-to-text app for Android phones from the Play Store on your phone or tablet. Also, see this [video on how to use Live Transcribe](#).

When Live Transcribe is on, what you say will appear as written text on your phone or tablet. The app can write in 70 different languages. You can also copy and paste from this app into a text message or document.

3. An app that can read aloud from a hard copy of text

The “Seeing AI” app reads out hard copy text aloud from for example a book you are reading or notes you have handwritten. You can download [Seeing AI](#) for your Apple or Android phone or tablet. This is very useful for people with unmet literacy needs or people with dyslexia. People originally designed this app with blind or visually impaired people in mind so they could understand the world around them. This short [video shows how to use “Seeing AI”](#). To use the app, you photograph or even just point the camera at the book, poster or menu. The app then reads the text aloud. It can also describe people and objects.

Another app you can download that is similar to “Seeing AI” for Android phones is the [LookOut App](#). See here a [video showing how to use LookOut app](#).

4. Further help and free resources

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- important IT skills including **touch-typing** and **file management**
- apps for Irish, French, German and other languages to help **prepare for oral and aural exams**
- how to **make a sound file** of text to listen to learn and revise anywhere, anytime even on your phone is so easy and convenient
- **Mind-mapping software** to plan and structure your written work. You can then access your mind maps study on your phone anywhere, anytime.

