

Accelerated Reader Accessibility

Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) is accessible to students with disabilities. It is compliant with all the standards issued by the Access Board under section 508 and works with several widely used Assistive Technology tools. Students with disabilities generally experience difficulty using educational technology in two ways. First, students with limited or no fine motor skills have trouble using the mouse. Second, blind students or students with visual impairments have difficulty seeing the screen. Accelerated Reader is accessible to students with visual and fine motor impairments through mechanisms available in the Accelerated Reader software, the computer's operating system, and various Assistive Technology products.

Accelerated Reader Software

Accelerated Reader's "built-in" accessibility features allow students who cannot accurately manipulate a mouse to execute all functions from the keyboard including selecting name and class, searching for books, entering information, and completing an AR quiz. Accelerated Reader also provides audio quizzes that read questions aloud to students with difficulties seeing the screen.

Computer Operating System

Accelerated Reader is accessible to students with limited or no fine motor skills and blind students because it is compatible with the accessibility options built into every computer's operating system. Operating system accessibility features (which are located under Accessibility Options in the control panel for the Windows XP operating system, under "Ease of Access Center" / "Change how your mouse works" for Windows Vista, and under Universal Access in the system preferences for Mac OS 10) allow users to change settings to adjust the visual display and the software controls for the computer. For instance, selecting the "mouse keys" accessibility option in both the Windows XP and the Mac OS 10 operating systems allow the user to control the mouse through the numeric pad on the keyboard. This feature provides an alternative to using the mouse for students with limited or no fine motor skills. Accelerated Reader functions that involve the mouse can be executed through the numeric pad on the keyboard when the "mouse keys" is selected under Accessibility Options.

Accelerated Reader is compatible with other accessibility options built into operating systems. For instance, the MAC OS 10 operating system displays all on-screen elements in AR in black and white when the "switch to black and white" accessibility option is selected. This provides users with visual impairments a more contrasted display to read text. The Mac OS 10 also provides a "zoom in" accessibility option that allows users with visual impairments to zoom in on nearly all screens displayed throughout the AR application. Similarly, selecting from a number of "high contrast" Accessibility Options in the Windows XP or "Ease of Access Center" / "Optimize visual display" in Windows Vista displays nearly all screens in AR in contrast (usually black and white) and increases text size so users with visual impairments can more easily read text. While the actual Accelerated Reader quiz itself is not displayed in black and white, it is already displayed in a contrasted combination of yellow and black.

Assistive Technology

Accelerated Reader also can work with widely-used Assistive Technology tools such as screen reading software. Window-Eyes Version 7.11 is an example of a screen reading software program that reads the text in AR to students who are blind or have extreme visual impairments.