Text to Speech and Screen Reading Software: What’s the Difference?
There are several ways that voice is added to text when using a computer. Here is a short comparison to help determine which would be best based on the needs of the user.

**Text to speech Software** allows the user have **text read to them**.

In some cases, the words are highlighted, in others only speech.

Some users will only need to hear pieces of text and not the entire screen.

Individuals who use text to speech only **are able to see the text on the screen**. They may also need to enlarge the text in order to see it. Having to learn multiple keystrokes to navigate may be difficult.

In most cases, the **use of a mouse** is required to select text.

In some cases, but not all, settings can allow the menu items to read.

**Examples of software are**: Natural Reader, Balabolka, Zabboware, Text Edit (Mac), Read/Write Gold, Kurzweil 3000, ZoomText

**Screen Reading Software** allows the user to **hear everything on the screen**.

Menus as well as the location on the screen are voiced so that the user can navigate through the text on a page, through a series of keystrokes.

A long list of keystroke commands must be learned in order to navigate the screen fully. A short list of keystroke commands can be used to get started.

The user of screen reading software **cannot see the screen**.

If a mouse is required for use, the environment is not accessible to screen reading software.

Fluent users of screen reading software can listen to the voice at higher rates of speed, to increase efficiency and rate of use.

**WCAG 2.0 A and AA** guidelines are required when creating web sites and other documents in order to create accessible environments for screen reading use.

Graphics must be described, links must have logical descriptions and document structure must be used in order to create accessibility for screen reading use.

**Examples of software are**: NVDA, WindowEyes, VoiceOver and JAWS