NVDA Prerequisites and Basic Navigation

Before beginning to use a screen reader efficiently, a user should be a confident touch typist. Without knowing the layout of a keyboard, learning to use a screen reader will be difficult, frustrating and slow.

Putting a tactile marker on the Tab, Shift, Enter, and Down Arrow keys may be a useful tool for some users as they begin to learn screen reader navigation. Markers on the Ctrl, Alt and Backspace keys may also be useful, but some users may find this overwhelming.

For beginning users, it is important to listen for the hints NVDA gives you, e.g. "press Enter to select" or "press Down Arrow to expand".

Most navigation with NVDA can by done by using the Arrow keys, Tab and Enter. This is a good place to start. The "NVDA modifier key" is also important – See the "NVDA setup basics" document for more information.

Useful shortcuts to get started and help with orientation.

Ctrl + Alt + N – start or restart NVDA

NVDA + Q – quit NVDA

NVDA + 1 – opens the NVDA keyboard help. Press any combination of keys to find out what they do. Press NVDA + 1 again to return to regular keyboard function.

NVDA + N – opens the NVDA menu

NVDA + T – reads the title of the focused window

NVDA + A – reads continuously from the cursor location to end. (laptop layout)

Ctrl – stop speech

Shift – pause speech (press shift again to resume)

Windows + M – minimise all windows (go to desktop)

Windows + D – go to desktop

Windows + B – go to notification centre/system tray

Alt + Tab – cycle between all open windows

Windows + E – open file manager

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