

Did you know your computer can speak to you? It is built into all the native Mac applications. Its pretty easy. If I open safari and I highlight some text, all I need to do is hold down the control key and click on that text to get a menu. If I scroll down to where it says speech I just move the cursor over to start speaking.

"Welcome to the Maine Learning Technology Initiative."

That's pretty neat. Now if I'd like to have text spoken in every application where I can highlight text on my Mac, I can turn that on in the system preferences. So if I go up to the apple in the top left-hand corner and I scroll down to system preferences and I click it, it'll open up my system preferences. I'm going to go to the fourth row down which is called system. And I'm going to go to the word "Speech". It kind of looks like a microphone. I click on speech and then I make sure I choose text to speech. (Which is the top right-hand button). I make sure the voice is Alex. There are lots of other voices in here that are interesting but Alex is the only one that is human sampled. It's based on a real human voice. It actually takes a breath after every period, when it's reading something to you. It also has a speaking rate so if English is my second language I can slow it down or if I want to make it go a little faster... I can make it go faster. Third checkbox down is very important. This needs to be checked off. It is "Speak selected text when key is pressed". That means that any text that I select, when I push a certain key, it will speak that text out loud. So now I have to set the key. This is really important. You want use a key combination that is not in use for anything else because this will override everything else. Make sure you pay attention to what you selected. I have seen people that choose a key and then when they go to type it will no longer type that letter because that's the key they selected for speaking and that is over ruling the word processor they're trying to use. I'm going to select "Set Key" I like to use **option s** (~option speak ~option stop speaking ~option shush ~option start speaking). Option s is a pretty good one. I suggest that you use that.

Then you click okay. Now my computer is set up so it will speak any text that I highlight, and then push... what keys? That's right "option s". I'm going to close my system preferences. And now I'm going to open TextEdit and I just happen to have something I have written. I'm going to do select all. And now I'm going to push option s

"Alex has built in artificial intelligence Alex reads ahead by about a paragraph trying to predict how to say a word by comparing the words around it. Check out this example Tim wanted to record his record he was hoping to earn \$1 23456789987654321. Oh yeah, Alex can say numbers too!

So this is a pretty neat tool that's built into every Macintosh computer. I use this to proofread my e-mails, things I need to post on the Internet or any other important writings I'm doing.

So the next time you write something have Alex Read it back to you and see how it sounds.